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The implementation of restorative practices in an urban middle school

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

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DEDICATION

Mom, everyday you exemplify what it means to be a strong, independent, curious,

intelligent, understanding, and confident woman. I'm so lucky to have you in my life.

This dissertation is dedicated to you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I am taking my first ethnography class when my professor suggests that I consider writing my dissertation on the implementation of restorative practices (RP) into a nearby school district. Although I am not unfamiliar with ethnography, I never had the opportunity to perform ethnography. I naively assume I will be a natural ethnographer because I enjoy talking to people and listening to their stories. However, I quickly discover that ethnography is more difficult than I expected it to be. I am overwhelmed by the thought of having to walk blindly into the district and "figure out" the culture, especially since I knew it would be months before had some grasp of what was going on.

I have been invited to the middle school for a faculty meeting addressing faculty's concerns for the RP program. The meeting is at 3:15pm. I walk into the school a few minutes after 3pm and I find the principal, Markus, in the hallway. I ask him if he could show me to a restroom before I follow him into the meeting. He graciously tries to think of the best faculty bathroom to send me to, which makes me feel like I'm someone important. When I was in middle school, the faculty bathrooms, along with the faculty lounge and anything that said, "Keep out," were considered to be the unknown lands of the school's campus. Only adults were allowed to journey through those lands. So, of course, I humor myself into thinking that I'm being taken to the El Dorado of all bathrooms, furnished with a gold sink and matching toilet. I near the bathroom door and brace myself for the incredible sight I am sure to witness. To my dismay, there's no gold. Instead, it is a small bathroom, about the size of an average stall, located in the back of

what seems to be a cluttered storage room. My dream of an El Dorado is officially crushed.

I quickly finish in the bathroom. I don't want to walk into a faculty meeting late! I laugh and say to myself, "What are they going to do, Katie? Write you up for being tardy? Send you to the principal's office?" Although I am joking, my pace quickens. As a middle school student, my face would turn red if I was caught doing something considered bad or wrong. I was scared of being tardy for fear of being stared at by my peers, or even worse, reprimanded by a teacher in front of them. I strived for invisibility. However, right now I'm more concerned with getting to the faculty meeting before the room fills up and I am forced to sit wherever there is an empty seat. I want to have options for where I sit because this may influence my first impression of the faculty and more importantly, their first impression of me. If I sit too close to the front, my view may be obstructed and I may not be able to adequately observe faculty's reactions to RP. On the other hand, if I sit too close to the back, I could be perceived as an insignificant bystander and faculty may not bother to talk with me.

I find the room where the faculty meeting is being held. I hesitantly walk down the aisle as if I'm looking for an empty seat in a cafeteria on the first day of school. As I look around, I tell myself, "Don't sit there…too close to the front…nope, he looks kind of scary…looks like that seat's taken." I can feel all the faculty and staff members' eyes on me; to them, I am like the new kid in school. Reluctantly, I take one of the few empty seats in the back, but I am relieved the seat-finding task is over. Yes, this does feel like middle school. The only thing that's missing is my high water jeans (it was hard to find

jeans that covered my ankles, since I was tall for my age), my dollar store, white canvass, tennis shoes (the only shoes my mom could afford, since we were poor), and the strong smell of wood stove smoke on my clothes (we were so poor my mom couldn't hire a professional to clean the chimney, so thick smoke often filled our house).

Only fifteen minutes has passed and my middle school self is already haunting me, making it difficult for me to concentrate. I guess finding the perfect seat wasn't the only thing I should have anticipated when I prepared to come here today. I should have thought about how being in a middle school again might evoke dormant emotions within me. I haven't thought about my middle school experience for years. I blocked it out of my memory because it was a horrendous time for me. It was a time when I felt the most isolated. I had a hard time making friends because many of my peers didn't understand what I was going through. My father was miles away. Our house was in shambles and we didn't have the money to keep it up since my mother was trying to raise three girls on a secretary's salary without any financial assistance from my father. We had duct tape unsuccessfully holding together the bottom of our fiberglass tub, just to give you an idea. All of these things might have been okay if I had a strong self-esteem, but of course, who does when they're 12 or 13 years old? It's not uncommon for adolescents to feel uncomfortable in their own skin. Yet, during these years, I believed I was the only one in the world feeling out of place.

I quickly snap out of my thoughts when the principal and the district's RP consultant begin their presentation on RP. After explaining the rationale for implementing RP into the school, they open the floor for questions. One teacher, who is

visibly disgruntled about having to use RP, dominates the discussion and doesn't understand how RP are going to help teachers gain control over their students. The consultant does his best to assure the teacher that RP work, but the teacher seems unconvinced. I can see him shake his head and smile as he turns to a colleague sitting on his left as if to say, "Yeah, right. Who does this guy think he is?"

A few minutes later, the principal introduces me and asks for me to come up to the front of the room and explain my study. I'm nervous to speak, especially after witnessing the tense confrontation that transpired between the consultant and the teacher. I speak for 2 minutes (the amount of time I was promised). I finish and no one has any questions for me, so I hand out a sheet of paper with my contact information and a brief description of my study. Then the principle dismisses the faculty and they quickly head for the door. I smile and stand at the front of the room naively thinking someone will surely want to talk to me. But alas, they pass by me. I pretend not to be bothered by their obvious determination to not make eye contact with me, but they are really making me feel incredibly awkward and I'm sure my face is red. I'm so incredibly aware of my awkwardness that I slip out of the room before it becomes unbearable. I walk intently through the hallway as I struggle to keep my poise. I finally find the exit, find my car, and dig through my purse to find my keys. I sit in my car for a few minutes, watching teachers talk and laugh with each other. I feel like such an outsider right now, as if I'm not even living in the same world as the teachers I'm looking at. I can't help but hear my middle school self dishearteningly ask me, "Why didn't they like me? Did I not make a good first impression?"

Driving home from the faculty meeting, I thought about my middle school self and the challenge of keeping her subdued when I was in the school. Do the middle school teachers at RPMS ever confront their middle school self? Do they remember the pain of growing up? Or do they think their middle school self has nothing in common with their students? If so, does teachers' lack of connection cause them to succumb to the stereotypical adult these-kids-just-don't-understand attitude? Is this why they feel they have no control over students?

And thus begins my ethnographic journey to examine the implementation of restorative practices in a local middle school.

*   *   *   *   *

Justification

Traditionally, schools have turned to zero tolerance policies when dealing with student discipline and punishment. As Haft (1999) states, these policies "are designed to suspend or expel students from public schools for a single occurrence of a proscribed conduct" (p. 796). However, some scholars question whether expelling or suspending a child from school is effective. Skiba (2000) asserts that "there appears to be little evidence, direct or indirect, supporting the effectiveness of suspension or expulsion for improving student behavior or contributing to overall school safety" (p. 13). It is argued that zero tolerance policies are not only ineffective, but also harmful to students. Haft (1999) suggests that these practices alienate and isolate students from the community, which could lead to further misconduct and prohibit them from becoming productive democratic citizens. Critical pedagogy scholars especially find zero tolerance policies to

be problematic for teaching students to be democratic citizens. For instance, Giroux (2003) explains that zero tolerance policies militarize schools and as such these schools "lose their ability to provide students with the skills to cope with…the various symbolic and institutional forces that undermine political agency and democratic public life itself" (p. 563). More importantly, these policies jeopardize the promise of democracy because they create a generation of suspects (Giroux, 2009) and understandably, these youth have no trust in the system or in the adults who continue to maintain it (Giroux, 2006). As a result, these youth may be less likely to become active democratic citizens who believe they can transform their communities in the future.

Unfortunately, the ability of educational institutions to act as democratic spaces is being threatened (Giroux, 2009); however, scholars suggest that restorative practices (RP) may provide schools with a means to develop into democratic spaces. It is argued that the practices not only resolve conflicts in schools, but also teach students how to be responsible, democratic citizens that will contribute positively to their communities (Cavanaugh, 2007; Haft, 1999, Karp & Breslin, 2001; Morrison et al., 2005; Varnham, 2005) as they learn to take responsibility for their decisions and actions (Karp & Breslin, 2001). The practices developed from restorative justice (McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al., 2008), which has been used in the United States criminal justice system as an alternative to traditional methods of punishment for criminal offenders for approximately 35 years. However, RP programs have only gradually appeared in schools in the past two decades in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It appears these programs are becoming popular as schools recognize the ineffectiveness of zero tolerance

policies. As such, the democratization of schools seems promising. Nevertheless, although advocates of RP claim they teach students democratic values by encouraging student voice and empowerment in schools, it is unclear whether schools implementing RP consider student voice and empowerment as vital components and outcomes of the practices, or whether students perceive the practices as promoting their voice and empowerment.

Recently, administrators at an urban school district located near a large, Midwestern city introduced RP into its schools. For my study, I conducted an ethnography focusing on the district's middle school and its implementation of RP. In particular, my study was guided by the following questions: (a) how do the teachers, coordinators, and administrators differ on how they interpret and speak about RP? (b) How does this affect the implementation of the practices? (c) Does RP have the potential to promote student voice and empowerment? Additionally, I performed autoethnography (a/e) to illustrate how communicative acts within the school may shape students' identity, which may affect their voice and empowerment.

Overall, RP are relatively new to education contexts; however they have a great deal of support from scholars in the field of restorative justice and RP. Empirical research suggests that RP programs have positive effects on schools, but unfortunately the amount of research is relatively small; thus, there is still a lot to be known about their effects. Moreover, most studies focusing on the implementation of RP into schools have been performed in schools in countries other than the U.S. Therefore, since educational systems outside of the U.S. are different, schools in the U.S. likely face implementation

challenges unique to its educational structure. Thus, this study hopes to provide helpful information to schools deciding to implement RP in the future.

Dissertation Outline

Chapter 2, Restorative Practices, provides a literature review of restorative justice theory and RP. In particular, it discusses restorative justice in the criminal justice system, RP in education, RP programs' implementation process in schools, empirical research on the effects of RP programs in schools, and an explanation of the practices. Finally, it applies critical pedagogy concepts to RP.

Chapter 3, Methods, introduces my approach to and use of ethnography and a/e to better understand the implications of what is being communicated within a middle school implementing RP. The first section of the chapter explains the method of ethnography. Specifically, it indicates how scholars evaluate ethnography and the techniques I used to gather data for my ethnography (i.e., observations, interviews, student questionnaires, artifacts, and training evaluations). The second section explains the method of a/e. In particular, it identifies the benefits of using a/e with ethnography, how scholars evaluate a/e, and the techniques I used to recall stories to include in my a/e (i.e., chronicling the past, inventorying self, and visualizing self).

Chapter 4, Findings, highlights the findings from my ethnography, which relate to my proposed guiding questions but also reveal unforeseen themes that emerged from the data. It also incorporates my autoethnography, which illustrates how communicative acts within schools shape students' identity.

Chapter 5, Discussion, Future Directions, and Conclusion, discusses the implications of my findings and points out directions for future research in RP and CP. Finally, the chapter concludes with my final thoughts on the project.

CHAPTER 2: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative practices (RP) are becoming popular methods to resolve conflicts in schools. In large part, schools are turning to these practices as an alternative to zero tolerance policies. In this chapter, I first explain restorative justice (RJ) in the criminal justice system, which is the foundation for RP. Second, I discuss RP in education. Third, I explain the strategies scholars recommend for implementing an RP program into schools. Next, I highlight empirical research indicating the effects of RP in schools. Then I describe the processes of different RP before applying critical pedagogy to the practices to understand their limitations to providing a space that fosters student voice and empowerment. Finally, I conclude the chapter with my final thoughts on RP in schools.

Restorative Justice in the Criminal Justice System

RP developed from RJ (McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al., 2008), which has been used in the United States criminal justice system as an alternative to traditional methods of punishment for criminal offenders for approximately 35 years. Scholars suggest, however, that restorative approaches were used to settle criminal acts in many ancient civilizations (Braithwaite, 2002). Braithwaite (1999) contends, "Restorative justice has been the dominant model of criminal justice throughout most of human history for all the world's peoples" (p. 2). Yet, it was the mid-1970s when the RJ movement flourished in the U.S. (Zehr, 1990), and it was the 1990s when interest in RJ heightened (Morris, 2002) and its practice increased (Bazemore, 2001). Morris (2002) asserts that interest in RJ during this time was

in part as a response to the perceived ineffectiveness and high cost (in both human and financial terms) of conventional justice processes and in part as a response to the failure of conventional systems to hold offenders accountable in meaningful ways or to respond adequately to victims' needs and interests. (p. 598)

Since then, RJ has been praised by advocates for its ability to resolve conflicts and benefit those involved in conflicts and society in general.

Braithwaite (1999) and Roche (2006) indicate that in the late 1990s Tony Marshall provided the most acceptable definition of RJ. Marshall defined RJ as "a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offense come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future [e-mail, Marshall to McCold, 1997]" (Braithwaite, 1999, p. 5). RJ scholars commonly use this definition (Haft, 1999; O'Brien, 2007; Roche, 2006). Roche (2006) contends, however, that Marshall's definition lacks the core values guiding RJ. Marshall (1999) emphasizes some of the values Roche (2006) believes the definition ignores in a list of primary objectives for RJ:

- to attend fully to *victims' needs* – material, financial, emotional and social (including those personally close to the victim who may be similarly affected)
- to prevent re-offending by *reintegrating offenders* into the community
- to enable offenders to assume active *responsibility* for their actions
- to recreate a *working community* that supports the rehabilitation of offenders and victims and is active in preventing crime.
- to provide a means of *avoiding escalation* of legal justice and the associated costs and delays. (Marshall, 1999, p. 6)

Most RJ literature highlight similar objectives, but the last objective concerning the costs (e.g., the cost for a public lawyer for the offender) and delays of the legal system (e.g., the time necessary before a case may be brought to court) does not appear to be a popular objective; however, as Morris (2002) points out above it may be a reason for why RJ

became popular in the criminal justice system. Still, Marshall does not list RJ's objective of repairing the harm, although this could likely be understood as an aspect of attending to the victim's needs. RJ literature often describes repairing harm as an objective. Schweigert (1999), for example, points to this objective when defining RJ as "repairing the harm done to all who are harmed by offensive behaviour" (p. 168). O'Brien (2007) also notes repairing harm as an objective, but also includes reducing risk to community and citizens, and empowering the community, as objectives. In essence, traditional perspectives on resolving acts of crime focus on the punishment of offenders; however, RJ is unique because it focuses on the relationship between offenders and their community (Varnham, 2005) and how offenders can repair the harm caused by their crime (O'Brien, 2007).

Zehr (1990) argues that there are three necessary steps in the RJ process: (a) the victim(s) identifies her/his immediate needs and along with this, the offender takes responsibility for her/his actions and acknowledges her/his obligation to repair the harm, (b) the victim(s) and offender discuss the incident, and (c) the victim(s) and offender address how to repair the harm. Zehr explains that the process must inform and empower participants and thus, power and responsibility must be delegated to them and not the facilitator or mediator. As such, Ashworth (2002) suggests that the voices of the victim(s) and offender should dominate the conversation regarding the conflict. In general, the central themes of the process are empowering the community, dialogue on the crime and its effects on individuals and the community, and negotiation and

agreement between the community and the offender on ways to repair the harm (Ashworth, 2002).

Overall, RJ is a relatively new concept to the United States criminal justice system that redefines crime as an injury to those affected as opposed to an offense against the state (Schweigert, 1999). Though RJ's objectives may vary, they all seem to derive from the idea that those affected by crime are the most capable of resolving its effects. Therefore, the process is meant to empower members of the community, including the victim(s) and offender because their voice is heard in the justice process.

Restorative Practices in Education

There does not appear to be a clear difference between how RJ is defined in the criminal justice system and how it is defined in the educational system. In fact, scholars who discuss the use of RJ in education cite definitions by scholars of RJ in the criminal justice system (Casella, 2003; Hopkins, 2002). Furthermore, the process of RJ in both contexts includes repairing the harm done to victims, having offenders take responsibility for their actions, and reintegrating both parties back into the community. Yet, although the term *restorative justice* is primarily used in criminal justice literature, it is used interchangeably with *restorative practices* (RP) in much of the literature pertaining to education. Even so, McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al. (2008) attempt to make a distinction between RJ and RP by suggesting that RJ "involves professionals working exclusively with young people who offend. In RP in education, the whole school community, all school staff, pupils and sometimes parents, can be involved [Hopkins, 2004]," (p. 407). However, this is congruent with RP because professionals trained on the practices also

work with young people (students) who offend. Thus, this explanation insinuates that the difference between RJ and RP is merely the context to which they are applied; however, McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al. also suggest that RP emphasize the rebuilding of relationships more so than RJ since criminals may not have necessarily had a relationship with their victims beforehand. Still, Morrison (2007) suggests the term *restorative practices* emerged only because some thought the term *restorative justice* had a negative connotation when used in education. Karp and Breslin (2001) note in their study that a school used the term restorative practices because justice can never be fully attained. Nevertheless, both concepts (RJ and RP) are discussed in the context of education. For the sake of clarity, I use the term restorative practices (RP) when discussing them in the context of education.

RP programs are considered to be a type of conflict resolution education (CRE). CRE began to take shape in the 1960s and 1970s (Jones, 2003; Smith-Sanders & Harter, 2007) and it is used to

> [model] and [teach], in culturally meaningful ways, a variety of processes and skills that help address individual, interpersonal, and institutional conflicts, and create safe and welcoming communities. These processes, practices and skills help individuals understand conflict processes and empower[s] them to use communication and creative thinking to build relationships and manage and resolve conflicts fairly and peacefully. (Association for Conflict Resolution, 2002, p. 1, as cited in Jones, 2004, pp. 233-234)

While CRE appeared in the 1960s and 1970s, RP have only gradually appeared in schools in the past two decades in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, perhaps following on the heels of RJ's popularity. According to Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005), the first school to implement RP was in Queensland,

Australia in 1994.[1] Still, ten years ago Karp and Breslin (2001) referred to RP as an

abstract idea, especially in the U.S., indicating that such programs were rather rare at the

time.

Today most schools in the U.S. rely on zero tolerance policies. These policies

"are designed to suspend or expel students from public schools for a single occurrence of

a proscribed conduct" (Haft, 1999, p. 796). RP appeared in schools because zero

tolerance policies were not (and in many cases, still are not) proving to prevent

misconduct or protect victims (Varnham, 2005). Karp and Breslin (2001) contend that

authoritarian controls such as zero tolerance policies may actually increase delinquent

behavior. On the other hand, scholars claim that RP are more beneficial than zero

tolerance and have the potential to create safe schools (Cavanaugh, 2007; Varnham,

2005), and lower expulsion and suspension rates (Karp & Breslin, 2001; Varnham, 2005)

without resorting to student exclusion.

More importantly, it is also believed that zero tolerance policies lack the ability to

transform students into socially responsible, democratic citizens (Haft, 1999), especially

when students are given punishments that exclude them from the school community

(Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne, 2005). Morrison et al. (2005) note that when schools

exclude students they tend to manifest anti-institutional identities, preventing them from

becoming responsible citizens. In contrast, it is noted that CR programs can foster

democratic ideals in schools (Bickmore, 2001; Smith-Sanders & Harter, 2007), such as

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[1] Morrison et al. point to Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) who summarize the findings
from a study sponsored by Education Queensland that examined the effects of RJ
conferences in the school.

responsible citizenship (Bickmore, 2001) and dialogue (Smith-Sanders & Harter, 2007). Smith-Sanders and Harter (2007) suggest that democratic ideologies underlie these programs as they provide an opportunity for students "to voice their ideas and acknowledge and respect diversity" (p. 111). Likewise, scholars suggest RP programs have the potential to teach students how to be responsible, democratic citizens that will contribute positively to their communities (Cavanaugh, 2007; Haft, 1999, Karp & Breslin, 2001; Morrison et al., 2005; Varnham, 2005) as they learn to take responsibility for their decisions and actions (Karp & Breslin, 2001). Cavanaugh (2009) also proclaims that RP "[provide] students…with a space to voice their emotions and concerns and listen to the voices of others who had been affected" (p. 59). Since they offer this opportunity, RP can empower students and their community (Cavanaugh, 2009; Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2006). In fact, Hopkins (2002) indicates that student empowerment is one of the values embedded in the RP paradigm and Morrison et al. (2005) claim that student and institutional empowerment is an objective of RP.

Dialogue is a key aspect emphasized by some RP scholars (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; Morrison et al., 2005), but in general it is indirectly noted in literature as occurring during RP since it is indicative of voice and empowerment. Smith-Sanders and Harter (2007) point out that the ideologies and practices of CR programs often contain dialogic themes. Thus, as the offender explains her/his side of the story for why the conflict occurred and as the victim expresses how s/he was affected by the offender's behavior, they engage in a dialogue that allows them to understand one another and to feel understood; hence, their voices exist within that

space because they feel acknowledged. Moreover, by discussing ways to repair the harm, they resolve the conflict, which provides them with a sense of empowerment because they feel capable of solving their problems in the future. As Morrison (2006) notes,

> In the context of harmful behaviors, these practices seek to empower victims, offenders, and communities to take responsibility for themselves, and in doing so, for others. Through empowerment, the multiplicity of voices within communities raises [*sic*] and healthy deliberative democracies emerge. (p. 373)

These democratic spaces emerge because students become part of the decision making process, instead of merely being passive observers (Karp & Breslin, 2001). Moreover, through this dialogue, participants build relationships with others and their community, which for some scholars appears to be a benefit of RP (for example, Morrison, 2006) and for others, an objective (for instance, Karp & Breslin, 2001). Nevertheless, they feel a connection with their community and thus, are more likely to consider how their behavior affects others in their community. Therefore, students may take what they learn from RP and use them to actively participate in the communities they belong to in the future.

Scholars and advocates of RP proclaim that the practices lend themselves as democratic spaces where students have the opportunity to engage in dialogue about their conflict and about ways to resolve it; thus, RP teaches them to become democratic citizens. Yet, for any of this to occur, RP must be successfully implemented into schools to effectively provide students with the means to engage their voice and deliberate on their conflict so that they are empowered to resolve their conflicts democratically. In other words, RP's effectiveness depends on how they are implemented. Therefore, in the next section I discuss the implementation of RP programs.

Implementation

Although scholars suggest that RP benefit schools and communities, the implementation of these programs determine if they are in fact beneficial. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) suggest that school leaders (e.g., administrators or any school personnel advocating implementing the practices) must enact five stages to effectively implement an RP program into a school. According to Blood and Thorsborne (2005), school leaders must

1. Gain the commitment of administrators, faculty, and staff.

2. Develop a vision with the school community and establish clear goals and ways to achieve them.

3. Create responsive and effective practices with the school community and support and maintain these practices with training.

4. Adopt a whole school approach to RP where the language of school personnel and school policy exhibits the values of RP, and manage the tension among administrators, faculty, and staff caused by the transition.

5. Encourage open, honest, respectful, and supportive professional relationships, use RP to manage problems and conflicts between school employees, and engage in behavior that is consistent with the philosophy of RP.

Blood and Thorsborne propose that this last stage must be strived for during all the other stages to sustain program implementation and thus, similar to the benefits of RP, dialogue and relationship-building appear to be necessary throughout their implementation.

Similar to these stages, Kane et al. (2007) also found that schools that seemed to be the most effective at implementing RP established clear goals, were committed to building positive relationships, and focused on a positive, child-centered atmosphere. However, the researchers concluded that a variety of approaches were applied among all the schools studied and not one of these approaches seemed more or less effective than others. Furthermore, Kane et al., note that there was evidence of culture change among schools that had school administrators with a strong commitment to RP. The Youth Justice Board of England and Wales (2004) recommends similar implementation strategies noted by Blood and Thorsborne (2005), which include developing a clear understanding of RP and a commitment to the practices, employing a whole school approach, and building relationships within and outside the school. The Youth Justice Board of England and Wales (2004) also suggests that staff should have access to other training opportunities, know what types of RP are available and what to expect from them, and be kept up to date on the program. Moreover, students and parents should receive written information on the program and newsletters to remind them of the practices (Youth Justice Board of England and Wales, 2004). Also, Morrison et al. (2005) refer to stage 2 listed above and warn schools that it is important to communicate its goals so that the school community knows if they have achieved these goals.

Many scholars insist on applying a whole school approach to RP (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Hopkins, 2004; Morrison et al., 2005; Shaw, 2007). This approach suggests that for RP to be effective the culture has to accept RP and, as such, a change in school culture is necessary (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Scholars suggest that it needs to

be transformed into a restorative culture (Hopkins, 2004) or a culture of care (Cavanaugh, 2008). Cavanaugh (2008) explains that in a culture of care teachers strive for healthy relationships with their students and thus, it is a favorable environment for using RP. Hopkins (2004) insists that schools must instill restorative values when employing a whole school approach. Hopkins's list is lengthy, but some of the values are mutual respect, trust, openness, empowerment, connectedness, acknowledgment, listening, and sharing ideas. This list demonstrates the significance of relationships, dialogue, voice, and the democratic ideology embedded in RP. Moreover, Morrison et al. (2005) suggest that faculty, staff, and administrators must develop a common language that complements a restorative culture. Therefore, they must "[move] away from using blaming, stigmatising, excusing, rescuing, helpless language and move towards more relational language," (p. 349). Consequently, RP programs appear to demand a significant amount of time and energy from schools. They cannot merely use RP as a reaction to bad behavior (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

Understandably, the arduous task of transforming school culture is a challenge within itself; however, there are other challenges schools may face when implementing an RP program. For instance, they are often met with resistance because RP conflict with traditional perspectives on schooling, especially in regards to discipline and control (McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al., 2008). Karp and Breslin (2001) note that school communities have been "socialized in a culture of retribution, and its language, even veneration, permeates all sanctioning processes" (p. 269). Thus, it is understandable why Hopkins (2002) and Shaw (2007) emphasize the significance of support in the

implementation of RP because policies illustrating zero tolerance have been a part of schools' culture for so long; hence, it may be difficult to change the attitudes of those who have relied on these policies in the past.

The time needed to implement RP can also make these programs challenging (Hopkins, 2002; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Shaw, 2007). It can take years before a school witnesses the benefits of RP. For example, Karp and Breslin (2001) note that it can take 1 to 3 years before a school sees the benefits of using RP; Shaw (2007) suggests that it may take up to 4 years. Still, Blood and Thorsborne (2005) suggest 3 to 5 years is necessary for schools to sustain change. Thus, it may be difficult for schools to sustain a program long enough to see its benefits, especially those with unstable funding. Jones (2003) also suggests that training for conflict resolution programs can involve several in-service days for teachers and implementing the practices into curriculum can take an entire semester or school year. Shaw (2007) found that it took time for faculty and staff "to develop an understanding of what is restorative and what is not, how these practices fit in the school curriculum, and what they look like in the classroom and on the playground" (p. 133). Furthermore, when RP are used they can take a lot of time out of the school day (Hopkins, 2002). For instance, Cavanaugh (2009) found that teachers did not always have time during class to use RP. As Hopkins (2004) notes, "Teachers' performance is measured on their test and examination results, not on the extent to which they are kind, caring human beings, developing the rounded personalities of their students" (p. 178). As a result, this may make it difficult to persuade teachers, staff, and administrators that RP are worth classroom time. Nonetheless, while there are challenges

to implementing an RP program, I discuss in the next section the empirical research revealing the effects of these programs. Their findings suggest that there is some indication that RP have positive effects.

Empirical Research on the Effects of RP Programs in Schools

There are few studies on the implementation of RP programs and their effects on schools. This is likely due to the fact that it takes a considerable amount of time for schools to witness any significant effects of a program for them to be measured by researchers. It can also necessitate a lot of funding and resources to research RP's effects on an entire school. Furthermore, since RP are not as widely accepted as traditional approaches to discipline it may be difficult for researchers to find schools implementing an RP program. Nevertheless, there are some studies that reveal the effects of RP on students and the school community in general. Though I do not elaborate on every finding from these studies, I do highlight the findings most relevant to my dissertation.

First, it seems RP may have the potential to change student behavior. Research indicates that RP may lower re-offending rates. Education Queensland[2] (1996) reveals that 83% of offenders did not re-offend (as cited in Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001). Mirsky and Wachtel's (2007) follow-up study to McCold's (2002) study found that re-offense rates remained low after two years after implementation of RP. These two studies illustrate that RP may have the ability to change student behavior. Research also suggests that RP programs may decrease certain types of behavior in schools. For instance, they have been shown to decrease student behaviors such as bullying, verbal

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[2] Much of the research done on the implementation of RP programs has occurred not in the United States but in the United Kingdom and Australia.

threats, physical assault (e.g., hitting and kicking), and racist name-calling (Youth Justice Board of England and Wales, 2004). Yet, it is unclear if RP can reduce suspension and expulsion rates. The Youth Justice Board of England and Wales (2004) indicates minor decreases in exclusion rates (e.g., suspension and expulsion); however, there were not enough schools in the study for researchers to conclude that this was due to RP. Kane et al. (2007) also found that schools reduced their discipline referrals and exclusion rates, but again, the researchers were unable to make a definitive conclusion that this was directly related to the implementation of the program. Nonetheless, lower suspension and expulsion rates do not necessarily indicate that student behavior has changed; however, schools often refer to their number of suspensions and expulsions to determine if they have a student behavioral problem.

Second, there is research demonstrating that most students have positive feelings about their experience during conferences, which is a type of restorative practice that I explain later. For instance, some studies point out that many students felt faculty and staff were fair (Education Queensland, 1996, as cited in Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; Kane et al., 2007; Youth Justice Board of England and Wales, 2004). Kane et al. (2007) found that a significant number of students felt that faculty and staff listened to both sides of the story. Also, Education Queensland (1996) suggests many students had a chance to have their say, were understood by others, got what they needed out of the conference, and felt they were treated with respect (as cited in Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001). The same study reveals that after a conference, a significant number of victims felt safer and offenders felt that they had a closer relationship with other participants. During the

conference, many offenders felt cared about, forgiven, and that they were able to make a fresh start.

Finally, research indicates the effects of RP programs on faculty and staff. The Youth Justice Board of England and Wales (2004) found no indication of a change in faculty and staff views on the effectiveness of exclusion (in fact, most of them were still in favor of it) and no difference in their perception of the school as being a safe place to work. Also, 43% of all faculty and staff knew nothing or very little of the practices at the end of the study and furthermore, 7% of those that stated that they knew a great deal about the practices were significantly incorrect about what they entailed. However, teachers noted that they lost less teaching time due to student disruptions. In contrast to this study, Education Queensland (1996, as cited in Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001) found that 92% of schools altered their views on punitive approaches to discipline and adopted a more restorative approach. However, 2 years later, schools were still using suspension and expulsion in instances when an RP conference seemed inappropriate, an offender and her/his supporters exhibited a negative attitude, or a positive outcome did not seem likely. Similarly, other studies have indicated that schools use RP in conjunction with zero tolerance policies (Kane et al., 2007; Youth Justice Board of England and Wales, 2004). Though there is relatively little empirical research on the effects of RP programs, the lack thereof suggests that there is still a lot that scholars do not know about the their effects on schools.

Explanation of the Practices

Wachtel (2000) argues that responses to wrongdoing are typically either punitive or permissive. However, Wachtel asserts that viewing punishment in this way is limiting and we should instead look through a "social control window." Wachtel's Social Control Window model identifies four different responses to wrongdoing: punitive, permissive, neglectful, and restorative. He differentiates each by the amount of control (limit-setting/discipline) and support (encouragement/nurturing) given during each response. Applied in a school setting, a punitive response is one with high control and low support (e.g., suspension and expulsion). For instance, a student receives little encouragement, but definite limits are set. A permissive response is one with low control and high support. For example, a student receives a lot of encouragement, but the child continues the wrongdoing because there are little, if any, limits set. A neglectful response is one with low control and low support. Basically, nothing is done (i.e., no encouragement is given and no limits are set). A restorative response, however, is one with high control and high support. In other words, there is encouragement, but definite limits are set. Wachtel states,

> We can summarize these four responses to wrongdoing with a few simple words – *not, for, to,* and *with.* When we are punitive…we are only doing something *to* them. When we are permissive, we are doing everything *for* them, but asking little in return. When we are neglectful, we simply are *not* doing. But when we are restorative, we are doing things *with* them and involving them, along with victims, family, and friends, directly in the process. (p. 88)

Hence, RP are designed to resolve conflicts *with* students and are used to repair harm caused by wrongdoing and/or to prevent misbehavior from occurring in the future.

According to McGrath (2003-2004) RP vary between informal and formal

practices. There are many different types of RP; there can also be many different names for a particular practice (e.g., peacemaking circles have been referred to by some RP practitioners as restorative circles, friendship circles, problem-solving circles, healing circles, and circle sentencing). I only focus on four types, which are discussed in my ethnography: affective statements, affective questions, peacemaking circles, and conferences. Affective statements and affective questions are considered to be less formal than peacemaking circles and conferences. Furthermore, scholars and practitioners have described these practices in a variety of ways. Thus, they are described below by how they were described by members of the school I observed and interviewed, but they are also supported by RP scholars' definitions and descriptions.

There are specific terms that need to be briefly defined before describing these types of RP. First, the person who is harmed by an incident is referred to as the *victim*. Second, the person who is accused of doing wrong is called the *offender*. Some scholars use the term wrongdoer, but for consistency, I use the term offender. Finally, the person who facilitates a peacemaking circle or a conference is referred to as the *facilitator* in this section because this term is a general term that can be used to describe anyone (e.g., a teacher, staff, administrator, or RP coordinator) leading one of these practices.

Affective statements/questions. Asking affective statements and questions (a.k.a., restorative questions) are the most informal practice among the four discussed in this section. They can be said or asked immediately after an incident occurs. Affective statements communicate emotion to the receiver in a positive way ("What is Restorative Practices," n.d.). Statements like, "I feel disrespected when you say things like that to

me," or "It upsets me when you destroy my things," are examples of affective statements. Affective questions allow offenders and victims to reflect on a conflict. O'Connell (2007) lists two sets of questions teachers, staff, and administrators can ask students when a conflict occurs. The first set of questions is asked in response to challenging behavior (e.g., if a student punches another student) and it allows offenders (e.g., the student who punched the other student) to think about what they did and how to repair the harm. O'Connell indicates that the questions are asked in the following order:

- "What happened?

- What were you thinking at the time?

- What have you thought about since the incident?

- Who do you think has been affected by your actions?

- What do you think you need to do to make things right?" (para. 7)

O'Connell notes that the second set of questions is asked to those who have been harmed (e.g., the student who was punched) by an incident so they can explain how the incident made them feel and what they think should be done to make them feel better. O'Connell explains that the questions are asked in the following order:

- "What did you think when you realized what had happened?

- What impact has this incident had on you and others?

- What has been the hardest thing for you?

- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?" (para. 7)

Traditionally, a teacher resolves a conflict by asking offenders, "Why did you do that?" and their response is often, "I don't know," which causes the conversation to end. If any

resolution occurs, offenders are told to tell the victim that they are sorry even if they are not. Also, traditionally, victims are not given a chance to express their feelings about the incident. Asking restorative questions, however, is supposed to encourage conversation between the victim and the offender.

Peacemaking circles. Peacemaking circles (or problem-solving circles as Hopkins, 2004, refers to them) are efficient when a problem needs to be discussed as a group, a specific conflict needs to be addressed, or if something happened that has caused stress or harm to a large group (Hopkins, 2004). These should not be confused with conferences (described below), which are more formal and structured. Peacemaking circles are more informal and they can often be based around a problem that does not have a clear victim or offender, but is contributing to conflicts in the school. For instance, a peacemaking circle can address issues such as gossiping, which may not have any clear offenders or victims because everyone is contributing to the problem. Usually, people in the community who feel they are affected by the problem are invited to participate in the circle. During this practice, everyone sits in a circle and an object (e.g., a talking stick) is passed around and only those with the object can talk, which prevents participants from talking over each other.

Conferences. A conference is a meeting that is held so that a victim(s) and an offender can discuss possible ways to resolve a conflict. According to the Youth Justice Board of England and Wales (2004) the victim and offender talk about what happened before the incident and how it affected them after the incident and furthermore, how the offender will take responsibility for the harm. A teacher, staff member, administrator, or

a person in a position specifically designated to facilitate RP can facilitate these conferences. They are often scripted and they ask the victim and offender a series of questions about the incident, which are similar to the restorative questions (see Appendix A). Often, at the end of a conference, contracts stating the criteria for the offender to repair the harm caused by the offense, which are agreed upon by the offender and the victim, are created. If the offender does not follow the criteria, she/he may endure consequences such as suspension or expulsion.

There are two different types of conferences: full and impromptu. The differences between these conferences are the type of people invited and the amount of time between the incident and the conference. During a full conference, friends and family of those harmed or accused, and/or members of the community who feel they were affected by the incident, are invited to participate. An impromptu conference tends to occur within 48 hours of the incident and only the victim, the offender, and the facilitator participate (McGrath, 2003-2004).

As I note in this section, there are several restorative practices. To be clear, the practices at the school that I observed for my ethnography used affective statements/questions, peacemaking circles, and conferences. In the next section, I use critical pedagogy as a framework for understanding these practices, and to highlight their potential limitations to nurturing student voice and empowerment in schools.

Application of Critical Pedagogy Concepts

For some, there is not one particular way to define critical pedagogy (CP) and to do so would go against the philosophy behind CP. Yet, there are certain explanations of

CP that I agree with; it is necessary to discuss these to add clarity to the theoretical perspective that I apply to my ethnography. To put it simply, CP is a teaching philosophy that stems from critical theory, which seeks to demystify the structures making up society and culture in order to uncover contradictions that maintain and create injustices. For me, CP derives from the idea that the institution of education in general perpetuates and legitimizes the social injustices represented in the status quo (Burbules, 1986). Some of these social injustices develop from, for example, race, class, and gender biases, which cause an imbalance of power in the relationships within schools. Because of these power relations, the voices that support the dominant ideologies within our society are legitimized, while the voices of the marginalized are silenced; thus, this maintains the status quo. As such, I think of CP as a way to deliberate and negotiate social injustices and thereby, transform schools into democratic institutions where marginalized students can become empowered (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; McLaren, 1998). For this reason, I also understand CP as "committed to the imperative of transforming the larger social order in the interest of justice, equality, democracy, and human freedom" (Biesta, 1998, p. 499). Furthermore, my stance on CP is that it recognizes schools as sites where students can problematize their world and thus, deliberate and negotiate the contradictions and constraints of dominant ideologies (Giroux, 1988). In this sense, schools act as an opportunity for student empowerment, where their voice is acknowledged as significant to the transformation of the world in which they live. Therefore, I recognize CP as founded on the idea that schools are vital to the formation of democratic citizens; thus, schools have a responsibility to demonstrate democratic values.

Therefore, similar to RP scholars, some critical pedagogues argue for the democratization of school culture (Cho, 2010) where students' voices are acknowledged and students are empowered because they are learning to participate in their world. Still, in order for their voice to be acknowledged and for them to become empowered, there must be a democratic space provided. Space in this instance does not merely mean a physical space (e.g., a school building), which is obviously necessary, but rather an opportunity where the student feels s/he can share her/his opinions, ideas, or concerns; a space where voice and empowerment can occur.

Unfortunately, the ability of educational institutions to act as democratic spaces is being threatened (Giroux, 2009); however, RP scholars suggest that RP may provide schools with a means to develop into democratic spaces. Yet, these scholars insist that a transformation of the schools' culture needs to occur before they can offer a democratic space where students can engage in dialogue and be part of the decision making process for resolving their conflicts. Nevertheless, the democratization of school culture appears to be at the heart of RP. As such, it is appropriate to apply CP as a theoretical framework to explore RP's potential to create a space for student voice and empowerment through the implementation of RP programs into schools. Furthermore, some of the critiques of RP complement some of the concepts and ideas brought forth by CP; therefore, they are discussed by focusing on their relation and relevancy to RP. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that I offer these not as hypotheses for my ethnography, but as potential limitations to RP's ability to provide a space for voice and empowerment. Therefore, this section can be thought of as an extension of the literature review on RP.

RP does not clearly define voice and empowerment. Though RP scholars suggest that voice and empowerment are outcomes of the practices, these concepts are inadequately defined in the literature. Nevertheless, some CP scholars offer definitions for voice and empowerment.

Voice. Simon (1987) defines voice as "attempts through which students and teachers actively engage in dialogue. Voice then is related to the discursive means whereby teachers and students attempt to make themselves present and to define themselves as active authors of their own world" (p. 377). Thus, voice, in this instance, does not refer to the mere act of speaking or having access to speak because voice relies on dialogue and thus, it is reliant on others. Freire (1970/2007) contends that dialogue is an encounter between people, "mediated by the world in order to name the world" (p. 88). To be clear, this dialogue cannot occur unless there is trust; however, this trust cannot be based on power. For instance, I cannot simply trust others just because they tell me that they are authorities of some form and thus, they "know better." This suggests that their voice is meaningful and my voice (my opinions, my feelings, etc.) is not and thus, in the communication that transpires my speech is irrelevant; therefore, I am silenced and my voice does not exist in that space.

Students have the ability to name their world and thereby, they have the ability to transform their world. However, this transformation can only occur when a student's voice is present through dialogue. As such, voices are acknowledged when dialogue occurs because it is then when students and teachers can deconstruct messages and create new meaning(s) for these messages, which essentially transforms their social reality

(Freire, 1970/2007). Thus, while students have the ability to transform their world, the extent to which they can do this depends on the extent to which others acknowledge their voice. While this definition makes voice seem reliant on others and thus, disempowering, CP scholars such as McLaren (2003) view knowledge as a social construction. Therefore, it is understood that to construct knowledge through dialogue requires both parties to be reliant on each other.

Empowerment. For some critical pedagogues, the idea of empowerment is one of the central principles of CP. Bastian, Fruchter, Gittell, Greer, and Haskins (as cited in Simon, 1987) define empowerment as "the opportunity and means to effectively participate and share authority" (p. 374). It is argued then that when students realize they are capable of transforming their world, they will feel empowered and thus, begin to break free from oppressive forces. When students name their world, the hope is that they feel a sense of empowerment. As such, not naming is essentially *dis*empowering because it does not allow students to discuss problems that affect them every day, therefore they do not get a chance to feel as though they are able to transform their world. CP suggests that most traditional methods of teaching do not empower students because these methods treat students as receptacles waiting to be filled with information provided by the teacher (Freire, 1970/2007). Teachers merely ask the student to regurgitate "facts." Freire refers to this as the *banking education.* He insists that this method of teaching "will never propose to students that they critically consider reality" (p. 74). As a result, students are not encouraged to name their world. Furthermore, since this method implies

that "a person is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others" (p. 75), students never view themselves as actors who can transform the world.

In general, RP scholars seem to assume that student voice and empowerment are outcomes of the practices because they provide a physical space (e.g., a conference or peacemaking circle) with proper resources (e.g., trained facilitators/coordinators or teachers, well-designed and scripted questions, etc.) for students to talk about the conflict and be part of the decision-making process. Yet, Fine (1991) notes that student voice is often constricted in schools because it is believed that their naming will foster negative behaviors. Fine states that when students are restricted from naming it disconnects their experiences from the educational process. Expulsion and suspension silence students who challenge authority by removing them from the school (Stevenson & Ellsworth, 1993). As such, the dominant culture prevails and the existing power imbalances remain unchanged. Therefore, RP scholars' assumption that voice and empowerment will occur through the practices is problematic because it may cause schools to unintentionally recreate the type of culture RP are meant to transform: an undemocratic culture where voices are restrained.

RP ignores issue of power. Freire (1970/2007) asserts that pedagogy must be "forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed" (p. 48). Critical pedagogues maintain that doing things *for* students perpetuates unequal power relations within the classroom because it implies that students do not have knowledge to contribute. The teacher is then viewed as the one-who-knows-all. If, as Cho (2010) points out, knowledge is power, then the teacher is perceived as having power over the student who "knows nothing," creating

unequal power between the student and teacher. To be clear, this is not to say that critical pedagogues view power as inherently negative or something that should be eliminated in a relationship. No one is ever entirely without power, just as no one ever fully attains power. As Fassett and Warren (2007) note, power is fluid. For instance, the power displayed in a conversation involving two people fluctuates between them. Nevertheless, when this fluctuation ceases (e.g., a teacher consistently displays more power over the student than the student over the teacher) there is an imbalance of power, which may cause one of the people to feel disempowered.

Interestingly, Wachtel (2000) also suggests that restorative approaches attempt to work with the student, not to or for them. Therefore, it appears he may agree with Freire (1970/2007). In fact, most RP scholars agree with this sentiment as they disagree with zero tolerance policies, which are done *to* the student (e.g. suspension or expulsion). However, while RP scholars may understand suspension and expulsion as displays of power, it seems RP are not designed for students to acknowledge this power and how it affects them, or for that matter, power relations in general. Consequently, it is suggested that RP may ignore issues of power, class, gender, and race that may influence student conflict (McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al., 2008). For instance, the conference and affective questions scripts that facilitators often rely on only allow students to address their thoughts during the incident and the effects of the incident. As such, it is questionable if the use of a script allows for a space that stimulates dialogue on issues of power. Secondly, schools do not often address how adults and policies contribute to student conflict (Opffer, 1997). RP scholar, Hopkins (2004), explains, "The reactions

[students] get from adults can exacerbate the conflict. School records of disruptive incidents do not often record the possible contribution of the adults to any escalation of an incident" (p. 56). McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al. (2008) also note that when schools use the practices in a way that mimics their use in the criminal justice system, they do not take into consideration the power relation between adults and students. Such power relations can create an environment where the teacher/school is perceived as always right and the student is perceived as always wrong. However, RP may be well suited to address power exhibited in relationships. For instance, Meyer (2008) explains that educators can help transform school culture by "helping students learn to interrogate daily discourses, to explore the historical specificity of certain terminologies, and to understand how language is used to control identities and behaviours [and this] will offer [students] a different way of seeing the world" (p. 43). Nonetheless, for the most part, it does not seem as though RP inherently allow for students to critically analyze how power influences conflicts. As a result, this may depend on an adult's facilitation style during RP. Therefore, RP may not allow for students to critically reflect on power relations and how to transform these relations affecting their world.

RP language contradicts their objectives. Since RP developed from RJ, some scholars and practitioners use the same terminology that is used in the criminal justice system, which is problematic since RP aim to repair harm and reintegrate students into the school community; through these objectives, it appears RP may avoid the harmful effects of labeling (Youth Justice Board of England and Wales, 2004). Nevertheless, scholars and practitioners use the terms *offender* and *victim* to identify students

participating in RP, and this language may prevent them from teaching students how to be democratic citizens and from nurturing student voice and empowerment. First, when students are labeled as offenders or victims, it can demonize and criminalize students (McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al., 2008) and this may cause them to feel isolated from their school community, which is similar to the effects of exclusion. As a result, students may manifest an anti-institutional identity, exerting anti-social behaviors and thus, preventing them from becoming responsible citizens involved in future decision-making processes (Morrison et al., 2005). Therefore, RP's use of these labels contradicts their objective to teach students how to be democratic citizens. Alongside this, these labels can act as self-fulfilling prophecies. As teachers and researchers, we may "create the phenomena we observe, through our assumptions, values, past experiences, language choices, and so on" (Fassett & Warren, 2007, p. 50). For example, if a student has been in several altercations with students or teachers in the past, an RP facilitator may be more likely to label this student as an offender even if it is unclear which student may have instigated the conflict and less likely to view the student as worthy of listening to. Consequently, students labeled as offenders may be silenced during RP and the negative connotation of being identified as such may influence how others view them afterward. Also, students labeled as victims may be re-victimized, creating an imbalance of power between them and their offender and thus, they may feel disempowered (Haft, 1999). As such, these labels prohibit RP from fostering student voice and empowerment. Overall, these labels counteract many of RP goals.

RP may mirror zero tolerance policies. CP scholars like Giroux (2009) contend

that adults have become increasingly suspicious and distrusting of students in general.

Giroux states,

> Historically, it has become commonplace for youth to be treated equivocally by
> adults as both a threat and a promise; the ambiguity that characterizes this mix of
> fear and hope has given way within the last 20 years to a much more one-sided
> and insidious view of young people as lazy, mindless, irresponsible, and even
> dangerous. (p. 71)

Hence, adults have become biased against youth culture as a whole. Adults in education

exhibit this distrust through zero tolerance policies, as such policies exclude "dangerous"

students from the presence of those perceived as "good." Thus, these policies create a

generation of suspects (Giroux, 2009) and understandably, these youth have no trust in

the system or in the adults who continue to maintain it (Giroux, 2006). RP scholars also

believe these policies to be harmful to students, and it is for this reason why some stress

the necessity for a whole school approach to RP. Inherently, for such an approach to

exist trust must be restored in schools that formerly relied heavily on zero tolerance

policies. If not, then these schools may foster the same negative effects created by zero

tolerance policies and the program will simply serve as a means to reinvent the (broken)

wheel the practices were meant to fix. Be that as it may, research on the effects of RP

programs reveal that many schools still rely on zero tolerance policies after they

implement an RP program (Education Queensland, 1998, as cited in Cameron &

Thorsborne, 2001; Kane et. al, 2007; Youth Justice Board of England and Wales, 2004)

even though these policies seem to contradict the values of RP. However, although many

RP scholars criticize zero tolerance, not all scholars believe that RP should necessarily

take its place. Roche (2006) states, "the evidence suggests that restorative justice works best when it is used in conjunction with the threat of tougher enforcement" (p. 235). Roche implies that this statement is relevant to RJ in any context, including schools. While there may be research supporting this claim, it suggests that those applying RJ or RP must decide in which situations they should or should not apply the practices, which Roche suggests is an issue that scholars still need to determine. It also suggests that the practices only work with certain types of people, which essentially disempowers certain members of the community and mirrors one of the problems with zero tolerance policies. For instance, the school community may perceive recurring offenders as unsuitable for RP, while students who have never had a conflict (or a conflict requiring severe disciplinary measures) in the school may be perceived as suitable candidates. But this is not any different than schools administering zero tolerance policies as they exclude the "bad" kids and retain the "good" kids. Thus, such a distinction suggests that some students are worthy of RP, but others are "too far gone" to be helped; in other words, some voices should be listened to, while others should remain silent. Therefore, suspension and expulsion contradict the democratic values of RP (Hopkins, 2004). Nevertheless, Haft (1999) suggests that excluding students may be necessary if everything else, including RP, has failed. Interestingly, Haft also warns that offenders should not be coerced into participating in RP because participation needs to be voluntary. Other scholars second voluntary participation (Drewery, 2004; Hopkins, 2004). Hopkins (2004) points out that voluntary participation is necessary because the process should empower participants. She also argues that coercion is also incompatible

with the democratic values of RP. However, if expulsion and suspension are possibilities, then they may in fact coerce identified offenders into participating in RP. Essentially, this coercion disempowers students because they may feel like they really do not have a choice, especially those who may not want to participate in RP or feel that it is pointless to participate because they are already silenced by the assumption that they are indeed the offender. Moreover, zero tolerance policies may prohibit schools from transforming into a restorative culture, which scholars suggest is necessary for RP to be effective (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Hopkins, 2004; Morrison et al., 2005). In fact, McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al. (2008) found that schools limit their ability to transform school atmosphere when they incorporate RP with authoritarian disciplinary measures. This is understandable since these measures can create a culture of fear rather than care (Karp and Breslin, 2001). Thus, schools using suspension and expulsion in combination with RP may be unsuccessful in creating the environment necessary for RP to be effective.

In general, these critiques indicate that RP may be limited in providing a space for student voice and empowerment. The critiques reveal that RP literature have unclear definitions for voice and empowerment; thus, this makes it difficult to determine what scholars mean when they use these terms. Also, they appear to ignore issues of power and that the language RP scholars and practitioners use may disempower students. Finally, if schools use zero tolerance policies with RP then they may cause the same harmful effects they were meant to resolve.

Conclusion

Restorative practices (RP) are becoming popular methods to resolve conflicts in schools. In large part, schools are turning to these practices as an alternative to zero tolerance policies. RP scholars note that the benefits of using these practices in schools include teaching students to be democratic citizens through dialogue that allows them to be part of the decision-making process on resolving their conflicts. Thus, scholars believe that RP provide a space for student voice and empowerment. However, scholars recommend certain strategies for schools implementing an RP program so that the practices are effective. Scholars also point out challenges for the implementation process as well. Nonetheless, empirical research suggests that RP programs have positive effects on schools, but unfortunately the amount of research is relatively small; thus, there is still a lot to be known about their effects. There are different types of RP, which include affective statements/questions, peacemaking circles, and conferences, but overall the practices are not met without criticism. The application of critical pedagogy, as it emphasizes similar ideas and concepts as the literature pertaining to RP, sheds light on their potential limitations to foster student voice and empowerment. Since these appear to be key in students' ability to develop into democratic citizens, I focus my ethnography on RP's ability to provide a space for student voice and empowerment. Moreover, because scholars insist schools must transform their culture into one that is conducive to the values of RP, my use of ethnography is appropriate as it allows me to look at the culture as a whole. Therefore, in the next chapter, I discuss ethnography as a method and

explain the way in which I observed the implementation of an RP program into a middle

school.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

For this study, I am conducting an ethnography and writing an autoethnography (which I refer to as a/e). In this chapter, I discuss my approach to and use of these methods to better understand the implications of what is being communicated within a middle school implementing restorative practices (RP). In the first section of this chapter, I explain the method of ethnography, and in the second section, I explain the method of a/e.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a research method used to describe a culture and understand its peoples' way of life (Spradley, 1980). Spradley (1980) defines culture as "the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior" (p. 6). Scholars note different ways ethnography should be conducted, some emphasizing certain techniques over others to understand a culture. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state,

> for us ethnography…draw[s] as it does on a wide range of sources of information. The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned. (p. 2)

To access information from the culture, Spindler and Spindler (1984) assert that ethnographers should participate in direct observation, immersion, and interviewing "in all degrees of formality and casualness" (p. 332). By employing these techniques, ethnographers attempt to understand subjects' reality and the meaning(s) they attribute "to events, intentions, and consequences" (Spindler & Spindler, 1987, p. 4). These meanings are difficult, if not impossible, to discover through the mere use of experiments

and surveys (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983), but they can be uncovered when an ethnographer observes and participates in a culture and makes inferences about the behaviors witnessed (Spradley, 1980).

For this study, I use ethnography to study the implementation of RP into an urban middle school to understand how the culture's unique complexities influence its communication of RP. Unlike other methods, ethnography allows me to answer questions like, "*How* do the teachers, coordinators, and administrators differ on how they interpret and speak about restorative practices?" but also, "*How* does this affect the implementation of RP?" Furthermore, the middle school is unique because it has multiple ethnic cultures making up the school culture. To understand the conflicts occurring within it, and for which RP are meant to resolve, it is necessary for me to use a method that takes into consideration all the aspects of such a complex school culture. In so doing, it allows me to answer the question, "Does RP have the potential to promote student voice and empowerment?" Additionally, my study focuses on the communication occurring within the school, specifically in regards to the RP program. Therefore, I had to immerse myself into the culture to get a broader understanding of what students, faculty, and staff go through on a day-to-day basis, making ethnography an appropriate method for me to use for my study.

Since my study focuses on communication within the culture, I essentially conducted an ethnography of communication. Yet, despite the fact that this culture is merely situated in an educational institution, my ethnography may still be perceived as an ethnography of education because it focuses on the implementation of a program teaching

behavioral change. Therefore, it is necessary for me to briefly address this possible confusion. Ethnographers in educational contexts use ethnography as a method of "studying problems and processes in education" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 9). Spindler and Spindler (1987) affirm that ethnographers of education attempt

> to determine how teaching and learning are supported and constrained by understandings, many of them implicit, that govern the interaction of teachers and students. The dialogue around what is to be taught, and how much of it is to be learned, and how the teaching and learning will be conducted, is what [they] try to record and eventually interpret. (p. 3)

The teaching and learning of a conflict resolution program (such as the RP program) in a school, for instance, may be of interest to ethnographers of education. The dialogue surrounding the program may be another, and this is why I believe my ethnography could be considered an ethnography of education. Nevertheless, Saville-Troike (2003) explains, "Virtually any ethnographic model must take language into account, although many relegate it to a separate section and do not adequately consider its extensive role in a society" (p. 28). Ethnographers of communication are invested in understanding communicative behavior and how this behavior is influenced by the culture. The primary focus of my ethnography is on the interpretations of the RP program and how these interpretations are influenced by the middle school's culture and thus, it is an ethnography of communication.

It is also necessary to understand that I take an interpretive approach to my ethnography even though I use critical theory to analyze the RP program. Anderson (1989) explains that critical ethnographers are similar to interpretivist ethnographers in that they "aim to generate insights, to explain events, and to seek understanding," and

believe "the cultural informant's perceptions of social reality are themselves theoretical constructs" (p. 253). Yet, critical ethnographers differ by proposing that "informants' reconstructions are often permeated with meanings that sustain powerlessness and that people's conscious models exist to perpetuate, as much as explain, social phenomena" (p. 253). Carspecken and Walford (2001) explain that critical ethnographers

> begin their research with the assumption that contemporary societies have systemic inequalities, complexly maintained and reproduced by culture. [T]hey conceptualize [inequalities] as a structural feature of society, and they wish to conduct research that will support efforts to reduce it. (p. 4)

Still, a critical ethnography should not be confused with an interpretive ethnography using critical theory as a framework to explain the causes of the happenings within a culture. For example, some of these causes may be power relations, structural constraints, or issues of class. In this study, I question the political embedded within the cultural, which I believe cannot be separated. Unlike critical ethnography, my ethnography only goes as far as suggesting possible connections between my findings and political factors; however, I do not attempt to change these conditions within the school. As will be clear in the following chapters, I take an interpretivist stance to ethnography, yet use critical pedagogy (grounded in critical theory) as a theoretical framework to question the political within this educational culture.

Evaluating ethnography. Critics claim that ethnographers' use of observations to gather data is subjective and thus, unreliable and lacking validity (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). LeCompte and Goetz (1982) explain that reliability is problematic for ethnographers because they observe events that can never be replicated; thus, some scholars suggest it is an unattainable goal (Stewart, 1998). Validity is concerned with the

accuracy of the conclusions drawn from a research study (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Validity is also difficult for ethnographers to convey in their research, especially for

critical and interpretivist ethnographers who adhere to the idea that an "informant's

perceptions of social reality are...reconstructions of social reality" (Anderson, 1989, p.

253). Consequently, this means an ethnographer's perception of the informant's

perception is merely a reconstruction of a reconstruction of reality. Therefore, the issue

of validity is irrelevant because there is no absolute reality or truth that can ever be found.

Instead, each individual perceives her/his own reality, including the ethnographer; thus,

there is no way to test for the accuracy or inaccuracy of the conclusions drawn from

observations. To explain this idea further, I critique researchers' use of triangulation,

which is a technique often used to show validity in qualitative research. There are

scholars who insist that relying on one data collecting technique may lead to a biased or

distorted view of the culture (Cohen & Manion, 1980). To strengthen the validity of

findings, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest that data can be triangulated through the use

of multiple sources, multiple methods, and/or multiple researchers so that a convergence

of meaning from the data may be uncovered. These contentions exemplify two

problematic assumptions for researchers using triangulation to validate their findings,

which Mathison (1988) points out. The first assumption is that "the bias inherent in any

particular data source, investigator, and. . .method will be cancelled out" (p. 14) if

researchers use multiple methods; however, all investigators are biased and thus, so are

their sources and the methods they apply. The second assumption is that triangulation

will result in "a convergence upon the truth about some social phenomenon" (p. 14);

however, as I mention earlier, there is no absolute truth or reality that can be discovered and therefore, truth will not magically appear if two methods are applied to a research study. Though triangulation is only one technique used to exhibit validity in research, it illustrates the impossibility of rectifying validity, as it is traditionally defined, in ethnographic research.

Cho and Trent (2006) indicate two popular approaches to validity found in qualitative research literature (which are relevant to my ethnography as it uses qualitative methods): transactional and transformational. They explain that the transactional approach "is grounded in active interaction between the inquiry and the research participants by means of an array of techniques" (p. 320) that when used, are thought to provide "an accurate reflection of reality (or at least, participants' constructions of reality)" (p. 322). The second approach Cho and Trent mention is transformational, which challenges or rejects the idea of validity. These transformationalists appear to be similar to the antifoundational qualitative scholars who "[argue] that interpretive research traditions [such as ethnography] have already moved beyond discussions of firm, fixed, or consensually derived criteria, which are declared foundational (or, at best, nonfoundational)" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 276). Similarly, Hammersley (1992) explains,

> [T]here are those who argue that the character of qualitative research implies that there can be no criteria for judging its products. In other words, it is suggested that the very notion of assessing research products in terms of a set of criteria is itself incompatible with the nature of the social world and how we understand it; or at least with the ethnographic approach. (p. 58)

Yet, Cho and Trent (2006) suggest that transformationalists believe that traditional ideas of validity constrict research, such as research intending to improve social conditions or to provide its readers a deeper understanding of those being researched.

The validity and reliability of ethnographic work continues to be challenged. In an attempt to resolve these matters, researchers offer criteria for evaluating the validity and reliability of ethnography (see Hammersley, 1992; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Lincoln, 1995). Some scholars insist ethnography should employ certain criteria to demonstrate validity. Cho and Trent (2006) however, argue that qualitative researchers, such as ethnographers, should instead concern themselves with choosing a technique(s) to study a culture that are based on their purpose for conducting their research. The purpose should then determine the criteria for validity, which does not necessarily need to be concerned with truth or accuracy (Cho & Trent, 2006). Cho and Trent offer five purposes for qualitative research, two of which apply to my study: thick description and personal essay (which I address in the following section, "Autoethnography"). Thick description can help answer research questions like, "How do the people under study interpret phenomena?" (p. 326). Cho and Trent state that the validity of thick description should rely on "(1) the extent to which data are descriptively presented; [and] (2) the researcher's competence in making sense of the daily life of his or her participants" (p. 329). My ethnography attempts to fulfill these criteria by providing a vivid picture of the setting/culture (Adler & Adler, 1995), supplying a significant amount of information from a variety of sources, and presenting my interpretation of what is happening within the culture and the possible causes for these happenings. In the next section, I discuss the

types of data I collected while being in the culture so that I could provide the reader with a thick description of it.

Data collection. In order to study social settings and local cultures, ethnographers engage in fieldwork, which requires them to work with the people they are studying in their natural setting for long periods of time (Fetterman, 1998). There are several techniques ethnographers can use to investigate and understand what is happening in a setting/culture while doing fieldwork. These techniques can be divided into two different categories: interactive and noninteractive methods (LeCompte & Goetz, 1984; LeCompte & Priesle, 1993). Interactive methods require ethnographers to interact directly with participants (e.g., interviews), while noninteractive methods require little or no interaction between the ethnographer and participant (e.g., observations and questionnaires) (LeCompte & Goetz, 1984). I used both methods when gathering data for my ethnography, which began in February of 2009 and ended in September 2010.

Observations. Ethnographers use observations to help them describe the daily activities of the people in the culture they are studying. Oftentimes, what people *say* contradicts what they actually *do*. Participant observation is commonly used by ethnographers and involves immersing oneself into the culture being studied. The goal is that participants "forget their 'company' behavior and fall back into familiar patterns of behavior" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 36), which allows the ethnographer to witness the mundane patterns and events taking place within the setting/culture. Rist (1982) explains that participant observation can be thought of as a continuum: full participant on one end and distant observer on the other. Educational ethnographers are often found somewhere

in the middle of this continuum (Rist, 1982) and my position during my study was no exception. Throughout my study, I observed classrooms and training sessions.

Classroom observations. During my study, five teachers volunteered to be observed in the classroom, but I only observed three of these teachers because their classes fit with my schedule. Their schedules also made it possible for me to do the observations in three consecutive hours, which was important because I wanted to feel like a student walking to class between periods. In two of the classes I sat in a corner in the back of the room; however, in one of the classes I sat in the back towards the center due to student seat assignments. I took notes in a notebook and to make it easier to find specific entries, I wrote in a different color for each class; first hour was written in blue, second hour in purple, and third hour in green. To organize my notebook, I dated each entry and numbered each page. During my four months of classroom observations, I was in the classrooms an average of 3 days a week. At times, I was not able to observe the classrooms because teachers were absent or because students were having a test and teachers asked that I not observe during these times. Since I observed training sessions during the same period of time, I was unable to observe classes every day. Each class was 55 minutes long. Including preliminary observations, I spent approximately 130 hours in the classroom. Altogether, I had 90, typed, double-spaced pages of notes from my classroom observations.

During the classroom observations, I specifically paid attention to instances when the teacher punished or reprimanded a student and/or when a student(s) engaged in *bad*[3] behavior. Examples of bad behaviors are talking loudly, being disruptive, talking without raising his/her hand, cheating, talking back to the teacher, not having his/her homework, not working on an in-class assignment, and walking into the class tardy and without a pass. When one of these instances occurred, I made note of what the student did (or what the teacher accused the student of doing) to get in trouble, what the student and teacher did and said during the altercation, and the outcome of the situation. I noted the student's and teacher's tone of voice because sometimes things were said jokingly or sarcastically, which altered the interpretation of the situation. I was often fortunate enough to be able to fill in my notes during class, instead of having to wait afterwards, because students were working quietly on an assignment. If something happened that reminded me of an instance that occurred in an earlier observation, I tried to find the earlier observation and make note of the page number of the entry or I made a note telling myself to find it later. Sometimes articles or scholars were referred to in parentheses next to an entry or description of an event. For example, "(see Giroux)" or "(find article on affective statements)." (See Appendix B for an example of my field notes.)

The coding of my classroom observations went through three stages. In the first stage, I gave broad titles to many of my entries while I wrote them during my observations. For instance, "Student's World," was a popular title I used to convey that a particular entry focused on an event many middle school students encountered. Another

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[3] I italicize the word "bad" to indicate that I did not necessarily think the students' behavior was bad.

popular title was, "Teacher Frustration," which I used when an entry indicated a teacher's frustration during class time. This first stage especially allowed me to see how students and adults negotiate sharing space in the school. The second stage began during my last couple of weeks in the field and lasted several months. Throughout this stage, I typed my notes into a Word document, read through them many times, and created several Word documents dedicated to themes that emerged from my intense reading of the notes. I then copied and pasted entries into their appropriate Word documents according to the themes the entries demonstrated. For example, a theme that emerged during this stage was, "Trust/distrust," which signified that the entry demonstrated acts of trust or distrust between teacher and student. Stage two was tedious as I changed and narrowed the themes quite frequently. For instance, some entries that were titled, "Student's World" in stage one became "Voice" and "Empowerment" during stage two. Voice and empowerment became popular themes since I focused my study on RP's potential to promote student voice and empowerment. The final stage consisted of me going through all thematized Word documents and renegotiating whether or not entries belonged in their designated theme. For instance, I found an entry that contradicted the theme I originally placed it under probably because I misread it during stage two. Basically, in stage three I looked for inconsistencies and misplaced entries. Unfortunately, I do not comment on all the themes I found during my classroom observations, not because they were insignificant, but because they did not directly relate to the RP program, discipline, voice, and empowerment. For instance, something I would have liked to discuss more in my dissertation is students' humor; however, their humor doesn't directly pertain to the

primary focus of my dissertation: the implementation of an RP program into a middle school.

Training session observations. I was invited by the school district to participate in two training sessions that were six and a half hours long. One was for conferences and the other, for peacemaking circles. My participation in the sessions gave me insight into the objectives for using the practices and how they work. I observed four, three-hour training sessions describing the "Nurtured Hearts" approach. The consultant trained faculty and staff on this approach to support their implementation of affective statements and questions, which are types of restorative practices, in the classroom. Altogether, 34 participants, excluding the consultant and myself, attended the four sessions. Before each session, I introduced myself to each of the participants as they came into the room and signed the attendance sheet. I handed them a consent form, asked them to read it before signing, and encouraged them to ask me questions. At the first Nurtured Hearts training session, I also gave a consent form to the consultant. At the beginning of each session, the consultant asked everyone to state their name and the position they held in their school (e.g., third grade teacher, middle school principal, counselor, etc.). I made note of their positions and the majority of the participants were teachers, and I only use the teachers' comments and reactions in my ethnography. For the most part, I did not participate except when the consultant needed another person for an activity, which happened during two of the sessions. I recorded the training observations in black ink in the same notebook as the classroom observations. Each entry listed the date in which the

session occurred. Altogether, I had 15 typed, double-spaced pages of notes from my training observations.[4]

Since the consultant's presentation was the same for each session, I was able to see how the four groups responded differently to the questions and videos. Two of the videos exhibited examples of teachers who seem to have no control over their classroom. Another video showed a school's positive reaction to the Nurtured Hearts approach. Yet another video was of a motivational speaker who is an amputee. The consultant played this video to demonstrate the need for teachers to focus on the positive characteristics of students instead of their negative characteristics. I recorded the participants' reactions and responses to the questions and videos in my notebook so I could identify any themes, similarities, and differences. Since the RP consultant kept the same format and asked the same questions during the trainings, I combine my observations from all four sessions to create one coherent narrative illustrating teachers' first impression of restorative practices in my ethnography; however, I also use them to support themes throughout the piece.

For the most part, most of what was said during the training sessions indicating teachers' reactions to the RP program, their thoughts on discipline, and their relationship with students is presented in my dissertation. Statements were only cut from the dissertation if they were redundant. Also, sometimes I was unable to write down some of what was said during the training sessions because I couldn't write fast enough.

Interviews. Ethnographers often conduct interviews to gather data. Rist (1982) lists several different types of interviews, but the three types I performed with

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[4] The total number of pages does not include the notes I had taken during my preliminary training observations.

administrators, coordinators, and teachers were formal, informal, and key informant interviews. Formal interviews are planned and well-structured, while informal interviews are more casual. An informal interview may occur in the midst of a conversation after a participant makes a comment that suddenly inspires the ethnographer to ask a question (Fetterman, 1998). My interviews were rather formal and structured since I had specific questions that needed to be asked linearly; however, I also asked questions that were not planned if the participant answered a question a certain way in which a follow-up question seemed necessary. Therefore, the interviews were both formal and informal at times. The flexibility of asking informal questions allowed me to uncover deeper meanings behind the participant's response, while asking the same questions to each of the participants allowed me to compare and contrast each participant's response. Finally, interviewing key informants can be beneficial since these participants "possess special knowledge, status, or communicative skills [and] have access – in time space or perspective – to observations denied [to] the ethnographer" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1984, p. 44). Throughout my study, the RP coordinator at the middle school acted as my key informant. She explained to me certain processes, particular sayings, or communicative acts witnessed in the classroom and school. In general, her explanations helped me accurately describe certain aspects of the culture when explaining them in the final write-up of my ethnography. The federal programs manager for the district was a secondary key informant. Just as the coordinator explained aspects of the culture at the middle school, the federal programs manager explained aspects of the culture of education in Michigan. Both provided me with information only shared among those truly *in* these

cultures and information that may have taken years to access.

I designed the formal interviews to ask different types of questions, including descriptive, structural (or explanation), contrasting questions (Spradley, 1979, as cited in Madison, 2005), and questions pertaining to participants' career history (LeCompte & Goetz, 1984). Descriptive questions "ask for a recounting or a depiction of a concrete phenomenon" (p. 28). An example of this type of question would be, "How would you define democracy in your school?" A structural or explanation question seeks an explanation of a situation, concept, or idea that is familiar to the interviewee. These questions often follow descriptive questions (Madison, 2005). A structural question following the descriptive question in the prior example might be, "Do you feel your school believes these to be important?" Finally, contrast questions ask how the meaning of a symbol is used and how it is similar to or different from other symbols. For example, a contrast question might be: "Can you explain to me the difference between a peacemaking circle and a conference?" I also designed questions pertaining to participants' career history. LeCompte and Goetz (1984) recommend educational researchers ask participants about their career history in which participants provide narratives from their professional lives. During the interviews, I asked participants questions like, "How many years have you been teaching/administrating/acting as coordinator/consulting?" and "How many years have you been at this school?" I also asked that they explain their role in implementing RP either in their school or in the district. Participants' responses to my career history questions shed light on their position within the school, their relationship to others (e.g., conflicts they have with others), their

responsibilities to the RP program, and their general perspective on education, all of which influence how they communicate to others and about RP. For instance, a new teacher may have a positive opinion on her/his school, while a teacher who has taught in the school for 20 years may be jaded and more likely to have a negative opinion on her/his school.

During the formal interviews, I asked participants about the implementation of RP in their school/district. Specifically, I asked them questions concerning the objectives of the program and their definition of certain concepts often used in the training sessions and RP literature. The interview protocol was the same for the administrators and the RP consultant (see Appendix C), but it was slightly altered for coordinators (see Appendix D) and teachers (see Appendix E). After conducting an interview, I transcribed it in a Word document. Once I conducted the interviews, I analyzed the responses for emerging themes. Originally, I planned to conduct two focus groups (one made up of teachers and another made up of the coordinators in the district). Due to the inaccessibility of the teachers and because it was difficult to get a group of teachers and coordinators who were available at the same time, I instead conducted interviews with five middle school teachers and the four RP coordinators in the district. My interviews with the middle school teachers and coordinators allowed me to make conclusions about the implementation of RP in the middle school. I interviewed the three elementary coordinators because the middle school teachers often mentioned how the program's success in their school relies on how the elementary coordinators are using the practices with their students. I compared and contrasted these interviews with the middle school

coordinator's interview to find out how RP was implemented differently in the other schools. For example, an elementary coordinator uses different terminology than the middle school coordinator. Moreover, I interviewed the three teachers I observed in the classrooms, so I was able to compare these teachers' responses with their actions in the classroom. I met the other two teachers when I passed out the Student Questionnaire in their classroom. They were interested in my study, so I felt comfortable asking them for an interview. I interviewed three administrators: the principal of the middle school, the superintendent of the district, and the federal programs manager of the district. I also interviewed the RP consultant hired by the district as well. Each interview lasted an average of 60 minutes long. I audiotaped these interviews after explaining to the participants that the tapes would be destroyed once thoroughly analyzed. Overall, I performed 15 interviews, which totaled approximately 15 hours. Altogether, I had 198, typed, double-spaced pages of interview transcriptions.

I coded my interviews similar to how I coded my classroom observations: in three stages. In the first stage, I gave broad titles to interviewee's responses when I transcribed the interviews, but for the most part these titles were closely related to the question I asked. For instance, when I asked school employees to explain the difference between a circle and a conference, their responses were titled, "Understanding Practices." Some responses, however, emerged organically, for instance, "Teacher's Voice." This theme was strong as many teachers explained how they perceived their voice as acknowledged or unacknowledged in the district. Throughout the second stage, I read transcripts from interviews many times, and created several Word documents dedicated to themes that

emerged during these readings. I then copied and pasted responses into their appropriate

Word documents according to the themes the entries demonstrated. For example, a

theme that emerged during this stage was, "Defining the Student Body," which indicated

that the interviewee's response labeled students in some way. Stage two was tedious as I

changed and narrowed the themes quite frequently. For instance, some entries that were

titled, "Defining the Student Body" in stage one became "Good Students," "Bad

Students," or "Middle Students" because the interviewee explained how they defined a

good, bad, or middle student. The final stage consisted of me going through all

thematized Word documents and renegotiating not only if responses belonged in their

designated theme, but also if responses fit more appropriately in one of the themes found

during my classroom observations of teachers. For instance, some responses correlated

with the theme, "Teacher Frustration," a theme that emerged during my classroom

observations. Thus, these responses were placed under, "Teacher Frustration," among

classroom observation entries. Essentially, in stage three I looked for inconsistencies,

misplaced responses, and responses that fit under themes that emerged from classroom

observations.

It's important to note that some responses were split up if a response signified two

separate themes. However, I tried to remain true to the context of what was said when I

split up these responses by giving an explanation of what the interviewee said before in

parentheses. For example, I asked one of the teachers, "What about teachers? How do

you think some teachers view [the program]?" He responded with,

> E: I think there's a lot of teachers, which, first of all, are not so much in *this*
> building, but I think there are many teachers that have their own working model

for discipline and no matter how RP is presented to them they will never open their mind to anything else. I think when you get to be that way it's time for you to move on and do something else. Unfortunately, they undermine the system and it's like blood in the water for sharks and when the kids pick up on it, it's gone. A lot of it has to be from administration, not so much as, "I order you to do this." See there's that dynamic of mistrust between teachers and administration that poisons the [positive aspect] of RP.

This response exemplifies two themes: "Identifying Boulders" and "Mistrust of Administrators." During coding, I placed the first half of his response under, "Identifying Boulders":

E: I think there's a lot of teachers, which, first of all, are not so much in *this* building, but I think there are many teachers that have their own working model for discipline and no matter how RP is presented to them they will never open their mind to anything else. I think when you get to be that way it's time for you to move on and do something else. Unfortunately, they undermine the system and it's like blood in the water for sharks and when the kids pick up on it, it's gone.

I placed the second half of his response under, "Mistrust of Administrators":

E: (Ethan discusses how he thinks other teachers perceive the program and then explains…) A lot of it has to be from administration, not so much as, "I order you to do this." See there's that dynamic of mistrust between teachers and administration that poisons the [positive aspect] of RP.

For the most part, most responses were at least coded with a general theme since I asked interviewees the same questions. Responses were not coded if they did not indicate how school employees felt about the RP program, their reactions to the RP program, their thoughts on discipline, or their relationship with students.

Student questionnaires. When ethnographers interview several people, questionnaires are often the most appropriate (Rist, 1982). I handed out questionnaires to students (see Appendix F) to examine their perceptions of the RP program. I created the questions so that students could provide a narrative for each question. Question 1, 2, 4,

and 5 focused on student voice. These questions were designed based on the definition that Simon (1987) provides. Simon (1987) defines voice as "attempts through which students and teachers actively engage in dialogue. Voice then is related to the discursive means whereby teachers and students attempt to make themselves present and to define themselves as active authors of their own world" (p. 377). Question 6, 7, and 8 focused on student empowerment. These questions were designed based on the definition Bastian, Fruchter, Gittell, Greer, and Haskins (as cited in Simon, 1987) supply. They define empowerment as "the opportunity and means to effectively participate and share authority" (p. 374). Question 3 merely asked about the student's overall experience with RP.

I disseminated the questionnaire by visiting all 7th and 8th grade Social Studies classes, which totaled 18 sections, in the span of a week and provided an oral presentation to the students about my study. The coordinator and the principal of the middle school thought this would guarantee that the study would be explained to all the students in the school and it allowed me to gather more data because students who had been involved in a conference in the past year were able to fill out the questionnaire. I mailed parental permission forms three weeks before I distributed the questionnaire to students. On these forms, I asked parents to sign the form if they did not want their child to participate and give it to their child's teacher within two weeks. Some parents did not sign the form, but they contacted me directly via email and per their request, I did not give the questionnaire to their child. I created a list of the names of students who were not allowed to participate before I distributed the questionnaires. Before going into a

classroom, I asked the teacher if there were any students on the list in the class and if so, if they could point the students out to me. Only a couple of students whose parents did not want them to participate asked me if they could complete the questionnaire. When this happened, I quietly explained to them that I could not give them one because their parents did not want for them to take the questionnaire; fortunately, these students did not seem too disappointed. I gave students who did not want to participate, had not participated in a conference, or whose parents did not want them to participate an activity sheet unrelated to the research project while their peers completed the questionnaire.

Students whose parents allowed them to participate could still choose to not participate. I gave students who wanted to take the questionnaire a consent form to sign. I was the only person distributing and collecting the questionnaires and consent forms. I asked students who had been involved in multiple conferences to think of one particular conference when filling out the questionnaire. I reminded them to not write their names on the questionnaires and to place them into the slotted, locked, metal box labeled *Conference Q's* when finished. Depending on the classroom's set up, I placed this box on a desk or chair on the side or in the back of the room so that students who completed the questionnaire did not draw the attention of their peers who did not complete it. Faculty, staff, and administrators did not have access to the completed questionnaires. After collecting the questionnaires, I gave each one a number. For each of the eight questions on the questionnaire, I typed the question and its corresponding responses with their assigned number into a Word document. I then analyzed and categorized the responses from each question.

Artifacts. Artifacts such as archival material (LeCompte & Priesle, 1993) can be used to study a setting/culture. Archival material such as the student handbook, homework assignments, and RP resources and training materials were collected during the study. For the most part, I gathered any documents that could provide me with a better understanding of the culture or the RP program. For instance, the student handbook provided me with the rules and policies students must follow to not get in trouble. Essentially, I analyzed artifacts to gain a general understanding of students' world as middle school students; thus, I did not use these artifacts as primary sources for collecting data.

Training evaluations. After participating in the training sessions for restorative practices, the consultant asked participants to fill out an evaluation sheet created by the district. The consultant distributed and collected the evaluations at the end of each training session. Some of the peacemaking circles' training sessions used different evaluations. There were 16 sessions using Evaluation #1 and three sessions using Evaluation #2. Five of the training sessions evaluated were for peacemaking circles. To analyze each set of evaluations, I assigned a number to every evaluation. I typed each question and its corresponding responses with their assigned number into a Word document. All of this occurred in the district's administrative building because I did not have permission to take the completed evaluations out of the building. After I finished this process, I analyzed the responses to uncover emerging themes. Overall, I used responses from the training evaluations to gain an overall understanding of how teachers initially perceived the RP program. Therefore, for the most part they gave me insight

into the culture that RP were being implemented into, but I did not use them as a primary source of data.

In conclusion, my study focuses on a middle school culture's communication of the implementation of an RP program. Although my ethnography was conducted within an educational setting, it is above all else an ethnography of communication. I take an interpretivist stance to this ethnography even though it has elements that are characteristic to critical ethnography. Like critical ethnographers, however, I do not believe that absolute truth or reality can ever be found, no matter what method a researcher uses. Thus, I ask readers to evaluate my ethnography using criteria based on my purpose. My purpose is to provide a thick description of the middle school culture. My hope is that my observations, interviews, student questionnaires, examination of artifacts, and analysis of training evaluations will provide the reader with a vivid description of the school and its members. However, if this does not suffice, I also offer my autoethnography within the piece. In the next section, I explain the method of autoethnography and my use of and approach to this method.

Autoethnography

Ellis (2004) lists several terms researchers have used to discuss a/e, which include critical autoethnography, personal ethnography, self-ethnography, evocative ethnography, reflexive ethnography, narrative ethnography, personal narrative, interpretive ethnography, introspective ethnography, narrative inquiry, and many others. Along with the many terms used to describe the method comes a variety of definitions and perspectives. When defining a/e, I turn to Ellis (2004) and Spry (2007). Ellis (2004)

defines a/e as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (p. xix). Spry (2001) defines the method as "a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts" (p. 710). Most of the literature uses similar definitions with researchers adding their own definition or perspective on the proper criteria for a/e. Hence, my definition of a/e, which is always evolving, involves writing about personal experiences and how these experiences influence the world around me and how the world around me influences my experiences.   As such, it provides a way for me to describe myself as a socially constructed being and at the same time critically analyze the political and cultural aspects that influenced the construction of my present self.

Autoethnographers are divided into two factions: the descriptive, evocative, and subjective approach (or evocative autoethnographers) versus the analytical, theoretical, and objective approach (or analytic autoethnographers) (Chang, 2008; Ellingson & Ellis, 2007). Anderson (2006) distinguishes between analytic and evocative autoethnographers by indicating that analytic autoethnographers are "(1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in published texts, and (3) committed to developing theoretical explanations of broader social phenomena" (p. 373), while those who are evocative present narratives with the intent of allowing the reader think and feel with the story. Ellis and Bochner (2006) do not agree that Anderson's first two criteria distinguishes a difference between the two types and they stress that Anderson's third criterion, which implies that evocative autoethnography does not theorize, is inaccurate; it is merely that evocative a/e does not produce theory to generalize, which Anderson

believes is necessary. Instead, Ellis and Bochner state that there is just as much value in theorizing to "[continue] a conversation and thus to encourage multiple perspectives, unsettled meanings, and plural voices" (p. 438). I agree with Ellis and Bochner and my use of a/e in the following chapter attempts to theorize with the reader through dialogue, but does not attempt to generalize the middle school culture.

I chose to use a/e for this study not only because of the benefits it provides when integrated with ethnography (as mentioned in the following section), but also because my own middle school experience significantly marked my identity and affects who I am today. When I first started the project, I was invited to attend a faculty meeting regarding the RP program. During the visit, I immediately became uncomfortable in my own skin. I was forced to remember my middle school years, which I had planned on blocking out of my memory forever. It was then I realized that if I was going to be a researcher in this uncomfortable space, I was going to have to confront these forgotten memories that now knocked on my door like an old, unwelcome friend wanting to reconcile and using a/e was going to be the best method to do so. As a result, for my a/e, I reflect on my experience during middle school as I observed the middle school students for my ethnography. The issues explored while writing my autoethnography were the effects of labeling and power.

During my middle school years, I realized I belonged to certain social groups without any choice. Unfortunately, being labeled as a poor kid had negative effects on my self-esteem and how I interacted with others. I was also shy and timid around people in positions of power. Even today, I am rarely confident when confronting these types of

people. I often comply with their requests without question because I do not want to be perceived as difficult or get in trouble. Through the writing of my a/e, I was able to uncover how these experiences affect my identity today. Furthermore, it helped me examine how they affected my ability to observe middle school students while collecting data for my ethnography. My a/e allowed me to address being in a setting that inherently made me feel uncomfortable, awkward, and embarrassed. A/e gave me a chance to empathize with students and ultimately understand them on a deeper level that would be impossible if I had merely conducted the ethnography.

Though my original plan was to only contribute experiences belonging to my middle school self, unfortunately, my teacher self argued against it and won. Because of this, I allow her a voice as well. If anything, this concession demonstrates the difficulty of separating our multiple selves to understand one self. As Ellsworth (1989) explains, one can have multiple voices, which makes it "impossible to speak from all voices at once, or from any one, without the traces of the others being present and interruptive" (p. 312). My struggle to avoid my teacher voice from interfering with my middle school student voice supports Ellsworth's argument. My writing of the ethnography made me question myself as a teacher as I learned about RP and I wondered if my actions in the classroom negatively affected my students. My middle school self spoke to my teacher self and essentially, forced her to acknowledge this possibility. Thus, my middle school self awakened my teacher self. My middle school student voice is therefore, still found within me and though it is interrupted, it remains significant. Finally, upon reading a rough draft of a paper in which I comment on the pain I endured during middle school,

my mother wrote me an email. She also responded to an email I sent her asking about her absence from my school when I was younger. I include these emails with her permission.

My hope is that readers of my a/e will learn from my experience of having to do research in a place that once made me feel small and insignificant. Someone reading my piece may encounter something similar in the future; or perhaps s/he has gone through the same thing and my piece gives her/his experience more meaning. A/e, unlike ethnography, allows me to speak to the reader in this way. Furthermore, I could have focused my study on one of the three elementary schools implementing the program; yet, I chose to focus my study on Restorative Practices Middle School (RPMS). My reason is selfish, and based solely on my need to re-introduce myself to my experience in middle school, but it is nonetheless why I chose to focus on the middle school and not on the other schools in the district.

Benefits of using a/e with ethnography. The use of a/e as a research method is a controversial issue among researchers. Many label autoethnographic work as narcissistic, self-indulgent (Coffey, 1999; Manning, 2007; Mykhalovskiy, 1996), and self-absorbed (Mykhalovskiy, 1996). Autoethnographers have also been described as "navel-gazers" (Hemmingson, 2008). Nevertheless, my use of a/e demonstrates how it can be beneficial when used in combination with other research methods such as ethnography. Denzin (1992) declares that ethnography "privilege[s] the researcher over the subject, method over subject matter, and maintain[s] commitments to outmoded conceptions of validity, truth, and generalizability" (p. 20). Due to these "commitments," Sparkes (1995)

describes these texts to be "author-evacuated texts" in which the researcher is there, but yet not there at all. A/e resolves this by inserting the researcher back into the text. As Duncan (2004) notes, "the essential difference between ethnography and autoethnography is that in an autoethnography, the researcher is not trying to become an insider in the research setting. He or she, in fact, is the insider" (p. 30). Hertz (1996) explains, "Researchers are now acknowledged as active participants within the research process, not passive observers or scribes. Therefore, it is essential to understand the researcher's location of self" (p. 5). A/e complements ethnography by resolving this problem through a direct acknowledgment of ethnographers' biases and experiences. This stimulates dialogue between the researcher and the reader. It provides readers with a "less distorted [account] of the social world" because researchers are willing to show how their "positions and interests are imposed at all stages of the research process – from the questions they ask to those they ignore, from who they study to whom they ignore, from problem formation to analysis, representation, and writing" (p. 5). The researcher is no longer disguised as the objective and neutral observer documenting true human action. Instead, s/he accepts her/himself as a subjective being, embraces this idea, and uses it as an opportunity to create a dialogue with readers. This is unlike conventional ethnographers who take on the *researcher-knows-all* standpoint, which can prevent dialogue from occurring altogether between researcher and reader because the reader is expected to accept the researcher's findings without question. This standpoint also has the potential to demonstrate power or domination over those being described within the culture. Alcoff (2009) states, "the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on

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behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or re-enforcing the oppression of the group spoken for" (p. 118). A/e, unlike traditional ethnography, acknowledges the fact that researchers cannot speak *for* those being researched, rather they can speak *with* them in such a way that takes into consideration the researcher's privileged status or biases which affects how he/she writes about that culture. Hence, the researcher is self-reflexive, analyzing his/her position within the culture (such as his/her gender, class, race, ableness, privilege, etc.) and how this affects his/her perception, and creation, of the culture. As Alcoff further notes, "where one speaks from affects both the meaning and truth of what one says" (p. 118) and it is this idea that serves as the prime argument for doing a/e. Furthermore, autoethnographers agree that "writing about the self involves, at the same time, writing about the 'other' and…work on the 'other' is also about the self of the writer" (Mykhalovskiy, 1996, p. 133). Ellis (2004) maintains that this writing about the self as *other* creates empathy for the other, which is lacking in other styles of academic writing.

Atkinson (2006) states, "'the ethnography' is a product of the interaction between the ethnographer and a social world, and the ethnographer's interpretation of phenomena is always something that is crafted through ethnographic imagination" (p. 402). Therefore, ethnography "is always, in some degree, autoethnographic in that the ethnographer's self is always implicated in the research process" (p. 403). Most autoethnographers agree that anything the ethnographer decides to observe or write is a reflection of the ethnographer, but merely assuming this to be the case does nothing for the reader. Ethnographers should explain what led them to observe *this* and not *that*

because it helps the reader understand the ethnographer's relationship to the people in the culture being studied and it uncovers biases that would otherwise remain hidden. These biases inform the ethnographer's findings. Therefore, without the reader knowing the perspective in which these findings are being interpreted, there is no opportunity for her/him to interpret the findings. The ethnographer then prevents the reader from asking certain questions about the ethnography and the ethnographer's intentions, which limits the potential of the ethnography.

Additionally, a/e provides a reader-friendly style that is engaging and "tends to appeal to readers more than conventional scholarly writing" (Chang, 2008, p. 52). As a result, the writing style of a/e, especially evocative a/e, may complement ethnography in that it may allow for studies to be more accessible to people outside of academia. Nevertheless, my a/e can be perceived in two ways: (a) as a method complement*ing* ethnography, or (b) as a method complement*ed* by ethnography. I encourage readers to consider both perceptions.

Evaluating a/e. Evaluating autoethnographic works is a controversial topic among scholars. Ellis (2000), Bochner (2000), and Spry (2007) all provide general ideas on what should be considered *good* a/e. Spry (2007) contends, "good autoethnography is not simply a confessional tale of self-renewal; it is a provocative weave of story and theory" (p. 713) in which the reader "must be moved emotionally and critically" (p. 714). Ellis (2000) agrees that a/e should be emotionally charged and when reviewing such pieces admits to wanting "to feel and think with the story" (p. 273). She further claims that, when evaluating a/e, she continuously asks if it has "engaged, evoked or provoked

[her] sufficiently" (p. 274). Bochner (2000) does not support the idea that there should be a set criteria for judging autoethnographic works. Bochner notes, "criteria always have a restrictive, limiting, regressive, thwarting, halting quality to them, and they can never be completely separated from the structures of power in which they are situated" (p. 269). Despite Bochner's resistance, a/e still receives numerous critiques on its ability to establish validity because autoethnographers often rely heavily on memory. Reda (2007) questions the use of memory by asking,

> Can we utilize memory in an autoethnographic project in the same way we use observation, interviews, and material records in an ethnography? Memory is a self-selecting process, creating patterns through elision, emphasis, [and] forgetfulness. Such transformations radically alter the "data." (para. 13)

I disregard any critiques about the issue of memory and validity. It is true autoethnographers may intentionally or unintentionally omit or alter pieces of a memory, but similar accusations could be directed toward ethnographers when they write about what they've observed in the field. Ethnographers cannot, and are not expected to, write about everything they had observed in their final ethnography. Some observations are omitted because they are not seen as significant to the culture. Others are altered intentionally to add dramatic effect or are altered unintentionally if an ethnographer is reliant on memory because s/he can't write about observations until after the event ends. Whether or not an omission or alteration is ethical is a question ethnographers as well as autoethnographers, or at least the ones attempting to be ethical, should always ask.

Also, I contend that it is irrelevant if a memory is altered unintentionally because the autoethnographer still *believes* it to be true. As Duncan (2004) notes, "An important assumption held by autoethnographers. . .is that reality is neither fixed nor entirely

external but is created by, and moves with, the changing perceptions and beliefs of the viewer" (p. 30). As a result, this "false" memory influences how the autoethnographer perceives her/himself in the world. Alongside this, autoethnographers' over-reliance on memory for most (if not all) of their data is not problematic, especially for studies focused on identity construction. Memories make a significant contribution to the construction of a person's identity. For instance, only by reflecting on "past selves" can a person can begin to understand how and why these past selves created the present self. Moreover, readers with similar experiences will reflect on and make connections with their past and present selves, which for some autoethnographers is the objective.

While both ethnography and a/e pursue "the ultimate goal of cultural understanding underlying autobiographical experiences" (Chang, 2008, p. 49), a/e conflicts with ethnography in regards to *how* autobiographical experiences are gathered. Ethnographers gather stories from people other than her/himself and autoethnographers gather stories from her/himself. Alongside this, scholars debate over *how much* personal experience should be involved. Ellis and Bochner (2000) state, "autoethnographers vary in their emphasis on the research process (graphy), on culture (ethno), and on self (auto)" (p. 740). But some argue that too much emphasis on the *auto* leads to other problems. For instance, Jackson and Mazzei (2008) claim that "autoethnographers run the risk of simply replacing one privileged center with another, making similarly narrow claims to the truth, authority, and authenticity as objectivism" (p. 299). I argue that this is not a reason to dismiss a/e altogether as much as it is a reason to encourage readers to critically evaluate autoethnographies.

Data collection. There is a lack of literature describing specific methods for autoethnographers to use in order to gather material for autoethnographies. Therefore, I relied heavily on methods offered by Chang (2008) for help with collecting self-reflexive and external data. To prepare for my a/e, I recalled memories that occurred 18 and 19 years ago. This was not an easy task; however, to gather personal memory data I performed the following: chronicling the past, inventorying self, and visualizing self (Chang, 2008). When chronicling the past, Chang advises creating an autobiographical timeline to make note of significant events and experiences. My autobiographical timeline focused on my junior high years. The timeline was sparse at the beginning, but as I added memories throughout the project it became much more dense. Not all of these are discussed in my a/e, but the process gave me a chance to begin recalling experiences and deciding which would be useful. It also allowed me to remember the sequence of my experiences, which was important when multiple experiences were related to each other.

Participating in routines also helped me chronicle the past (Chang, 2008). As mentioned above, during my observations, I went to three classes about three days a week. I walked through the halls and went to the bathroom between classes, just as the students did. Partaking in the routine of *going to class* reminded me of my own middle school experience. For instance, it reminded me of the anxiety of trying to get to class on time. I also followed classroom rules as much as possible. For instance, I was careful not to chew gum since the students were not allowed to. These routines also allowed me to connect with students. Chang (2008) encourages engaging in routines because they help outsiders "acquire language, customs, and traditions and become enculturated into

patterns of society" (p. 75). Middle school students are faced with different problems today; engaging in their routines helped me witness these as well as remind me of the problems I endured as a middle schooler.

As I began collecting several stories from my past, it became necessary to categorize, organize, and evaluate these stories. Chang (2008) refers to this as *inventorying*. As categories emerged, I decided which stories were the most relevant to the focus of my a/e. I began this process by carrying a journal so that I could write down memories as they came to me spontaneously. For example, this proved to be effective when I visited the middle school for a meeting with the principle. As I waited to meet with him, I sat in the teacher's lounge. As I sat there, the principal presented his end-of-the-day announcements over the intercom. He reminded the students of the proper way to wear their uniforms and it reminded me of the importance of clothes and how clothing labels labeled me as *cool* or *uncool*. This led me to remember a specific story, which I made note of and reflected on later. This story was given multiple categories that are layered; its major category is *labeling* and its minor categories are *appearance* and *image*.

Finally, Chang (2008) mentions *visualizing strategies* to help stir memories, such as looking at photographs. Looking at photographs of me during middle school was useful and allowed me to see myself as the Other. Doing so permitted me to disconnect my *middle school self* with my *present self*. For instance, looking at an old cheerleading picture reminded me of feeling embarrassed because my past self thought I was fat compared to other girls my age. While still able to recall this feeling, my present self is

now able to reflect on this period of time and see much more than the cheerleader was able to.

My a/e benefited from the above strategies, but since these experiences happened many years ago, I thought it would also be beneficial to visit my middle school and observe a couple of classes. Fortunately, I am still in contact with a few of my former teachers. One in particular helped me gain access to the school and she spoke with other teachers about me observing their classes. My hope was that I would recall memories while re-experiencing the school. The notes I took were strictly about my experiences, not about the students or teachers in the school. While I was there, I spoke with a teacher who I mention in my a/e piece about the boy named Jay. In fact, he was able to confirm the incident I discuss in the piece.

While chronicling the past, inventorying, visualizing, and re-experiencing my middle school helped me recall past experiences, I also wrote about myself in the present state. I took notes while observing the middle school students and faculty, noting my reactions to happenings in the class and connecting them to my past experiences. If an instance reminded me of an experience I had during middle school, I made a short note about it.

All of these strategies required a great deal of reflexivity. Hertz (1996) explains that reflexivity "permeates every aspect of the research process challenging us to be more fully conscious of the ideology, culture and politics of those we study and those whom we select as our audience" (p. 5). The goal is to attain a heightened self-awareness. Hence, I not only needed to be able to find ways to capture memories, I also needed to

ask myself questions allowing me explore deeper meanings to my current and past experiences. In turn, I better understood my location as a researcher within the field and how I acknowledged and understood the Other. Sometimes the questions were emotionally difficult for me to answer. At times it brought feelings of pain, but also of joy. Either way, these emotions allowed me to empathize with the people I observed.

Overall, although a/e is controversial, it can benefit ethnography, especially interpretive ethnography, because a/e puts the researchers biases at the forefront. These biases can create dialogue between researcher and reader. My a/e illustrates themes concerning labeling and power. My hope is that readers can relate to my experiences and/or feel with me as they read them. Critics who continue to disagree with a/e because they believe it is not a valid method of inquiry may not understand the purpose of a/e because they remain blinded by the power of positivistic criteria for validity. Therefore, they may be hesitant to let go and actually feel the emotions that a/e evoke; that is assuming, however, that they have read a/e.

Ultimately, it is for readers to determine the validity of my project, which I believe is a burden that is always placed upon them. As readers, we choose to dismiss, accept, and question researchers' claims, support, and inferences whether or not they successfully followed a set of criteria. Our dismissal, acceptance, and questioning of the researcher are based on our experiences (perhaps our experience contradicts or supports their findings or perhaps their findings perpetuate or refute an idea that has caused stress in our lives). This burden, however, is not really a burden, but instead an opportunity for dialogue between researcher and reader, and perhaps it may also inspire dialogue

between reader and community. These are my hopes for the reader as they audience my

project, which I present in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

The city and area surrounding the school district (which I refer to as Restorative Practices Public School District, or RPPSD) in my study has a unique environment and history that attracted me to undertake this project. Knowledge of these circumstances allows the opportunity to appreciate the challenges affecting the district's implementation of restorative practices (RP). As such, I provide details about the district and the area it is situated in, as well as the middle school (Restorative Practices Middle School, or RPMS) where most of my time is spent. I also give descriptions of the primary people I interact with the most. They are complicated individuals that have complex reasons and motives for using or not using RP. Finally, at the end of this introductory section, I provide a note to the reader with helpful directions that contribute to reading the chapter.

The Scene

The cultural makeup of the district can be understood when we examine the general background of the city. According to the 2010 Census, the city, which has a total area of about 2 miles, is inhabited by nearly 22,500 residents. Economically, the city is rather poor.[5] The median income for a household is $26,008 and over 38% of the population's income is below the poverty line (2010 Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey).

Barbara, a middle school teacher in the RPPSD, explains that the city has acted as a place of refuge for many immigrants throughout its history, especially those from war

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[5] In fact, the city attempted to file for bankruptcy in 2010, but the state denied its request.

torn countries, because of its cheap housing and availability of industrial jobs. As such, the city is extremely diverse when compared to neighboring cities and towns in the region. Polish immigrants started moving into the area as early as after the American Civil War and they became the majority by the 1910s and 1920s. When Barbara, a middle school teacher at RPPSD who is of Polish heritage, was younger, the area was actually made up of mostly Polish immigrants, but since then its ethnic makeup has dramatically changed. Today, the city is made up of 64%[6] Caucasians, 20% Asians, 19% Arabs, 16% African Americans, and 16% Polish. Additionally, 42% of the residents are foreign born and of these people 34% were born in Europe and 64% were born in Asia. Unsurprisingly, nearly 58% of the people speak a language other than English in their home (2010 Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey).

The school district has six schools with about 3,000 students enrolled from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. The district's mission statement emphasizes serving a multicultural population; this is significant given that the student body is as diverse as the city's population. The district's website indicates that the student population represents twenty-three countries and there are 16 primary languages spoken among the student body with the top six being English, Bengali, Arabic, Bosnian, Polish, and Albanian.

Though I interview others in the district, most of my time is spent in the middle school observing teachers in their classrooms and interviewing the principal, RP coordinator, and teachers. The middle school has a student body of 400 students and represents multiple cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Also, 88% are a part of the free or

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[6] Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

reduced lunch program (National Center for Education Statistics), which exemplifies the poor economic status of the city.

The building was an elementary school in the early 1900's until it became a middle school in the 1970s. Most of the building appears to have not been renovated for several years. For instance, the gym is half the size of most school gyms I have been in and has an old, wooden track on the balcony, which circles the entire gym. Many of the rooms still have hardwood floors, which are in good condition even though most of the finishing is worn away. The building also has no central air, which requires most of the rooms to have air conditioning units, and there are very few electrical outlets. The school has three floors with the second acting as the main floor where the main office is located. I devote much of my time on the main and third floors observing teachers and talking with the principal, Markus, and the RP coordinator, Dana.

The Characters

Several types of RPPSD employees are involved with the RP program and their position ultimately determines their responsibilities for implementing RP. In this section, I offer descriptions of the people playing key parts in the rest of my ethnography Their roles influence not only their perspective on the practices, but also their view of others within the school community.

Jean: Federal programs director for RPPSD. When the district began implementing RP, Jean had worked for the district for 5 years; however, she was only working as the federal programs director for about a year. As the federal programs director, Jean is second to the superintendent and therefore, she has a substantial amount

of power in the district. During her first year in this position, Jean introduced the district to RP and persuaded its school board to implement the practices. As such, she strongly supports the practices.

Victor: Superintendent of RPPSD. Victor had been the superintendent of the district for a year and a half when RP were first implemented, but he has worked in the district for over 40 years. Before becoming superintendent, he was an English teacher in the middle school, an assistant principal, and a principal. His role in implementing the RP program is to oversee the program in general.

Markus: The middle school principal. Markus had been the principal of the middle school for a year and a half when RP were implemented into his school. Before becoming principal, he was a teacher for about 24 years. He explains that his role in implementing RP is, "to accept the program, to learn as much as I could about it, and to see how it could be implemented in our building to deal with discipline issues." As the principal, he often deals with disciplinary matters and thus, he works closely with the middle school's RP coordinator, Dana.

Dana: The middle school RP coordinator. Dana was hired as the RP coordinator for the middle school to assist the school in utilizing the practices. Before obtaining her position as a coordinator, she was a teacher in the middle school for 12 years. Coincidentally, Dana grew up in the area and was a student at the middle school. As the coordinator, she helps faculty incorporate RP into their classrooms and acts as a resource if they have any questions. She also facilitates peacemaking circles and conferences with the students. Her knowledge of RP is based largely on training sessions

presented by Greg, the consultant, and attending a summer class on the practices. Since I spend most of my time in the middle school, Dana is one of my key informants.

The elementary school coordinators. There is one coordinator in each elementary school in the district. Like Dana, elementary coordinators help faculty implement RP and facilitate conferences and peacemaking circles in their schools. I interview them to attain their general perception of the program in their school; however, their responses act as support for some of the themes I discover while in the middle school. Hence, they are not main characters in the following piece, but rather, supporting characters. I do not assign them names in the text. They are referred to as coordinator one (C1), coordinator two (C2), and coordinator three (C3).

Greg: The consultant. Greg became an RP consultant about 10 years ago after obtaining his license through the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). He also had training in peacemaking circles through the Minnesota Department of Corrections. He trained faculty, staff, coordinators, and administrators while he worked as the district's RP consultant for about 14 months. Greg also collaborated with Jean to get the RP program implemented into the district.

Barbara: A middle school teacher. Barbara has taught for about 30 years and spent nearly 12 of those years in the middle school. Along with teaching middle school, she taught elementary and high school and also worked in administration. Barbara does not think the RP program is working, at least not to the extent that the administration promised. While observing her first hour science class, I notice she uses RP more so than the other two teachers I observe.

Liz: A middle school teacher. Liz has taught for 15 years in the middle school. She believes RP can work and have positive effects on some of the students. However, she thinks that teachers with poor classroom management skills will not benefit from the practices until those skills are improved. While observing Liz's second hour advanced math class, I notice she is energetic and her students respond well to her lessons.

Robert: A middle school teacher. Robert has taught for 15 years. He has moved between the middle school and high school for about 8 years. In fact, this is his first year back in the middle school and thus, he was not here when its faculty began training on RP. Robert is neutral towards RP, but thinks their use in the school is incomplete. I observe Robert's third hour science class, where he likes to use humor to connect with his students.

Anita: A middle school teacher. I met Anita while passing out a student questionnaire in her class. Anita has taught for almost 23 years, but for only 13 years at the middle school. She supports the program because she argues RP are key in creating a positive school environment students desperately need as many of them live in homes exhibiting a negative environment.

Ethan: A middle school teacher. I also met Ethan while passing out a questionnaire in his class. Ethan has taught in the district for 15 years. For the past 9 years he has moved back and forth between the high school and the middle school. Like Robert, this is Ethan's first year back in the middle school after teaching at the high school and thus, he also missed the school's initial training sessions held last year. Ethan

agrees with the theory behind RP, but he doubts their effectiveness in his school because of the way the district is implementing them.

A Note to the Reader

In this section, I offer helpful directions to clarify how and why sections are written the way they are. First, there are moments during the chapter where people appear to be in conversation with one another even though they are not. For instance, I interview individuals one-on-one, but because I often ask the same questions, I combine these conversations to make the piece less redundant. I also blend my observations from the training sessions because the consultant asks many of the same questions to each training group and his presentation format rarely changes. The end result could be confusing, seeming as though they are observations from one training session when they are actually from four. Finally, at one point, I combine my observations from Barbara, Liz, and Ethan's classes to provide an example of the many responsibilities RPMS teachers often attend to while teaching.

Second, throughout my writing of my ethnography, I reflect on my experience as a middle school student and as a teacher. By sharing my middle school experience, I aim to remind the reader that students are at the receiving end of actions decided upon by adults and thus, should not be forgotten. Furthermore, these actions significantly shape students' identities. My sharing of these experiences, however, should not be interpreted as an attempt to persuade readers that my experiences allow me to speak for students at RPMS. I do not know how it is to grow up in an urban setting, or with parents who speak little-to-no English in a predominantly English speaking country, or in an area where my

race or ethnicity is unlike many others around me. RPMS students' experiences are unique in their own right for a multitude of reasons and do not deserve to be involuntarily obscured with mine. On the other hand, I believe feelings of awkwardness, embarrassment, and fear are common feelings experienced by many adolescents, and thus, those emotions are features we share.

In general, I encourage you to reflect on your experiences with educational institutions, either as students, teachers, or parents of students, while you journey through the text. Hopefully, it inspires you to come to your own conclusions for why the people of RPPSD react to RP in the manner they do.

First Impressions

My first moments in the district and middle school are telling. Interestingly, they foreshadow themes I later discuss and set the tone for the rest of my ethnography. Therefore, I present a portion of my training observations, which explores faculty's first impression of RP, because I want you to witness the tension in the culture as RP are initially introduced to faculty.

I arrive 15 minutes early to the RP training session and again, I am on my quest to find the perfect seat. Unfortunately, since no one is here, trying to commit to a seat is a challenging task for me. What if I sit in a seat and everyone sits far away from me? I decide to wait and choose a seat when more participants are present. As the participants finally make their way into the room, I ask them if they will sign a consent form so that I may observe them during the session. Most of them happily oblige, but others seem

annoyed with my presence. "Yeah, sure. Whatever," a participant grumbles. I try not to

take their lack of enthusiasm personally.

After I collect all of the forms, I find a seat in the third row, center-left. I am

sitting fairly close to some participants, but not close enough for them to read what I am

writing in my notebook. The focus of the session today is using affective statements in

classrooms. Greg, the RP consultant presenting the training session, stands in the front

with his first slide projected on the screen as he prefaces his presentation:

> G: [The school district] brought in RP, but we were not giving teachers tools *in* the classroom to deal with disruptive kids. Therefore, the district decided to implement [the Nurtured Hearts] approach so teachers can do RP more consistently and effectively.

He explains that while conferences and circles are working, teachers are unsure about

what to do before an issue develops into something that needs a circle or conference.

Thus, the Nurtured Hearts approach fulfills this need. To be clear, other restorative

practitioners do not necessarily adhere to this approach. Even so, Greg utilizes this

approach to demonstrate the application of affective statements, which is a restorative

practice. Greg begins the training by simply asking, "What do you want to get out of this

training session?" Some participants raise their hand, while others call out answers.

> P1: I've been here for 20 years and I want validation in the classroom.
> P2: Something to assist me with students whose parents are the worst enemy.
> P3: I feel pretty comfortable with my students. (Her tone indicates frustration, as if the session will not apply to her and is a waste of her time.)
> P4: Reinforce what we do in the classroom.
> P6: I think the classroom teachers we have now might be fine, but I think we need to give substitutes more training. We have children who get out of lessons because they have to go to the bathroom. They should have a set time to go and then that's it. But maybe we could talk with the subs and fill them in. They need to know what to do when three kids don't have their spelling book. Teachers in the classrooms know their students, but subs don't know.

P10: We don't have that many problems. We have a problem with them speaking their own language and not English, but we don't have many problems. I would like to learn something from here about how to help students solve problems.

P11: I'm fairly new to this, so I would like a better understanding of RP.

P12: Get more ideas and insight for those extreme cases. I have a lot of ADHD kids that I would like to know how to handle.

P16: To deal with problem students more effectively

P17: I'd probably say the same thing. I want to think about the long term. How can we make it long lasting for them?

P18: I have some challenging students and I'd like to know how to deal with them.

P19: Frankly, I'm mad with these children. I want them to come in with a different attitude. I want them to want to learn. They have an attitude and I want them to change. (Pause.) I want to let them know how this affects them 20 and 30 years from now.

P20: I'd like to see more circles being done. Maybe they're going on and I'm missing them, but I have some special education students that are just making life sheer hell.

P21: Children who are our lower level readers are always a problem. Something has to be done and something has to be done in a small group, probably after school. I think that because we have students who have reading problems, it's causing a lot of problems. I'm looking for something to improve reading, improve behavior, and something that instills more pride in the child.

P18: I talked about this with a friend. (She explains how she is continuously having problems with one particular girl.) My friend says, "Have you hugged her?" and I said, "Well, I put my hands on her shoulders," and my friend said, "Well from what you just explained to me it sounds like her home life isn't the best. She's probably never touched." I'm just wondering if this has anything to do with the Nurtured Hearts approach?

P17: (She adds to P18's statement.) I think it goes back to what I was saying with making it long lasting. I've hugged my students at the end [of a conflict] and at first they looked at me like... (She makes a confused face.)

Not all the participants' goals align well with the goals of RP. However, after Greg clarifies the purpose of the session, he assures them that although he will not be able to address all of their concerns, they will gain something from his training.

Greg has everyone pair up with another participant to work on an exercise. Because there are an odd number of participants, he pairs me with P4, a woman working as a counselor at one of the grade schools and at the middle school. She talks to me about

her experience with RP, and it is apparent that she supports implementing the RP program into the district. She tells me that using affective questions helps her talk with her students.

The session continues and Greg discusses ways to not be disrespected in the classroom. He asks, "What's going to happen if you start threatening students or calling them names?" A participant adamantly replies, "They'll get defensive." Greg tells us that affective statements work better than threats. He gives an example of using affective statements by acting as though he is a teacher and we are students in a classroom misbehaving. He turns the lights off as a cue for us (the students) to be quiet. "Okay, we're going to keep [turning the lights off] until we get it right, but we're making progress!" he says. He then explains to us (who are no longer acting as students) that after getting in the habit of using such statements "you'll finally get it to work 100%. The key is to accuse them of being great!" Two women sitting in front of me glance at each other and roll their eyes as if to say, "I'm not buying it." They are unconvinced.

During the break, Greg talks to a woman about the use of affective statements. As a grade school teacher, her concern is that these statements, and other RP, take too much time to perform in her class and take time away from her good kids.

> P3: I have a student who is bad because of his background. If I spend all this time on the bad and disruptive students, then what does this do to all the good kids?
> G: Time me. You did a really good job raising your hand today.

The teacher is unimpressed.

> P3: I hear you, but I have so much to do during the day. I just don't feel like I have time to constantly praise them. I feel like I *need* to get [the disruptive students] out of my room.
> G: Well, it's all about your perspective.

This is not the first time I have heard a teacher point out the extra burden these practices place on them. During these instances, Greg refrains from presenting an attitude suggesting you're-wrong-and-I'm-right. Instead, he is empathetic to their suspicions, but emphasizes that he believe the practices will help them in the long run. Though Greg remains as understanding as possible, this teacher does not seem to want to budge. No matter what he says she is still skeptical, which is understandable because she will be the one using them. However, she seems to have entered the dark side of teachers' world, where teachers, after making many failed attempts to get students to behave, succumb to the conclusion that nothing will work, so why bother? She and other teachers appear frustrated for having to use RP. Many appear unsure of how this is supposed to look in the classroom. They worry about the time it will take away from their already information packed classes. I hear a tone in these teachers' voices that says, "I've been doing the best I possibly can, but *you* think you have the answer?" I ask Greg months after he left the district about the possibility of teachers portraying him as an egotistical outsider who believes he has all the answers.

> K: Did you ever feel that faculty took offense to you being there because they felt you were trying to tell them how to do their job?
> G: First of all, teachers, particularly in urban schools, have a tougher job than most Americans understand. It's extremely difficult to deal with all the complex and troubling behaviors. Teachers are almost inundated with ever changing expectations and requirements. So, teachers in [urban] schools tend to be skeptical of those ideas and resistant until they see some real evidence of effectiveness, as they should be. If an outsider comes in, even if he's as nice and as handsome as I am (laughs), I understand that he or she can still be misunderstood and resisted.

Since Greg is often confronted with skepticism it's understandable why he is not troubled by the teachers' doubtful remarks in this session.

When we get back from break, Greg emphasizes the importance of promoting inner-wealth in our students. He asserts that we should be praising students if they are "normally disruptive, but at the moment, are not." Participants fervently raise their hand.

> P3: I feel like I'm promoting inner-wealth, but then I have a lesson to teach.
> G: It's continuous, but it's only taking a few seconds.
> P28: Yeah, but I don't know if [I] can [promote inner-wealth] when these students have to go home or out in the hallway. They come back in and [I] have to start all over. Sometimes I feel like I'm not going to be able to transform the student because I only have them for so long. As soon as they leave me…(She stops talking and shrugs as if to say, "It's out of my control.")

Greg responds to these concerns by reiterating that affective statements will help resolve these issues and do not take much time away from the classroom. He continues with the training and a few minutes later a woman asks him how long she needs to use affective statements before seeing their effects. Greg gives examples of his experience using them, but he seems hesitant to give a specific amount of time. Finally, as though he feels trapped to give a specific answer, he surrenders and awards her with the response, "It takes a couple of weeks."

We now move into an exercise where Greg has a participant play a character named Jane, who is supposed to represent a student at our school. He divides everyone, except for Jane, into two groups: negative and positive. Pre-typed negative and positive comments are handed out to their corresponding groups and then Greg has the negative group go first. They say things to Jane like, "I told you a hundred times to stop doing that!" "Why are you doing that? You're not *that* stupid," "Don't you know what a four is? You're a first grader!" After the negative comments, we talk about their oppressive effects. Greg asks Jane how these comments make her feel.

Jane: I feel like I'm getting bombarded with so many negative feelings. I didn't feel too good.
G: So, how may Jane feel when going to lunch?
Jane: I'm probably going to hit someone or take it out on someone else.

Greg then instructs the other group to go up to Jane and say their positive comments. They tell her things like, "You're being so respectful right now," "Thank you for being so quiet while others are working!" "You're doing great. Keep it up!" After the positive comments, Jane describes how these statements make her feel differently compared to the negative ones.

Greg: How are you feeling now?
Jane: I'm feeling pretty good! I feel like I can help others now that I feel good about myself.

Still, a man seems annoyed with the implied positive nature of RP and asks, "So, when they slam the door, [I'm] just supposed to just let it go?" Greg replies, "No, you explain to them that there are consequences." The man's irritated tone insinuates that RP are too lenient for misbehaving students.

Towards the end of the session, some of the participants confess they have problems with the parents of their students. A woman (P3) says, "I've had frustrations with parents that don't have a clue about how to get their child to behave. They don't know what to do either." Another participant (P2) asks, "What happens if the parent is as defiant as the child?" In response to their concerns, Greg tells a story of a boy with a defiant mother. The child was difficult and the mother was not helping the situation. One day, as she dropped her son off at school, she yelled out of her car, "100 points for shooting the principal!" Greg found out that the mother valued reading skills and felt they were especially important for her son to learn, so Greg offered to help the boy with

his reading. Because of this, the mother began warming up to Greg and became less

defiant.

> G: If we engage students, if we don't talk down to them, and if we adapt to their needs, a child will change and as such, their parents will change. Basically, we need to keep trying. Just a few months ago, the boy called me and said, "I'm doing well. I have a business and a family. I just wanted you to know." What I'm saying is, you can't ever give up on kids. There is always hope.

Still, some of the teachers want specific strategies to use to stop misbehavior in the

classroom. To satisfy these teachers, Greg explains the Re-set method in which students

take a quick 30 seconds of time-out. The method piqued one woman's (P34) interest.

> P34: I'd like a list of strategies like the Re-set because after a month my students will get bored.
> G: But this isn't just about the Re-set. You can alter strategies.

Greg makes clear that strategies, like the Re-set strategy, are not the point of the training

session and he redirects the focus back to affective statements. As though she is agitated

by his dismissal the woman insists, "But after awhile that gets monotonous and then [I'll]

have to use another strategy. They get bored." I do not understand why she thinks using

affective statements will become monotonous. It is not as if there are only a few

statements a teacher can use. Greg calmly responds, "That may be, but I haven't

witnessed that [happening]." Another participant offers the woman another way of doing

the Re-set by using a flower. I get the feeling some of the teachers are not satisfied with

using affective statements as a strategy, perhaps because they are dependent on the

context of the situation and as such, can vary. They seem to want to know a step-by-step

process that will work with any situation.

Overall, my observations of the RP training sessions provide a transparent portrait of a frustrated and distressed teacher. They do not provide, however, an accurate depiction of the complex issues affecting teachers. Furthermore, as informative as these initial observations are, they are biased because they only focus on what adults think of RP; they do not explain what RPPSD students think of RP. Thus, they only capture a blurry snapshot of the culture. In the rest of my ethnography, however, I attempt to zoom in on this snapshot and analyze it through multiple lenses until it reveals a clear picture of the complexities of many educational institutions today, especially those implementing programs of reform. To do so, I begin by discussing the objectives for implementing RP into the RPPSD. Second, I explain administrators' and coordinators' burden to convince teachers to use the practices. Third, I reveal the challenges of using RP in schools. Fourth, I uncover the reasons for teachers' resistance toward RP. Then I shed light on RPMS students' world and RP's place within it. Lastly, I conclude my ethnography by summarizing my findings.

Objectives for Implementing RP

I'm on my way out of the middle school after a long day of observing classes, when I divert my attention to the students' lockers. They are twice the size of my middle school locker; still, something about them isn't quite right. I don't see the brightly colored flyers or hand-made posters that decorated the lockers in my school. The posters informed my peers and me about who was involved in a sport or activity for the season. Students with a poster on their locker were considered to be popular (or at least on the path towards popularity). I remember the red megaphone with neatly drawn block letters

spelling out my name in black marker that was taped to my locker. I worked hard for that megaphone!

I tried out for the cheerleading squad because I thought being a cheerleader would win me some cool points. With the help of my uber-peppy, cheerleader cousin, I made the squad. Unfortunately, my being on the squad just exaggerated my uncoolness. As a poor kid, I found ways to not appear poor to my classmates. I wanted that part of me to be invisible, but every now and then, my poorness stuck out like a sore thumb, like when I had to wrap up things around my house that looked new for my friends' birthday presents.   Or when I could no longer keep friends from coming over to my house and seeing the porch roof that was starting to cave in. I was well aware of my poorness, but I tried to keep it under control and being on the cheerleading squad was supposed to assist me with my plan. The plan, however, backfired. I thought that because the cheerleaders at my school appeared to have money that I would appear to have money. Instead, my poorness became even more evident. With each wave of her pom-poms, my cheerleading self kept unveiling my poor self.   Our squad had to buy matching shoes, outfits, bloomers, and jackets and there were no substitutes. I dreaded asking my mom for money because I knew she didn't have it. I would wait to the last minute to ask her because I hated how upset she would get with me. No longer having the spirit to be knocked down with my poorness, I quit the squad. I told my cheerleading coach that I wanted to focus on drama. I didn't need to buy new shoes to be a thespian.

As I think about my reason for quitting cheerleading, I realize it is similar to the district's decision to implement the RP program. When I quit cheerleading, I resolved

the financial strain my involvement with the activity caused my mother. Similarly, administrators are trying to resolve the district's poor budget (which negatively affects students) by keeping students in school. However, coordinators also have objectives for using RP in their school. Furthermore, teachers have inconsistent thoughts on administrators' reasons for bringing the RP program to the district. In the following sections, I explain this matter further and discuss administrators' reasons for implementing the RP program into the district, coordinators' objectives for using it in their school, and teachers' perceptions on administrators' objectives and their intentions for implementing the program.

Administrators' objectives for implementing RP. To be clear, administrators note many goals for implementing the RP program, but fulfilling these objectives seems to rely on administrators' primary reason for bringing RP into the district—to reduce suspension and expulsion. Therefore, for administrators, reducing suspension and expulsions will start a domino effect and alleviate other problems plaguing the district. These problems include a poor image and a disappearing student body, which appear to be contributing to the district's poor financial status. Accordingly, I lay out the administrators' objectives in a linear fashion because they are dependent on each other. I first discuss administrators' primary objective, which is to reduce suspension and expulsion. Then I examine their desire to restore the district's image and finally, their goal to rebuild the student population. However, since administrators often note that fulfilling these objectives will bring money back into the district, money is a popular theme within each section.

To reduce suspension and expulsion. Administrators suggest their main reason for implementing RP into the district is to help resolve its high expulsion and suspension rate. In fact, the principal of RPMS, Markus, insinuates that this is the primary objective for the district when he describes his role for implementing the program:

> M: My role as administrator of the building was to accept the program, to learn as much as [I] could about it, and to see how it could be implemented in our building to basically deal with the discipline issues we had and some of the other issues with suspension and so forth.

Markus implies that there is a discipline problem in his school, which is likely related to suspension and expulsion as he also mentions. Further, his role is to examine how the program may be used to improve this problem. Victor, the superintendent, elaborates on the district's suspension and expulsion problem:

> V: We had a lot of [suspensions and expulsions]. We were cited by [the state's department of education] for having too many suspensions, although a lot of districts are [being cited] right now. The number of suspensions, if we look at it over the course of a year, is very high. We realized that we're not fulfilling our responsibility to the kids and to the families.

Therefore, after the district received a citation from the state, administrators were pressured to find a way to lower their number of suspensions and expulsions. Jean, the federal programs director for the district, is responsible for choosing the RP program, and she explains her reason for considering RP as a response to the state's concern.

> J: When I took this position and was looking at the district as a whole, I could see that discipline was a major issue. Expulsions at the high school and the middle school are just too high and I thought the only way we can [fix] this is through a whole philosophical change. We're not going to come in to the schools and say, "Look, you can't expel." No, we've got to give teachers and principals other tools, other ways to solve the problem. I believe [RP] are those tools.

Jean would also like for the district to lower its number of recurring offenders. She explains, "If you go to some of our schools, it's the same student coming in over and over again. If we can take the time to have that student held accountable for their behavior, we can change that behavior." Financially, the district needs to reduce expulsions because they negatively affect the district's budgetary funds.

> J: If [I] want to be really crass and blunt about it, every time a student walks out that door, there's $7,500 going out the door. Financially, we are the poorest district [in the region]. We cannot sustain that. We have to start working with our kids and educating our kids.

I ask Jean to explain why a district loses money when a student leaves the district.

> J: Well, for instance, we get a tuition grant from the state. [Districts are] different based on their tax base. In other words, if you went into Norfolk[7], they're probably getting $11,000 a kid. If you went into Brownstown, they're getting $10,000. If you come into [our district], we're getting $7,500 dollars. That's why when you go to Norfolk High School you'll think you're at a college. They have state of the art everything. Then you'll come into ours and understand the difference. When we lose a student, we lose $7,500. When a student registers, that's $7,500 and that [money] makes up our general fund. So, when I heard that [the high school] principal expelled 25 kids, I said to him, "Do the math. 25 times 75," and everybody said, "Oh well, he's making the environment safe." I said, "No, he's making us poor!" I can't believe that all of those kids cannot be helped and that they're all trash. I can't believe that.

Jean equates students to money, which may seem insensitive, but her position requires her to consider money a priority. If the district has a limited budget, it cannot sufficiently provide students the education they need to succeed. Thus, although she genuinely cares for the students in her district, she has to think about how the district can accrue more money and a way to do that is to keep their current students in school by diminishing the expulsion rate.

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[7] The names of the cities are changed.

To restore image. Another objective administrators hope to attain through the RP

program is to restore the district's image, yet this goal seems to be reliant on the district's

effort to reduce their suspension and expulsion rate. Jean and Victor suggest RP will

transform their schools into safe environments where positive communication is

exhibited.

> J: My goals are for teachers to learn how to talk to kids in a respectful manner and
> that it's not okay as the adult to be sarcastic with the children, [and] for teachers
> to model proper and positive communication. I'm also hoping we create safe
> learning environments where teachers and students feel safe and where the
> perception in our community is that we have safe, quality, learning environments.
> Right now, that is not the case in every [school], so we've lost our credibility and
> we have to build that trust back up. Then of course, in the end my major goal is
> to raise student achievement, so that our schools are not considered failing
> schools, and they're not going in the wrong direction.
>
> V: Kids being held to a higher accountability and staff also; staff being in a
> position where they're actually more responsible [for] helping kids instead of just
> pushing them out the door.
> K: You see a lot of teachers who are like that right now?
> V: There are some, yeah.

Jean describes the consequences of the community viewing the district unfavorably.

> K: It sounds like a domino effect. If the district loses kids, then it loses money. If
> it loses money, then it is not getting the money it needs to maintain its facilities
> and appear as a good school so more kids will enroll.
> J: Exactly, and if everyone out in the community says, "Well, they just expel like
> crazy," they're not going to put their kid in here. We're giving the impression
> that the environment is not safe.

Jean seems exceptionally wary of the district being portrayed in a negative light as it can

affect the district's ability to enroll students. The district's RP consultant, Greg, has

experience working in many schools and he can attest to urban school districts' paranoia

over their image. During one of his training sessions, I notice people are hesitant to use

the phrase *out of control* when describing their students. I ask Greg if he can explain why

this happened.

> G: All school districts have image sensitivity. Particularly, small, urban districts that are competing against charter schools. The term *out of control* is something that would not present a good image for the district or the school if used in the community. Quite frankly, we have a lot of work to do to bring in RP. I'm a little concerned that it's being seen as an image enhancement rather than as a difficult and long journey to travel.

The district may in fact be using RP as a way to enhance their image, however,

administrators seem to be aware that restoring the district's image will require a lot of

work resolving the problems currently damaging it.

To rebuild the student population. Rebuilding the student population is not a

goal administrators articulate as clearly as other objectives. However, this objective

appears to underlie their hopes to reduce their suspension and expulsion rate and to

restore the district's image because meeting these objectives should increase the student

population and bring money back into the district. This objective is best understood if we

examine the district's student population, which has declined considerably in the past few

years. Teachers at RPMS are witnessing this decline first hand and argue that charter

schools are to blame. One of the teachers, Anita, mentions that six years ago when

charter schools infiltrated the area, her school lost 300 students in one year. She

illustrates the extent charter schools hurt the school when she states, "The charter schools

killed us. At one time, we had a thousand kids at this school. Now, we're at 400 or so."

Another teacher, Barbara, also describes the effects charter schools have on the student

population at RPMS and the added financial stress it brings to the district.

K: I heard that the student population keeps dropping, which means the district loses more money?

B: Right. Our district is small and we have as many charter schools as we have public schools. So, the competition keeps getting fiercer and fiercer.

K: Yeah. It will be interesting to come back once I get done with this project to see…

B: To see what's left? (Laughs.)

K: Well, to see what's changed…hopefully, for the better?

B: No, after yesterday's State of the District meeting, it's a grim picture, a very grim picture.

K: It seems like the state's educational system in general is…well, it seems like things just aren't…doing well.

B: Yes, and the source of all the grimness is the state not having any money. So [the state] is telling us, "You have so much per student," so we plan on that and we've made all the expenditures. Then all of a sudden, "Oh sorry, you're going to be cut $165 a student," [but] we've already purchased all of these things. How are we supposed to *un*purchase them? We're spending money that we don't have [and] every year the deficit keeps growing and growing. Then the state looks at us and says, "Okay, you need a deficit reduction plan," but how are we supposed to reduce when we don't really know how much we're getting? Or how many students we're going to have? We lost 900 students in the last 5 years.

K: Oh, my! Yeah, I noticed the portable classrooms. (There are ten empty portable classrooms sitting in a lot beside the school.)

B: Yeah, we used to have 700 students in this school.

Although Barbara and Anita do not agree on the number of students that used to attend RPMS, they agree that their student body is disappearing and that charter schools are to blame. Thus, as the RPPSD competes with charter schools, administrators anxiously want parents to perceive the district in a positive light so they will enroll their children into its schools and rebuild the student population. However, Barbara also points out a significant issue concerning the state and its role in reducing budgets and increasing ambiguity in forced reduction, which explains the district's urgency to resolve its unstable financial status.

Administrators' decision to bring RP into the district seems like a no-brainer because if the program is successful, it will reduce suspension and expulsion, which will

present the district in a positive light. If the district's image is restored, then it can

rebuild its student population, which will inevitably bring money back into the district.

Therefore, administrators' objectives for the RP program are complex. In the next two

sections, however, we will see if administrators are clearly communicating their

objectives to coordinators and teachers.

Coordinators' objectives. As I note in the section above, administrators have

many objectives for the RP program, but they all appear to stem from the primary

objective to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions in the district.

Coordinators note the significance of this objective for administrators. For instance, C2

explains:

> C2: The district wants to see less fighting, less suspensions. I think [RP] can lead
> to a higher graduation rate.
> K: So do you think [administrators] are more interested in numbers?
> C2: Yeah.

However, though coordinators recognize reducing suspension and expulsion as an

objective, coordinators do not seem to emphasize this objective as much as

administrators. For instance, C2 focuses on keeping students safe while in school.

> K: If someone asked you about RP, what would you tell him or her?
> C2: I would tell them that we are here to welcome all children into school, to keep
> all children in school, and keep them safe.
> K: Do you think there are other objectives?
> C2: I think there are many more objectives, but being at the elementary level,
> those are the ones I'm focusing on.

Yet, Dana believes that by reducing suspensions and expulsions, RP will lead to an

overall productive learning environment where students learn how to manage conflicts in

a positive way, which is her ultimate goal for the program.

K: What do you think are the objectives for RP?

D: The overall objective is to reduce suspension and expulsion rate so students are in the classroom learning. That is the first objective of any school system is to have [their] students in class to learn. Through that[, the objective] is creating skills for students to utilize while they're in school and to benefit [from when they are] out of school, but also to create relationships [so] they are not continuously harming one another. They can be in school and not worry about relationships outside of the classroom. Their focus is on what's going on in class because they know they can resolve any personal issues they may have somewhere else at a different time. That's what my goal is for them.

C3 suggests suspensions and expulsions are not as much of a problem in her school, so instead, her school aims to make the culture more positive for students.

C3: To me the goal of RP is to improve school culture. So I feel like anything I'm doing to improve school culture is part of RP because we're making things better and we're getting the students involved.

K: Is this your objective for your school?

C3: No, I think it's the district's objective to improve the schools' culture. [It's the objective for] some schools more so than others. I think any district's objective is to improve what's happening [in its schools].

K: Do you foresee things changing in the school after RP have been implemented for a few years?

C3: I think we'll see fewer suspensions. We've already started seeing that a little bit this year. But this particular building did not really have an issue with student discipline to begin with, so we are looking more at changing the school culture, not just with students, but also with staff. [We are] making the physical environment more positive.

C1 also mentions changing the school climate into a less negative environment where learning can thrive.

C1: Well, the ultimate objective is to change the climate of the school to be more conducive to learning and less conducive to conflict and negativity.

K: Are those the district's objectives?

C1: I would say the district's objective is kind of a hybrid of that because [the district] is all about having a positive, inviting environment. RP don't have to necessarily be in schools. I've gone to my son's school and I've almost asked the principal, "Hey are you guys practicing RP here?" because [I] walk into the building and everything is restorative. The climate is calm. There's a common language, which is an objective [of RP]. There's a common way of approaching situations. We want to change the climate, that is our vision, and we're going to

do it by having a common language. We're going to have a common approach to conflict and other social problems and to [students] breaking the rules.

Unlike other coordinators, however, she also mentions the importance of faculty and staff having a common language, which she suggests is another objective of RP.

In general, coordinators note the importance of reducing suspensions and expulsions and believe RP can achieve this so students can stay in school. However, coordinators also emphasize creating an overall safe and positive school atmosphere. Although this objective aligns well with administrators' goal to restore the image of the district, coordinators are less concerned with the image of the school or district than they are for making their school an optimal place for students to learn. This is not to say that administrators only care about the district's image. Jean and Victor, for instance, want to transform their schools into positive and safe environments and they adamantly believe RP can make this happen. As administrators, however, they are also burdened with the responsibility of making the district appear to parents and the state board as a safe and positive learning environment. Yet, they need quantitative evidence to support any school improvement claims, which may be why they stress the need for RP to reduce suspension and expulsion more so than coordinators.

What do teachers think? Some teachers imply that administrators' goal is to create a positive school atmosphere, while others are skeptical and suggest that the program is being used to cover up for the district's expulsion and suspension problem.

To create a positive atmosphere. Anita, Liz, and Robert insinuate that the objective for the program is to create an overall positive school atmosphere where conflicts are handled in a productive way.

K: What do you think are the objectives of restorative practices? What do you think the administrators are trying to get from this?
A: Less confrontation. Less fighting. Less bickering. Trying to keep [students] on task.

L: I think the main thing is, instead of bashing the kid and yelling at them negatively, to try to think of ways to get them to change their behavior more positively.

R: Well, hopefully it's to alleviate some of the problems in the hallways and in the classrooms. I think that's one of the major goals, to have a consistent way of dealing with the students.

These teachers appear to understand that the objective for implementing RP is to help their school resemble a more peaceful space. Although administrators would likely agree with this objective because it resembles their objective to restore the district's image, decreasing suspension and expulsion throughout the district seems to be a higher priority for them. But since administrators have several goals they would like to obtain through RP, it is understandable why teachers may not recognize reducing suspension and expulsion as administrators' main goal.

To cover up the suspension and expulsion problem. Barbara, Robert, and Ethan suggest they are skeptical of administrators' objective for the RP program. Barbara reveals her suspicion when she describes administrators as selling the program to teachers as a way to decrease the suspension and expulsion rate. She seems doubtful, however, that this is their actual goal.

K: What about the program's objectives? Do you know what the objectives are?
B: No. I could tell you what we were told to *sell* us on the program and basically it was sold to us [by them] saying it was an intervention because the middle school had too many suspensions, too many students with days out that we have to do something to keep them in school. So, this was the solution. That's basically what it was.

While Barbara only hints at her skepticism, Robert and Ethan heartily express that they are not only skeptical, but that the program is being used as a cover up for the district's suspension and expulsion problem. Interestingly, even though Robert tells me earlier that he believes the objective is to alleviate problems in the hallways and classrooms, he later discloses that it may really be a ruse.

> K: What do you think their goals were then for the program?
> R: To stop the suspensions. To cover them up. I'd like to see the data on suspensions versus how many days…instead of last year to this year, to see if…I mean, it has to be working because like I said, there were [students] fighting that were supposed to get 5 days, but they only got 2 days with their parents coming in and having a session with both parties. So there's 3 days there. If that happens 50 times, there's a 150 days that have been cut off.

Robert insinuates that administrators may be deceivingly remedying the district's suspension rate by merely decreasing the number of days a student is out of school. He suggests administrators are using the program to give the appearance that they are effectively solving bad student behavior in the schools, when in fact they are not. Similarly, Ethan also believes administrators are using RP as a way to prove that they have done all they can do to solve the suspension and expulsion problem.

> E: When a student is going to be very problematic and may end up going before the board for expulsion, I think [administrators] got to have that documentation of RP, so they can look the parents square in the eye and say, "Look, your child and our school district can no longer work together. You got to go somewhere else." I think that's the reason the district grabbed on to RP. I don't think that they were really convinced that it was going to change behavior, but I think they were looking at it as a tool for justification for expulsion. Therefore, they don't put all the necessary effort into RP to truly bring about change in student behavior.
> K: So you think it's more of a way to show parents, "Look, we've had this conference and this circle. We've done all that we can do."
> E: Right. It's another shield they put up because they got cited for too many student suspensions and expulsions. So, this was just another layer in the process and I don't think there's a 100% effort to try and make it work.

K: What do you think are the objectives of RP or the district's objective for the program?

E: I clearly understand and agree with the objectives of RP. [They're] a model for humanity. Wherever [we] are [we] need to accept responsibility for what [we] do. That part is wonderful. [RP] should be making students think about further future actions. It's like a verbal parent sitting on the kids' shoulder. That's the *good* thing about them. Now, the way the district has implemented them and the objectives for using them…again, I think [they're] just another shield, another layer to protect [the district] from liabilities in the future. They've spent tremendous amounts of money on [the program] and they've continued to spend tremendous amounts of money on it, but I think that's just to keep the lights and curtains on the show. So at the end of the day [administrators] can say, "Look we threw money at [the problem]. We threw 300 thousand dollars on RP. We've put people in the school. We got a program in place." And they can show them the model for RP and people will scratch their heads and say, "Wow, that's really great." But at the end of the day, if you look around this building right now, I could light up my attendance with suspensions. How many of those bad kids are suspended until the end of the year because we don't want them around?

Barbara, Robert, and Ethan's skepticism suggests they may be distrustful of administrators, but it is unclear yet as to why they may feel this way. Unfortunately, their lack of distrust may cause them to view the practices as not credible.

Overall, administrators, coordinators, and teachers appear to agree with the program's objective to create an overall positive atmosphere. The most telling finding, however, is teachers' skepticism of administrators' intention for implementing RP. Unfortunately, this may make it difficult for administrators and coordinators to convince teachers to use the practices. In the next section, I discuss administrators' and coordinators' burden to convince teachers to use the practices.

Administrators' and Coordinators' Burden: Convincing Teachers

Administrators and coordinators believe RP will benefit students, teachers, and the school atmosphere in general. Still, in order for the school to benefit from RP, they must be embraced and used by all in the school community. For this reason, Jean felt it

necessary to obtain a 7 to 0 vote from the local school board when they voted on the RP

program.

> J: I wanted to make sure that at the time we presented [it to the board] there would
> be absolutely no questions and I wanted a seven to zero vote on it. When [anyone]
> is starting something totally new that's a total paradigm shift, [they] know
> [they're] on shaky ground. I'm in hostile waters here, shark-infested waters. I
> know I'm doing something that is very different. If one decision maker is not for
> it, they can poison another. That's why it had to be seven to zero. I have enough
> resistance without having a board member up there saying, "I told you. I told you
> it [was] not going to work."

Luckily for Jean, at the end of her presentation the board voted unanimously for the

implementation of RP. However, Jean's description of her being in shark-infested waters

leaves me with the impression that perhaps not everyone in the district supports the

program. Indeed, RP are met with resistance at RPPSD and administrators and

coordinators suggest teachers resist the most, making it difficult to convince them to use

the practices.

Administrators and coordinators are dependent on teachers to use the practices in

the classrooms, which is why administrators require teachers to attend training sessions

on RP. When the program was initially brought into the district Jean insisted that

teachers become familiar with the practices.

> J: As a situation occurs in a particular classroom the onsite coordinator will be
> able to conduct the circle or the conferences, but sometimes the teachers are going
> to have to do it. There's going to have to be a mutual sharing.

Dana and another coordinator feel teachers do not understand the extent to which the

success of RP lays in their hands.

> D: I don't think that some of the teachers truly understand that it starts in the
> classroom. It's [about] the way we speak to the children. [We] cannot expect one
> office to do it. We need the teachers behind it. We need the teachers utilizing it,

taking their training and calling it what it is to the students by saying, "Okay, we need to talk restoratively. What happened? What were you thinking at the time? How are you going to fix it?" I think it's important that kids know what it is and why we're doing it and sometimes that's not necessarily the message that's going out.

C2: I truly believe it has to start in the classroom. What we learned in the middle of the year about the Nurtured Heart Approach, that's what needs to be done in the classroom. What the teachers were trained on back in September, that's [their] job. That is what they need to be doing. It does not work if I walk into a classroom and they're wonderful for me, [which] happens.

During his involvement with the program, Greg noticed teachers resisted the practices.

G: My impression [of how people were reacting to RP] was that it was positive. I know there was an undertone of resistance and negativity among some teachers, but I didn't sense that in the community. Certainly among some teachers, but that's to be expected.

Resistance still exists after Greg left the district, which makes RP challenging for coordinators to effectively implement into their schools.

C1: My biggest battle has been the [teachers]. A lot of them are stuck on the idea that anything against the rules needs punishment. They feel if somebody fights, they should automatically be suspended. They don't [understand] the fact that if we're teaching social skills, walking [students] through it, fixing the issue, and getting to know where their mindset is and how we can change their mindset, then we [will] make them a better person later on.

C2: My overwhelming problem, and the only thing I can really work toward, is getting the teachers to accept [RP]. Getting teachers to talk the talk and walk the walk has been the most difficult thing. They're at a point right now where they're angry. They don't want to hear another word about [RP]. [Teachers] don't want the children that they want suspended brought back. The children are accepting of it and the parents are accepting of it. We just have to make it a building-wide initiative.

The superintendent, Victor, also acknowledges teachers' resistance.

V: It is a very well received program with parents, students, and some of the staff. The challenge is to get the entire staff [of teachers] to be on board with it. Some teachers are embracing it. Some just want to kick the kid out of the class and say, "Leave me alone, this doesn't work."

Therefore, administrators and coordinators point to teachers' resistance as a major problem with RP implementation.

Teachers' resistance to RP is not surprising. Many people have a difficult time accepting changes in policy or practice, especially when they alter a routine or are recognized as burdensome. Yet, to what extent is resistance viewed as complicating the implementation of RP? An elementary coordinator, C2, helps me understand how resistance can be detrimental to the program.

> C2: The people who are fighting it are very strong in this building. It's a small group and they just don't want to see change. They like being in control.
> K: Do they feed off of each other?
> C2: Yeah. I'm never going to change them because it's their personalities.
> K: Do you think if you were to change the minds of one or two people in the group, the rest will follow?
> C2: I don't think they are going to change their minds until they see it working somewhere else.

Later she confides in me how brutal these teachers can be.

> K: So how do you think these teachers feel about RP?
> C2: Oh, well, I'm the Barney Lady. (We both laugh.) You know the Barney song.
> K: The "I Love You" song?
> C2: Yeah.
> K: Oh, okay, they think that you're treating them a little bit too….
> C2: Too nice! Yeah.
> K: Have you ever heard them call you that in your presence?
> C2: Oh, yeah, they refer to me as that openly. I think they were trying to get a rise out of me, but they didn't and they never said it again.

The group's intentionally hurtful remark combined with their lack of concern for behaving in such a way toward a colleague demonstrates their power within the school. As such, this powerful group may be communicating their negative opinion of the RP program and therefore, influencing others. Their negativity may be due to their

misguided perception of the ideology behind RP, assuming that RP are a soft way of

dealing with punishment. Many teachers note that some of their colleagues have similar

views. Barbara and Liz specifically note that those with this interpretation of RP are

definitely affecting the implementation of the program. Liz adamantly says, "[This

interpretation] prevents the whole thing!" Furthermore, she also agrees that if her school

is going to benefit from RP, coordinators cannot be the only ones utilizing the practices.

> L: I think [RP] are being done, but I think [only] the coordinator is doing them. I
> don't think [they] are being done by the rest of the staff members. Until [they]
> are brought in by everyone, I don't think [they're] going to change everything.
> (For example, she specifically mentions changing student behavior in a positive
> way.)

Consequently, RP supporters in the district view these powerful groups (and individuals)

as infiltrating the culture like a contagious disease, infecting those most vulnerable and,

in essence, killing the body of the program. In the next section, I examine how RP

supporters identify these people as boulders.

Identifying Boulders

Dana recognizes resistance as an issue in her school. She categorizes faculty and

staff in relation to the degree to which they accept RP by placing them in one of three

categories: the "boulders," the "middle ones," and those "naturally restorative."

> D: I think [we] have three different populations: *the boulders* consider it like,
> "Kumbaya! Let's sit around, hold hands and smoke the peace pipe." They think,
> "Eh, this isn't going to work. This is just another program," but they're going to
> think that way about anything [we] bring to them. [They] aren't going to be
> happy no matter what [we] do unless they get the result *they* want. [We] have *the
> middle ones* who want to see change and who are willing to take that little bit of
> effort, but they still need to be pushed. [They] are more like, "Okay, what do I
> need to do? How much responsibility is this? How much am I accountable?"
> They look at it as, "Here's a new program I have to do. What do I have to do?"
> It's an obligation versus the third group who's *restorative by nature*. They see that

building positive relationships are good. They look at it like, "Here's a cool new toolbox I just got." It's opening their repertoire up for looking at things differently. Still working on the problems they had, but with a new set of tools to work with.

Therefore, according to Dana's definitions, teachers in the middle are willing to use RP, even if they need encouragement, and naturally restorative teachers easily embrace RP because they complement what these teachers already do in the classroom. As a result, these two groups of teachers do not intentionally pose a threat to the implementation of RP. Consequently, they act as supporters of the practices. On the other hand, Dana describes boulders as teachers obstructing the program because their negative perception of RP makes them susceptible to not use the practices. Since boulders essentially determine the life and success of the program, I am interested in speaking with them to find out their motives for opposing RP. So, I begin my quest to find boulders by speaking to others in the district. Though others do not call them boulders, they supply me with characteristics of teachers resisting RP and thus, insinuate that these teachers are the boulders Dana describes. Administrators, coordinators, and teachers' descriptions provide two pictures of the boulder: the angry teacher and the old school, stubborn teacher.

The portrait of a boulder: The angry teacher. Teachers often describe encounters with unstable and monstrous creatures living within the schools, roaming the halls, and screaming at students daring to cross their path. Their tales depict these creatures as inhuman, when in fact, they are teachers, more specifically, angry teachers. Ethan suggests that angry teachers create a toxic environment for students, and teachers should stop perpetuating it.

E: [We] have people screaming ridiculous things at these kids and there's absolutely no possible response for the student to have. [They're] trapped. [They're] pinned in. [We've] confused them in [our] venting process. See, I think what needs to happen is there has to be an agreement among faculty that we are not going to engage in arguments with the students. We are going to conduct ourselves like we do in adult-to-adult [interactions] and when that doesn't work, [the issue and student should] immediately go through RP or disciplinary measures. If I were principal of this school, I would tell my faculty, "Don't you dare raise your voice to a kid in this class, but on the other hand, the minute they disrupt the class, you send them to me. I'm not making you the cop. I'm not making you the sheriff. I'm not making you the bouncer. You are the teacher in the classroom and that's all I want them to see you being."

I tell him I heard a few teachers shout some interesting things to students. In fact, I was in an empty classroom stuffing envelopes a few months ago when I overheard a teacher next door tell his students, "Shut up," and "Don't act like a moron." According to Barbara, teachers who yell have problems putting their anger aside to use RP.

B: A student yelps at [a teacher] and yes, it's disrespectful, but [the teacher] yells back? Instead of asking them or telling them, "Have I yelled at you, am I disrespectful to you? Is this the behavior you would want someone to do to you?" they don't. It just turns into a shouting match and it gets out of hand. I know. I've seen it in the classroom. I've seen teachers coming into the office being angry. I'll tell you, there were some years that I was that angry person because the kids were just bonkers. It does take a lot of restraint sometimes. [RP] are different ways of looking at [misbehavior]. It does take some time to cool down, but I've seen [RP] work.

Barbara's confession about once being an angry teacher is surprising to me since I have never heard her raise her voice or appear as anything other than calm. Anita also reveals she is a former angry teacher and explains how RP have already changed her and other faculty.

K: Has your teaching been influenced by the RP training? Have you noticed a change in how you act in the classroom?
A: I have noticed that *I* have calmed down this year. I say, "You know what, it's not worth yelling. It's not getting anywhere yelling." They get yelled at [when

they're] home. I see that I have changed. Absolutely. I'm not as aggressive. It makes a big difference.

K: If there was a student misbehaving in your class *before* you had the training, how might you have handled it?

A: I would have yelled at them…just *yelled* at them.

K: Would you have sent them to the office?

A: Oh yeah, "Get out, get out, get out of here! I don't care where you go, get out!" I didn't do that this year at all.

K: What would you say to a student misbehaving now?

A: "What's the matter? You can do it, baby! Come on! Look at me, I got white hair and I can do it! Come on!" and they laugh. It's a joke.

K: So, are you using more humor in the classroom?

A: Oh, [I] have to, yeah. They *love* the humor.

K: Are there any specific stories you would like to share that illustrate your feelings on the implementation of this program?

A: [We] are not screaming and yelling at these kids [like] we used to. It's like, "Hello," "Thank you," "How are you?" "Good morning!" (She says these very calmly.) It makes a real big difference.

K: It saves your voice?

A: Saves [my] voice and you know what, in the morning, if [I] say, "Good morning!" with a smile, there's a big difference. [Instead of], "Hurry up! Get in this classroom!"

Anita recognizes teachers' yelling at students as a problem in her school and expresses her hope that RP will resolve the behavior.

A: I hope [RP] are successful and I hope we continue [them]. These kids absolutely need it. We've got to stop yelling and shouting at these kids. We've *got* to! They get enough of that at home. We've got to make restorative practices work because we have no other alternative.

For Anita, the objective for using RP is to get teachers to not yell at students, which seems to be an indirect objective that is associated with creating a positive atmosphere in the school where RP can be effectively used. Nevertheless, she probably considers angry, yelling teachers as boulders because they counteract the school's attempt to create that atmosphere. Furthermore, Anita and Barbara describe their former teacher selves as angry teachers. While Anita suggests that RP transformed her angry teacher self into a

positive one somewhat recently, Barbara implies that her angry teacher self transformed similarly long ago. Be that as it may, it is difficult to undo previous ways of behaving. Moreover, it is difficult for people to interpret their own behavior as others may perceive it, which appears to be the case for one teacher who convinced me that she used to yell at students in the past, but no longer. Ironically, I witnessed this teacher yell, "Stop acting like an idiot!" to a student in the hallway. Did this teacher lie to me? Is the angry teacher a deceptive creature? Perhaps the teacher I saw really believes there has been a change, but in that case, does the "angry teacher" have multiple personalities? Barbara admits, "It does take a lot of restraint sometimes." Is she indicating that her angry teacher self still exists, but is suppressed? If so, is there an angry teacher lurking within all teachers? Is there an angry teacher within me?

During a training session, Greg asks that we list all the good characteristics we believe we have as teachers that demonstrate why we deserve respect. Here is my list:

I am:

Patient

Competent

Open-minded

Knowledgeable

Willing to listen

Concerned for others' well-being

As I write these characteristics down, I begin to wonder if I really *do* have all of these qualities, or is it that I hope I have them? What if these are not my qualities at all, but

instead the qualities of what I believe belong to the perfect teacher? Would my students agree with this list? If not, what do they see? What if I am actually an angry teacher? I feel myself having one of those moments where I question every little thing I do in the classroom. Doubt and guilt are starting to set in. Months after the RP training session where I listed my teacher characteristics, I have an "Am I good teacher?" moment.

<p style="text-align:center">*　*　*　*　*</p>

I'm currently an adjunct at a local community college where I'm teaching a basic public speaking class. A student of mine, Erin, seriously annoys me. She has an I-know-more-than-the-teacher attitude. It bothers me. Many times I want to emphasize to her that I have been teaching this class for seven years, coached speech for the same amount, and competed on a speech team for three years; I know what I'm doing. I try to remain understanding whenever she addresses her concerns with me and I give her praise for the unusual amount of participation and observations she brings to the class, but I know my impatience gets the best of me at times and causes me to be short with her.

My students are presently working on a group speech and today I'm giving them class time to work on the project. Erin and one of her group members, Vanessa, stay after class and I overhear them having an argument. Erin is annoyed with Vanessa for not getting a portion of the outline done by the due date the group had agreed on, which happens to be today. As they are leaving class, Vanessa tells Erin, "There's no reason to be huffin' and puffin' about this. We still have time to get it done and Ms. Katie needs to get out of here, so let's go." I try to lighten the situation and say, "Oh, it's okay. You can stay for as long as you need. It sounds like the end of the semester is coming. I'm

sensing you two have some anxiety?" Erin gives me an irritated look that says, "You're the one who put me in this situation, you jerk!" She tells me, "I hate group work." I say, "I understand that group work can be difficult. It forces you to depend on other people, but you have to just keep communicating with each other and get through it." Erin and Vanessa walk out of the room and I follow them out. As I lock up the classroom, Erin turns around and asks me, "So, are you definitely not teaching at this school next semester?" I say, "No, I'll be working on my dissertation." She says, "So it's definite, right?" I reply, "Yes, I will not be here next semester." The question she asks is not an odd question to ask an instructor. I've had many former students ask me the same thing to see if they could take another class with me. However, the way Erin asked it was as if to say either, "Because if you are, I'm going to complain to someone in the department/college," or "Because if you are, I'm going to avoid your classes like the plague." Over the past seven years I've been teaching, I've become rather good at letting negative remarks from students slide off my back, especially when students are extremely disrespectful or rude to me. I know that public speaking can be really stressful so I will often tell myself that they're just frustrated and to not take it personally. I take such remarks as a red flag and ask them if I can help them with anything. However, this instance causes me to have an imaginary conversation with Erin in my car during my drive home. I won't get into the details of the conversation, but let's just say I rip her a new one. I imagine saying some nasty things to her if she ever gave me an attitude again. After I calm down, I overanalyze every moment I had with her in class, forcing the Doubtful Teacher in me to interrogate the Confident Teacher who tries to defend herself.

> Ms. Doubtful: What did I do to make her not like me?
> Ms. Confident: Nothing.
> Ms. D: Have I not tried to be anything but helpful and understanding of her needs and concerns?
> Ms. C: Yes, you did everything you could to help her. AND don't forget the time when students said negative things about her when she was absent and you defended her and framed her in a positive light.
> Ms. D: Was I too short with her at times?
> Ms. C: No, you were great. You were a little stressed at times, but you separated your personal life from your professional life quite nicely.

The Confident Teacher puts my mind at ease, at least for a little while, but I'm still questioning the characteristics I put on the list months ago during the training session and it makes me wonder: Am I really as patient as I claim to be? Am I just one moment away from lashing out at a student? Do I consistently present my students with all the good characteristics I possess every hour of every day? Does an angry teacher self exist within me? If so, does this make me a bad teacher?

I call my friend John; perhaps he can calm my identity crisis. I tell him about the situation and ask him, "Am I a horrible teacher? Should I have handled it differently? Maybe I should have been more understanding?" He reassures me that I am not a horrible teacher and repeats words of wisdom his mentor once provided him: Good teachers go to bed wondering how they could've been better. Bad teachers just go to sleep. I add to this advice and argue that good teachers wake up in the morning by accepting they may have been in the wrong and promising to strive to do better. Bad teachers never wake up because their ego takes over and they refuse to acknowledge their imperfections.

*   *   *   *   *

I only catch glimpses of the angry teacher in the middle school; however I have a close encounter with an angry adult. I cannot say for sure that she is a teacher, because I cannot see her; I can only hear her. As I am talking to Dana in her office about the negative effects of suspension and expulsion and RP's positive effects on students, the adult (W) is yelling at a student in the main office.

> D: Then [students] are on the street and what are they doing on the street?
> (It is becoming difficult to hear Dana because the woman yelling at a student outside of Dana's office. She is not sounding very restorative. In fact, it is ironic that this is happening as Dana is talking about faculty not wanting to subscribe to RP.)
> D: Then they get further behind in school and it's just a vicious cycle.
> W: Yeah, be quiet! I know that's hard for you to get through your head, but do it!
> D: So, it's kind of changed people's philosophies. It's going to take results for them to finally realize [it].
> W: Oh, let me get out my little violin for you.
> D: And I've had students come in and say, "You're not going to help me. These contracts are stupid. It's not going to change anything. This is the way life is." Then [I] have other students, who are the high offenders, coming in and saying, "I don't want to do another contract." Granted, some teachers thought it had gone too far because he had 8 contracts this year, but it was for 8 different instances…
> W: Just sit there and be quiet, if you're not going to do…[inaudible].
> D: …and he never broke a contract he was on. Yes, he may have done something outside of the realm of his contract, but he never broke his contract. When there's a kid coming in saying, "I don't want another contract. Suspend me," something is working.
> (It's becoming uncomfortable for me to sit here and concentrate on what Dana is saying.)
> K: Um, is that something you need to… (I refer to the commotion outside her office.)
> D: Nope.
> K: Have you noticed a change in the atmosphere since RP have been implemented?
> D: [I have] in certain circumstances. Through the RP department…well, I *am* the RP department…I started birthday announcements this year as positive reinforcement.
> W: You better quit being smart in this office!
> D: I have some of the 15 and 16 year olds, who are just way too old to be in middle school, asking me, "Are you going to announce my birthday?" They are

looking for the positive and for a reason to be on the PA where it isn't negative.
It's very little, but I see…
W: (I assume the woman is now talking to the principal, because I can faintly hear
his voice.)   He can *go* back to that class if he's going to act like a
baby…GOODBYE!
D: …where we're moving towards. Where the kids are looking forward to honor
roll ice cream socials, citizenship, movie, and treat days.

Although the woman's position in the school is unclear to me, some of the things

she says reveal she works in the school. Though she may not be a teacher, her behavior

is similar to others' description of the angry teacher. After hearing this altercation, I

understand the need for faculty to change this behavior for RP to be successful. If I were

a student on the receiving end of her yelling, I may be inclined to either match the

woman's behavior and yell back or surrender to her verbal beating and cry. Either way,

my reaction would be out of fear. I recall one day in middle school when my 7th grade

science teacher screamed at my peers and I. I was terrified.

*   *   *   *   *

It's Wednesday morning and I sit in my 7th grade science class waiting for the bell

to ring and to see if Mr. M is back from being sick. Our class had a sub for the past two

days and it was nice to have a break from Mr. M, who frankly, scares me. I don't like

having to talk to him because he likes to make sarcastic jokes that make me feel like he's

making fun of me. He's also the football coach for the high school and he walks around

as if he owns the place.

My stomach churns as I hear him in the hallway mocking some student. I hear a

boy sitting at the desk behind me quietly groan, "Oh, man! He's back," which startled

me because I thought I was thinking out loud and said it myself. He walks in the door

with his chest puffed up and a scowl on his face. Without even looking at us he asks us to get out a sheet of paper. "Pop quiz!" he says. "Ugh, really?" "Oh, no!" The class grumbles. I become light-headed and my heart is in my throat. I haven't read the last chapter because experience taught me that the likelihood of having a quiz after a teacher comes back from being sick is one in a million.

We take the quiz and turn them in, passing them to the front. I turn around and grab the pile of finished quizzes from Andrea who is sitting behind me. She and I used to play together when we were five or six because she lives next door to my grandparents. She was home schooled up until this year. She's nice and I would like to be friends with her again, but she wears homemade clothes and is known as a dork among my class. I'm already on the bottom of the popularity totem pole, so I can't risk being friends with her. As I take the quizzes from her she whispers, "This sucks!" Maybe she's not so much of a dork after all.

Mr. M is in a bad mood for the remainder of the class. When we ask him questions, he answers with short responses. "Can I go to the bathroom?" a girl asks. "No, hold it," Mr. M retorts. Towards the end of the class we ask him why he is in a bad mood. "Are you okay, Mr. M? Why are you mad at us?" Mr. M stands up from his desk, and paces feverishly in front of the class, and loses it! I'm sitting in the front row, a few feet away from him. He slams a book on the floor and yells, "You want to know why I'm mad! I'll tell you why! The sub told me how rude you were to him! I can't believe how you all behaved!" I am so stunned and scared that even my eardrums are numb. I try not to cry, but I desperately want the ambush to be over and perhaps

shedding a few tears will get me out of here alive. However, I have never witnessed Mr. M show mercy, so I refrain from acting on my plan. I am confused, thinking, "We haven't done anything wrong. What is he talking about?" Even though I know we didn't do anything wrong, I remain silent and decide to submit to the brutal beating along with my classmates. What else can we do? Who is crazy enough to argue with a teacher who is also the football coach?

Then, something extraordinary occurs. He stops yelling and starts laughing. I think he's lost his mind. I assure myself, "Yes, that has to be it! He has lost his mind! He'll be committed into a psychiatric ward, and we will all be free from his torturous ways!" But to my dismay, he tells us, "April Fool's!" It's an April fool's joke! He knew we hadn't done anything wrong. He wanted us to be scared. A grown man, someone we were supposed to look up to and trust, scared us for his own amusement. He wanted to see panic on our faces so he could laugh at us. I left class hating Mr. M, not just because of the agony and pain he put me through, but because he was entertained by it.

* * * * *

Teachers who are disrespectful of students lose their trust and respect. When this happens, students may behave negatively towards the teacher or even their peers; hence, I understand the importance of changing angry teachers' behavior in order for RP to work.

Teachers do not approve of teachers yelling at students. During a training session, Greg shows a video of a teacher yelling at various students as they laugh at him. It is not clear if the teacher is even teaching a lesson. At the end of the video, a girl tells

the teacher, "You're not teaching us anything!" After the video, Greg asks us, "What kind of advice could we give this guy?"

> P5: Give them something to do and don't call kids idiots.
> P6: They've taken over. [You should] make sure kids know what's expected of them.
> P1: Don't lose your cool.
> P10: Engage the students.
> P15: Establish rules to get respect.
> P12: Kids will feed off of you [when you act in this way].
> P16: They're feeding off his anger. The angrier he gets the happier the students are.
> P18: He's in this back and forth verbal battle.
> P19: And he needs to not stand there waiting for [misbehavior] to happen.
> P18: He could say something positive?
> P20: He wasn't even giving his lesson.
> P24: He was yelling and name-calling. That's not a good idea. He should've taken that one student aside and asked him to leave. (The participant is referring to one of the boys that the teacher was yelling at the most.)
> P25: His kids were bored. [He] left them with nothing to do.
> P26: He gave them a negative reward. He was feeding in to their negative behavior.

Since faculty members agree that the teacher's behavior in the video is inappropriate, they would likely argue that it is wrong for any teacher to behave this way. Yet, if this combative behavior is viewed as unacceptable, then it is unclear why angry teachers exist. Greg suggests it could be because it feels natural for some teachers to attack disrespectful students. This idea is illustrated when he explains the difficulty some RPPSD teachers had when switching to RP, especially when using affective statements.

> G: I think that some teachers found it difficult for them to confront disruptive behavior with affective statements, which are "I" statements like, "I felt disrespected," "I don't think I deserve to be disrespected," as opposed to accusatory or threatening statements. It's almost unnatural for us to not attack. For some people [the affective statements] came easily, but for some people it was very difficult to get away from the threatening and attacking mode of behavior management.

As I note earlier, the state reprimanded the district for having too many expulsions and suspensions. Greg thinks these methods were overused because teachers wanted relief from disruptive students. It is possible their dependence on using these methods created a culture where it is natural to threaten and attack students, which is causing boulders to not use RP out of habit. While I do not think Liz is an angry teacher, during one of her class periods I witness her yell at a student. She appears to react out of impulse.

> *Classroom field note, May 6, 2010: "I apologize for yelling at you."* After students turn in the quizzes they graded in to Liz, she puts them on her desk. A boy walks over to her desk and looks through the pile. Liz sees him and tells him to stop. "Those are mine and not for you to look at," she says. The boy tries to explain to her what he was doing, but Liz interrupts him and again loudly says, "Those are mine and not for you to look at!" The boy is finally able to squeeze in his reason for looking through the quizzes. "I was checking the quiz I graded," he says. Apparently, Liz was worried he was trying to look at his quiz grade, which she told the class they would see when she passed the quizzes back at the end of class. However, the boy was merely making sure he wrote the correct grade on the student's quiz he graded. When Liz finally hears his excuse, she says, "Oh, I'm sorry. I apologize for yelling at you." The boy is understanding and accepts Liz's apology. This was a nice moment to witness. It's not easy for a teacher to admit when they're wrong. As a teacher, I worry that apologizing or admitting to a mistake will make me appear weak to my students.

Liz illustrates how angry teachers may react unconsciously because they assume students are being disrespectful. Students, however, are not always meaning to be disrespectful when they do something that may be interpreted as bad; still, teachers have succumb to the habit of yelling at students, perhaps also out of fear.

Overall, the culture of the district does not seem to condone angry teachers. Teachers agree that yelling at students is unacceptable behavior. Teachers displaying negative behavior such as yelling may cause negative student behavior. Thus, angry teachers may be targeted as obstructions to the program because their behavior is

counterproductive. Furthermore, their behavior contradicts RP since they attempt to resolve conflicts in a peaceful and respectful manner.

The portrait of a boulder: The old school, stubborn teacher. Not only is being angry a characteristic of the boulder, but administrators, coordinators, and teachers also imply that boulders tend to subscribe to traditional forms of punishment, which they are unwilling to change. When I was first introduced to the program, I observed a middle school faculty meeting where one of the teachers voiced his resistance to RP. Looking back, I can now confidently say that he fits the description of a boulder. Jean describes why she feels he resists and her explanation illustrates the perceived stubbornness of the boulder.

> J: Well, it's a total change and it's going to require changing the way [teachers] do business in [their] classroom. Sometimes that's frightening for people. This is not true of everyone, but if they've been around a long time, they'll just decide that they will *not* change. It becomes stubbornness. The gentleman you're talking about actually went to the circle training and liked it. However, as the union president, he brings up all these things and he is constantly trying to make himself look as though he is the buffer, the protector, and the savior of the masses. I don't think he thoroughly understands education today. He's yesterday's educator. He doesn't understand what the needs are [and] I know our board of education absolutely feels that he is an obstacle. He's constantly putting an obstacle course for us to have to go through, so that becomes hard.

Jean's perception of him as a stubborn traditionalist (or "yesterday's educator") is similar to Robert, Liz, and Dana's description of boulders.

> R: Some teachers are reluctant to use RP and think that if a kid gets written up, they should go straight to the Principal and get suspended. They're old school.

> L: I think that there are a lot of staff members who see it as a program just to change the discipline from suspension to something else. I think a lot of the old-timer teachers would still rather see kids suspended than trying to get them to focus on changing their behavior and making a difference in the future for them. They want an immediate [consequence] and they say, "Well, this kid said F-off,

he should be suspended for five days because that's what we used to do." I think we're hitting some stumbling blocks as far as teachers' mentality. It's hard to change the way [we] do things. Even if it's going to be for the better, it's still hard to change.

D: I think some of the old-timers are just like, "Get them out! I'm done! The old way was that they were out 5 days! I want them gone!"

Ethan indicates that these boulders harm the implementation of the program when

students recognize their attitude.

E: There are a lot of teachers that have their own working model for discipline. No matter how RP are presented, they will never open their mind to anything else. I think when [teachers] get to be that way it's time for [them] to move on and do something else. Unfortunately, they undermine the system and it's like blood in the water for sharks and when the kids pick up on it, it's gone. I tried to come into it with 100% open-mindedness and I know a lot of my colleagues didn't. I don't know if they realize the power of, "I think therefore I am," but they're doomed it from the start by not opening their mind, complaining about it, barking about it, and belittling it. "Oh, right, I'm supposed to fill out these five steps? Get out of my room!" One statement like that and it's gone [because] 30 kids hear it.
K: The students might not take it seriously?
E: Right.

Thus, the old school, stubborn teachers at RPPSD are viewed as boulders since they

adhere to traditional methods of punishment that contradict RP; thus, they continuously

hold back the school culture from fully implementing RP. Liz empathizes with these

teachers in as much as she realizes the difficulty of breaking habits and changing

discipline philosophies, whereas Ethan seems impatient with narrow-minded, old school,

teachers. Nevertheless, teachers may continue to rely on suspension and expulsion

because they have been used for many years as ways to protect good students from bad

students; any alternative approach to discipline may harm well-behaved students and

condone bad behavior. This makes me think about my experience in middle school.

Although I was never suspended or expelled, I witnessed several peers exhibit bad

behaviors that resulted in their suspension or expulsion from school. I remember one boy in particular, Jay, who was kicked out of school for fighting with another boy.

<p style="text-align:center">*　　*　　*　　*　　*</p>

The bell rings and I walk out of my Social Studies class to find everyone pushing each other to see what was happening in the middle of the hallway. I am able to stand on the tip of my toes and catch glimpses of hair and arms. Ann, my cousin, walks up to me, "What's going on?" She's a foot shorter than me; she's totally going to miss the gladiator-like fight taking place before us. I barely look at her when I excitedly tell her, "There's a fight!"; my eyes are fixated on the spectacle. I don't want to miss anything good! Finally, I'm able to make out Jay, a boy in my grade, and Bobby, a boy twice the size of Jay (in fact, rumor has it Bobby holds the record of being an 8th grader longer than any other student in the history of the school.) Jay is known for getting in trouble frequently, but unless someone picks on him, he is usually nice. He is quite short and has a small frame, even for a 12-year-old, so I always figured he acted tough just so other students wouldn't think they could pick on him and get away with it.

Suddenly, Mr. S bolts out of his room and runs down the hall towards them. "Uh-oh, Mr. S is coming. Mr. S is coming!" I whisper to Ann, but Mr. S is too late. Jay slams Bobby into the glass trophy case. Glass shatters all around the boys and I see blood. Mr. S grabs Jay and drags him down the hall to the principal's office.

As Ann and I quickly disperse and walk excitedly to class before the next bell rings, I whisper to her, "Oh, my gosh, Mr. S basically lifted him off the ground. He is in so much trouble!" We know the fight will be the topic of our underground discussions

with friends through hidden notes and whispers that are inaudible to the adult ear. I walk

into class, and I hear a boy tell a group of girls, "He's totally getting expelled! There's

no way they are going to let him back in. Did you see what he did to Bobby? Yeah,

there's just no way."

The boy is right. We don't see Jay for the rest of the year. There are rumors that

his parents put him in an all-boys school. Then we hear he was taken away by law

enforcement and put into juvenile hall. There's also the possibility that his family sent

him to Florida to live with his grandma (for some reason this is often what we say of

students who suddenly disappear; everybody seems to have a grandma in Florida except

for me.) Even though we have ideas about what happened to Jay, we knew why he was

gone. We didn't need anyone to announce that he'd been expelled. We have seen the

ritual take place before: Student misbehaves, student gets sent to the principal's office,

and student gets suspended or expelled. Faculty may as well play a tape on a loop over

the PA, so that their threats remain permanent in our ears:

If you do something bad you're out of here...

<div style="text-align: right;">

Bad people must to be out of sight –

we have an image to uphold...

</div>

We won't care why you did it or how you felt

after it happened, that's not our problem...

<div style="text-align: right;">

Follow the rules and obey, and

you'll be fine...

</div>

If you screw up, we don't care what happens

to you…

* * * * *

I wasn't very close to Jay, but I think about him as I observe the middle school classes at RPMS. Where did he go? Why did he feel he had to act out so aggressively? Why wasn't he given another chance? He did a bad thing, but he was only 12. Why didn't the administrators or teachers try to help him? Or did they think that he wasn't worth helping? Or did they think they were protecting students like me from his bad behavior? Similarly, do boulders believe they are protecting good students by not supporting the RP program that could keep students like Jay in school?

Administrators, coordinators and teachers assume that old school, stubborn boulders resist because they believe RP are inadequate and awkward to use. Greg suggests that the culture RPPSD had before implementing RP encouraged traditional forms of punishment in the district. He believes attitudes that developed from that culture may be to blame for resistance against the practices. Greg recalls first his impression when he came to the district.

> G: What I discovered soon after initiating this reform measure was that RPPSD was a culture where teachers relied on suspensions to give them some relief from disruptive students. When we started looking at a different way of handling discipline and started relying less on suspensions and more on conferences to solve problems, some teachers saw that as unsupportive. I learned we needed to empower teachers with good classroom management models, so they have fewer discipline issues to begin with and can begin to appreciate when interventions do occur.

Therefore, boulders may believe the practices are inadequate compared to how punishment was handled before. Victor, the superintendent, indicates that this perception has not changed.

V: There are some teachers where it's changed their life, their teaching life. They've had wonderful successes. There are others who right from the get-go say it's a soft, sissy way of going about it and those [attitudes] have not been changed.

Being in the schools everyday, coordinators and teachers notice there are still teachers with the attitude Victor describes.

L: Oh yeah. We have a huge part of our staff that [think] we're going to sing Kumbaya [and] let's be all lovey-dovey to the kids. I don't think that they think it will work. They have a very negative feeling towards it.

C3: Well, the joke is that we're going to sit in a circle and hold hands and sing Kumbaya. I get referrals from people saying, "There needs to be a consequence." RP do not [imply], "There are no consequences." There are still consequences, definitely, but it's a follow up to [the consequence] and to make the consequence more meaningful. Sometimes I think people see it as, "Kids are getting away with things," or "They're going to have a conversation and that'll be the end of it," but that's not what it is.

Barbara notes that some teachers actually accuse RP for perpetuating a chaotic school atmosphere.

B: I think some teachers believe in the process and are willing to try the process and I think other teachers believe [it is] and see it as the soft way out [and] that it is not discipline. I've listened to different teachers and they actually blame RP for what is going on in the school as far as the general atmosphere.

Greg thinks many people arguing that RP are weak or soft misunderstand the goals of RP and this may be due to how society has viewed punishment in the past.

G: I think there was, and still to this day, a real widespread misunderstanding about what RP really mean because so many people think that if they're not punishing kids then they're being lenient and permissive and they're not holding them accountable. It's hard for people in general to understand that bringing someone face to face with the people they've harmed and expecting them to do something to make up for that harm is a higher level of accountability. But, the RJ [restorative justice] movement worldwide is having this problem in presenting this philosophy in a way that people can understand and accept.
K: Do you think the people who claim that RP are weak are seeing RP as a permissive approach?

G: Yes, they are and that's where the confusion is. If you look at the punitive and permissive continuum, we have a one-dimensional way of thinking. People assume that if they're not tough on crime, they must be weak on crime. But, I think RP offer ways to be tough and supportive at the same time. That's what [RP practitioners] are really looking at. How do we firmly enforce the rules in a supportive way so that students are less likely to misunderstand, feel a sense of injustice and be defiant?

Greg implies that some believe RP are inadequate because they appear too lenient; thus, teachers may remain reliant on traditional approaches to punishment.

Barbara credits RP's unorthodox approach to punishment as fueling old school teachers' motives for not using RP. She implies that it is awkward for some teachers because it challenges the traditional belief that teachers should not reveal their feelings to students.

B: It's so unusual. Teachers are not supposed to [tell students how they feel]. I mean, [we] were brought up thinking teachers had no feelings. [We] were supposed to just take it and [we] were supposed to move on. But it doesn't work that way. Even when the students do misbehave for the substitute, it's not that I'm angry that they misbehaved. I'm angry because I trusted them. Now it's a lot easier to voice those feelings, but 20 years ago [teachers] didn't say that.
K: Yeah. I studied to be a Secondary Ed teacher for a while during my undergraduate studies. The classes I had made it seem as if voicing feelings to students is unprofessional.
B: Yes, because it shows weakness. It's showing them that you actually have feelings. But then again, [RP] *can* work to a disadvantage and kids can take advantage of you because there still has to be that respect.
K: There still has to be that line. Yeah, because I remember a teacher of mine when I was in 7th or 8th grade, it was a Math teacher, and she didn't have any control of the class. One day, we were being horrible and I remember she just sat at her desk and cried, which is obviously going over the line in regards to showing students how you feel. But I see that as showing an uncontrollable emotion rather than showing students how you feel in a controlled manner.
B: I think a lot of teachers have a hard time accepting RP for that reason because [we] have these [teachers] who are like, "I'm going to tell them that what they're doing hurts me?"

Barbara believes teachers may feel awkward when using RP, since teachers are accustomed to more aggressive forms of punishment. Because of this, it may feel awkward for them to even try RP. After my conversation with Barbara about the awkwardness of teachers showing emotions to students, I think again about the day I saw my math teacher cry in class.

* * * * *

Ms. B is a young teacher, probably in her early 20's. I have her for Pre-Algebra during 4th hour. It's her first year teaching and my classmates and I sensed her fear from the beginning. After the first day of class it was clear the students were in control. For the most part, I consider myself to be a fairly well behaved student. In this class, however, I take part in some rather mischievous behavior. I attribute my behavior to peer pressure from troublemakers in the class, but I can't deny that I enjoy basking in the freedom of unruliness.

A typical hour of class involves a lot of yelling, not just from the students, but also from Ms. B. I always struggle with math. It is so difficult, but it is even more difficult to learn while being in Ms. B's class. How am I supposed to figure out what x equals with all this noise and chaos! I am lucky if I get a D on an assignment. She makes me mad because it's not my fault for doing so horribly. Ms. B rarely gets through a lesson. She usually gives up halfway into the hour and provides help to students who ask, instead of having to deal with the whole class.

Dang it! Someone just hit me with a spitball! Gross! Ms. B has no control over this class! How does a teacher have no control over 13-year-olds? Doesn't a person have

to master the art of controlling students before they can receive their teaching degree!? I imagine a King standing before a kneeling teacher and announcing, "I now bestow upon you the ability to control children everywhere!"

Spitballs are now flying across the room like arrows shooting across a battlefield. Boys and girls shield themselves with math books as they attempt to make their own ammunition of spitballs. The classroom is filled with deafening chaos. The students not throwing spitballs stand on the sidelines and act as generals encouraging their cavalry to annihilate the opposing forces or as peacemakers pleading to their comrades in the trenches and enemies across the front lines to stop their unjust actions. As I watch, the fury unfolds in slow motion. I'm in a state where the presence of the classroom, with all of its rules and normalities, no longer exists. I'm in another dimension where 13-year-olds rule and teachers, who have no choice but to submit to our control, are merely tolerated.

I snap out of the dream and notice Ms. B is no longer at the front of the room where she stood before the Adolescent Revolutionary War began. I turn toward her desk and see her weeping. There is despair in her eyes as she waves a tissue like a white flag silently telling us, "I surrender. You win." I frantically tap the shoulder of the boy sitting in front of me who was in the midst throwing a spitball. "What!" he retorts. I motion over to our defeated teacher. He shrugs and quips, "So," and continues proudly serving in the spitball war. In the wake of the aftermath, I scan the room and reality sets in. What have we done? Paper and trash is spilled on the floor, representing the humanity we shed while overthrowing our ruler. We wanted freedom, but while we blindly fought

for it we didn't realize the cost was Ms. B's dignity. And for those short 15 minutes, did we obtain any freedom? I always thought freedom meant to not be controlled, so why do I feel so controlled by the emotions evoked by my revelation of Ms. B's humiliation? The following semester, I see Ms. B in the hallway. I try to be nice and say hello, but she looks past me and gives a passive, "Hey." I'm embarrassed for being a part of the event that ensued last semester. Ms. B finished the year, but she didn't return the next fall.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *   *   *</p>

Years later, I wonder if Ms. B ever found a way to gain control. Did she reflect on her surrender and become a stronger teacher for it? Or did she end up setting down the white flag only to ferociously retaliate against her students, causing us to lose another teacher on the battlefield? More importantly, did her awkward display of emotion cause her to think twice about displaying any kind of emotion to students she taught later on?

Though I do not consider Robert to be a boulder, his attempts at using RP in the classroom illustrate the awkwardness teachers may exhibit when bringing RP into the classroom.

> *Classroom field note, April 13, 2010: "I'm not the touchy feely type."* Robert talks to the class about the concept of praise and the training he had yesterday morning. He says to the students, "You know I'm not the touchy feely type. I've been negative for the past couple of months. The training talked about how we need to catch you being good, but I think it's more fun to catch you being bad." He smiles and the students laugh. Apparently, the students were good for the substitute teachers that came in over the past couple of school days so he is rewarding them with pizza for lunch in a couple of weeks. He tells them, "So, I'm giving you pizza as a reward." He doesn't mention the specific good behavior the students exhibited while he was away, which is something taught at the training. He only mentions they were good for the substitute in general. Although this was awkwardly executed, I can tell he is really trying to use RP.

> *Classroom field note, April 14, 2010: "Thanks for being on the right page!"* I go into Robert's classroom and find my seat in the back. The bell rings and Robert comes into the classroom and walks over to a student. Mocking either Greg or the restorative practices in general, he says, "Thanks for being on the right page!" He walks over to another student and says, "See, I did what [the consultant] told me to do. I said, 'Thanks for being on the right page.'"

I do not think Robert means any disrespect to the consultant, or to the practices, but instead, he seems unsure about using the statements. It is as if he feels so uncomfortable that he needs to make a joke about it. I specifically mention this last instance to Greg the next time I see him.

> K: I actually witnessed one teacher who I am not sure caught on to the idea behind RP, but attempted to use some affective statements in the classroom. I could sense he was uncomfortable. He did it in a kind of joking manner. It was a great example of what you just said about how it doesn't feel natural for some teachers. Maybe it just takes practice?
> G: Practice and security. We're challenging a deeply held paradigm and that paradigm is that accountability is equated with punishment and if we're not punishing then that means we're being permissive. It's that punitive-permissive continuum. That's always been the challenge. In the past, for me to say to an unruly kid, "I feel disrespected," I would feel this is a foolish approach and think, "This child needs to do what I tell them to do and they need to do it now and there's not going to be any discussion." A lot of teachers are in that authoritarian kind of mode and it's hard to get them out of it.
> K: I think some of them are afraid of showing any kind of vulnerability.
> G: Correct.
> K: And they think it's going to…
> G: …show weakness.

Therefore, as Greg explains, old school, stubborn boulders may feel awkward because they are insecure to use practices contradicting the traditional idea that teachers should act like authoritarians. Overall, administrators, coordinators, and teachers suggest old school teachers consider RP as inadequate for resolving conflicts and awkward to use as they challenge the traditional role of teachers.

In general, administrators, coordinators, and teachers perceive angry, old school and stubborn boulders as resisting RP and thus, obstructing the program's success. Still, identifying boulders as angry or old school suggests they do not use RP just for the sake of being angry or old school, because why would anyone interfere with the success of the program if, as the district suggests, students benefit from RP? What kind of rational teacher would not want the best for her/his students? There is only one logical answer to this last question: bad teachers. If bad teachers are those not using RP, then are those using RP *good* teachers? (To be clear, as discussed earlier, Dana explains that those in the middle want change and are willing to use the practices, but just need encouragement. Therefore, in this instance I assume they would be placed in the good teacher category.) Barbara and Robert would likely answer, "yes" to this question. They believe RP are basically teaching practices that are used by good teachers.

> B: I think some of [what we learned] is just good teaching.
> K: So, you think using these practices are just generally good teaching practices?
> B: Right. It's not anything new, it's just good sound teaching.
>
> K: So, you think that what RP ask you to do is something that, as a teacher, you should already be doing?
> R: Yes, it's all about classroom management.

Whether or not teachers who use RP are good is debatable. Nevertheless, I assume Barbara and Robert would identify themselves as good teachers, but as I mention below, they admit to not always using the practices. Yet, I doubt Barbara and Robert are bad teachers even though they do not consistently apply RP.

Characterizing boulders as angry and old school teachers makes them one-dimensional, although I hope the reasons I provide for why they may reflect these

characteristics make them a little more two-dimensional at best. Boulders are described as angry and stubborn teachers, but their existence is dependent on their ability to act as obstacles for the program. The question remains, however, if true boulders really exist. I never found a teacher who fit the profile of a boulder. Many of the teachers I speak with have a positive attitude toward RP. Although some are disgruntled about the way the district has implemented the RP program, Liz notes, "I think when [RP] were introduced to us last year, we were excited about it." In fact, the training evaluations indicate that most faculty and staff were interested in using RP after attending training. Earlier in the implementation stages, I asked Jean if she worried about sustaining teachers' motivation for using RP.

> K: Are you concerned that when faculty realize the implementation process will be gradual and it may take awhile to see results that they'll lose motivation and want to go in a different direction?
> J: Yes, absolutely. I believe that *will* happen. That's why we're having an onsite coordinator at each site that will be fully trained to keep everybody on the right path so that they're not getting discouraged. Also, I will meet with the site coordinators, but they will also meet regularly with teachers in content areas or grade levels and talk about the use of circles. I think the message will be loud and clear: You're not just left here isolated, where nobody's noticing what you're doing. [The teachers] will know that we're noticing what is being done. I keep telling our teachers that this is the answer for us and if we don't do this, we are going to lose all of our schools. We are going to lose every one of our schools.

To Jean, excitement will be maintained through constant training, which may be desperately needed as teachers have inconsistent interpretations of RP. However, according to Liz excitement is often high when programs are first put into place, but then it dissipates.

> L: In academic support, we did a program called, "Lifelong Guidelines and Life Skills," or something like that, and like most programs, it got implemented and everyone was gung-ho at the beginning and then it kind of went to the way side.

I wonder if the RP program has a similar fate. Nevertheless, as the program continues to run into challenges and resistance, supporters of RP will need to take steps to boost the morale of their colleagues.

Boulders, however, are not necessarily bound to remain obstacles. Administrators, coordinators, and teachers believe boulders have the potential to change their negative perception of RP. Victor believes boulders will change when they directly experience RP's potential. He vehemently argues, "They need to see that [RP] work. They need first hand experience of when it has been successful. Personal success would be great for the program's acceptance." Still, Victor's solution assumes boulders use the practices. Coordinators believe transformation will occur in a different way. One coordinator (C1) reveals that if boulders "could see what I see, they would be more receptive" to RP. Dana agrees, but suggests it is going to take supporters of RP to help boulders *see* the positive effects that coordinators claim they see. She says, "It's going to take results for them to finally realize. It's going to take teachers on board and teachers in the middle to start talking about it to get the rest of them [on board]." Another coordinator (C3) is optimistic about transforming the boulders:

> C3: It's a big change for a lot of people. I don't think that people are resisting intentionally. I think it just takes time for some people who are so set in their ways to make that change, but I have seen change. I've seen gradual change.

Though C3 may seem naively optimistic, I observe an instance in Barbara's class demonstrating how transforming boulders may not be impossible.

> *Classroom field note: April 13, 2010: "It worked!"* Barbara begins class by telling her students, "Yesterday I went to my in-service and bragged about how my students are so good and well-behaved and I want to thank you for that." The

students don't say anything. I think they are waiting for a catch. It's then I notice their assignment written on the board. The students are supposed to answer the following question: "How would you feel if you worked very hard on something and someone destroyed it? Explain why you should feel that way." Apparently, a student had ripped some things off of Barbara's bulletin board yesterday while she was away at an RP training seminar. "Do you think I should be upset?" Barbara asks the students. Some of the students pipe up and say, "Yes, because it belongs to you," or "Yes, because it's not fair." Then Barbara implores, "I'd really appreciate it if you see someone doing this that you tell them these same things. I really appreciate how you act with the substitute teachers, but I think we still have some things to work on."

I was in a training seminar with Barbara yesterday. In the session, we learned about using affective statements and praise when talking with students. The consultant warned us that when he started using these statements with his students, they thought he was nuts. I do not know if the students think Barbara is nuts, but I think they are thrown off at first. However, the approach seems to work well. Instead of the students going on the defensive, the students discuss the behavior and why it is wrong.

I talk with Barbara days after she confronted the students about the bulletin board and she

describes her thought process for addressing the problem.

B: It was interesting because there was one day where one of my classes was really bad. (Pause.) Oh, I know what it was, they were punching my [bulletin] boards and I was like, "Okay, I know I can't lose my cool. I know I can't yell at them because that's not going to help anything. Let's see. How [am I] going to do this?" I don't know if it was [a restorative practice], but I wanted to tell them how I felt. That was the whole idea behind the [assignment on the board]; it was me trying to express how I felt about them ruining things I worked so hard on. It worked! They stopped punching my board. I do not know who did it, which I really don't care, but I wanted them to know how that made me feel.

Even though I would not identify Barbara as a boulder (she is obviously willing to use

RP), Dana considers Barbara as a seasoned teacher. Barbara has been teaching for about

30 years. It can be difficult to get teachers to try new strategies if they have been

teaching for as long as Barbara; therefore, I consider this a great feat for the program and

a reason for the district to remain hopeful for the success of RP. In the next section,

however, I outline the challenges of using RP in school, which may be preventing

teachers from using RP even if they support the program.

The Challenges of Using RP

Dana suggests the teachers I observe in the classroom (Barbara, Liz, and Robert)

are restorative by nature. She never suggests which category Anita and Ethan belong to

because she may or may not know about my conversations with them. Even so, I do not

label any of the five teachers as boulders; according to Dana's definition, they appear to

be supporters of RP because they accept and are willing to use the practices. Their

acceptance of RP is apparent when I ask them if they use the practices in the classroom:

> B: Yeah, not the peacemaking circles, [but] the affective questioning. Also, and I don't know if it is a restorative practice, but I'm becoming much more conscious about making sure that everything is positive instead of negative by telling them, "Thank you," and trying to build up their self-esteem. [I'm] even being very positive [with] the smallest things.

> A: Smiling and joking around with them every morning.
> K: How does that look?
> A: I'll joke around with them or do some things with them that they enjoy. They like to do hands-on things. Whatever it takes to make them happy, I have to do it.

> E: Yes, I've been to two circles this year [and] I've followed the model as best I could in several cases.
> K: Were you facilitating the peacemaking circles or were you just involved in them.
> E: I was involved in them. The coordinator facilitated it.

Liz and Robert also claim to use RP in the classroom. I then ask the teachers if they use

RP outside of the classroom and again, they all state they do.

> B: Oh, yes, in between classes, [when I'm] monitoring the hall, or on my way to lunch. If [I] see someone fighting or trying to start up something, [I] want to get in to the middle of it. [I] want to make sure it doesn't escalate.

L: Yes, in the hallway. Probably more so in the hallway because the kids I have to reprimand in the hallway, don't have me. They don't know me, so [I] have to go about it in a different way. I find with some kids that just talking to them in a different manner like, "You need to move to class, I'd appreciate it," instead of getting down their throat and yelling at them, [the end result] is just a little different.

R: Yeah. I use affective statements when they're pushing each other.
K: How do students usually respond to that?
R: They know they're doing it. It's almost like some of them are just saying what [I] want to hear and then they go back [to pushing each other].

A: Again, smiling, laughing, joking, high fives. Asking them, "What's up?" Stuff like that. I like to come in with a song like, "Put on a happy face." (She sings.)

Next, I ask if they will use the practices in the future. Anita implies that she will use the practices in the future when she expresses how important it is for all teachers to continue using RP.

A: We don't know what's going on at home! We have to make these kids happy in this environment. We have to use restorative justice! I've been here too long and we're just kicking these kids out and it's doing nothing.

However, Liz believes her use depends on whether or not she receives more training. Ethan and Robert not only will continue to use the practices, but they claim they used the practices before RP were implemented into the school.

E: Before RP came along, I've always used affective questions to the students and I try to get them, through the questions, to see the error of their ways rather than explaining to them what they've done wrong. It means more when they come about it on their own.

R: Yeah, I've always done RP. I didn't know it was called RP, but [I'd] find out the behavior, find a way to not bring that behavior out, and then I'd put them on a behavior contract. I've always done that since I've been here.

The teachers' application of the practices is questionable. Nonetheless, teachers admit to not using all of the practices. None of the teachers indicate they facilitate conferences

and only Anita claims to facilitate peacemaking circles. Also, during my observations of

Barbara, Liz, and Robert, I never witness a peacemaking circle or a conference. Liz

admits, "Thinking about doing circles scares me, so I haven't really done it." Regardless,

according to the teachers, the affective statements and questions are the most understood

and used practices. In fact, during my observations, I witness these RP the most, but

even these are not used to address all conflicts among students. Dana insists that teachers

are not using affective statements and questions as much as they should be.

> K: Do you think that teachers are using affective statements and questions as much as they should be?
> D: No, no.
> K: Why do you think that is?
> D: Habit. [As a teacher,] [I've] ask students for 15 years, "Why did you do that?" versus, "What were you thinking at the time?" So, I think it's habit and it's also leadership. We've all been to so many in-services. Unless teachers are told, "You have to do this," they take it as, "Oh, it's a nice thing to add in my repertoire." It doesn't mean [to them] that they have to do it. I think it comes down to, not necessarily building leadership or district leadership, but having a concise message from the district of, "This is where we're at. This is what we expect here. If you have an issue with a kid, we expect to see you in the hallway talking to the kid by first using these [affective] questions then calling home. We don't expect them to be in the office the first time they do something wrong." I think the district and the building have to have clear, concise expectations of their teachers and they need to be in some ways non-negotiable like, "This is what you have to do." But part of it is resources. I, as a coordinator, can't go to the teacher and say, "You're not doing your job. You're not asking these questions." I can only take that to my boss or my boss's boss and there's only so much time. Obviously, if [teachers] are not asking affective questions, there are other things that are going on that they're not doing. So, it's not really that RP are being snubbed, there are environmental issues happening.

Dana reveals that administrators' lack of clear expectations, resources, and environmental

issues are to blame for teachers not using RP. When I speak with teachers, they note

similar issues making it challenging for them to use RP, which include classroom time

constraints, inconsistent interpretations of RP, and the contradicting messages students

receive regarding conduct from parents and the school. In the next section, I explain

these challenges, which may shed light on why teachers are unable to use RP.

Challenge 1: Time constraints. Ethan tells me that if a teacher can keep

students' attention for 20 minutes during a class period, that is a good day. But, he says it

requires the teacher to be on his or her A-game and students being on their best behavior.

I am reminded of some of the teachers during training that asked about how they would

find time in the classroom to do RP *and* teach what they need to teach. In fact, teachers

often find it difficult to implement RP into the classroom because performing them takes

time away from teaching curriculum. Liz, for example, believes time would be an issue

if she were to use RP in her classroom.

> L: (Sigh.) I know that circles work, but I haven't really done [them]. I think if I
> were in a disruptive situation where I would have to work in a circle, the time
> constraints [would] throw me off. We got to get so much done with the science
> and the math curriculum. I know that the restorative practices are important, but I
> haven't found a way to be able to fit it in at this time.

Liz seems overwhelmed by the amount of curriculum she is expected to teach to

implement RP. Of course, I cannot help but discuss standardized testing with the

teachers as they explain to me the pressures of fitting in curriculum. During my

conversation with Barbara, the issue inevitably comes up.

> K: I talked to another teacher about standardized testing…
> B: (Laughs.) Oh no! That's opening another can of worms!
> K: It seems like it would be frustrating to not only have to deal with programs
> being thrown at you, (Barbara mentions programs being thrown at teachers earlier
> in the conversation), but to also have people telling you certain concepts or ideas
> you *must* teach. Another teacher explained to me that they feel like they're a
> facilitator instead of a teacher.
> B: That's what happens with a curriculum and a pacing guide (a teaching guide
> based on district and state objectives); it's like, "Here, this is what you have to
> teach." Some teachers, who still teach the benchmarks in content standards, think

it's an insult because [the district/state] cut [their] creativity. Basically, [we have to follow the pacing guide] because there are teachers who don't do anything, so [the district/state] has to give them something to follow. If [they] don't, then [those teachers] are all over the place and are not doing what they're supposed to be doing.

K: It sounds like what [the district/state] is really doing is punishing the good teachers.

B: Exactly.

After I hear Robert mention the state's standardized test in class one day, I ask him after class when students take the test. He explains that students get tested on what they learned the year before in October. During our conversation, Robert walks into his supply room (a narrow room located behind his desk) and brings out a paper with a list of units that must be taught. He admits some units take longer to teach, which takes time away from other units. It may be possible to teach these other units quickly, but they may not be fully understood by the student. Robert argues that some of the concepts and ideas he feels students should know by the 9th grade get bypassed because the information is not on the state test.

R: When I was teaching in the high school, I had students that had no business being in Chemistry.

K: *I* had no business being in Chemistry. I almost blew up the classroom!

R: Well, I've blown up a few things myself. (We both laugh.)

Barbara also questions the practicality of using RP in the classroom because they take time away from class.

B: As far as the affective questioning, that doesn't require any specific group or circle or anything, but the Peacemaking Circles may be a little difficult with a class of 30, especially when some of them aren't part of whatever upset there is. Also, the idea of taking the subgroup and working with five or six [students] out of the classroom, that may be a bit of a time constraint or too difficult as far as scheduling things like that. I've never had any experiences with [circles], so I really don't know much about them.

One of the training participants writes something similar on their evaluation:[8] "How do I implement this in a class of 30+ students who are disruptive and disrespectful to the learning process?" Robert and Ethan are annoyed with the process their school has put in place as part of the RP program. They believe too many steps are involved.

> R: With all the paperwork they're throwing at us, all the testing, and all the data analysis we're supposed to do on a daily basis…(He gives a look suggesting the extra work is a little ridiculous.) In the beginning of the year, it's really hard when [I] can't send a student down until [I've] had six write-ups on them. To me, if it's a repeater, then [I] shouldn't have to [wait that long] because they're doing the same thing they did the year before. I can see it happening with other teachers who are overwhelmed, the new teachers, but I never write anyone up because I handle everything myself.

Ethan contends that the process should be cut down because it takes too much time away from class.

> E: They have this behavioral log list and it becomes very impractical to keep that list current and to keep up with the disruptive student as [I] try to teach a class of 28 people who *do* want to learn. For me to take the time to run over and ask the restorative questions and to document the student's behavior, especially when [I'm] trying to set the tone of the class, it's disruptive to take time out. It's also disruptive to have to write the referral and tell them to get out. The process needs to be streamlined. Take some steps out. Don't take it to the fifth time. [After] the fourth [warning] teachers are supposed to have parent contact, which is a major stumbling block when 80% of the students' telephone numbers in the computer are bogus or disconnected or parents can't be reached and we don't have a phone in the classroom. Right there [we] stop the restorative practice because [we] can't move on to the next step and get a hold of their parent. Sometimes the student behavior doesn't warrant five steps. If a student verbally assaults another student or verbally assaults a teacher or endangers themselves with their actions, [we] shouldn't have to wait around for all five steps. They shouldn't be left to linger in the classroom and destroy the environment of the classroom with their behavior.

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[8] "Evaluation" refers to the evaluations the RP training participants received after the training.

Just hearing Ethan's explanation of the process overwhelms me. When I first heard

teachers complain about RP taking too much time to do in class, I thought they might be

looking for excuses to not do them, either out of laziness or just to defy the district's

wishes. I began to understand their concern, however, after sitting in several hours of

class. Below, I combine my observations from Barbara's, Liz's, and Robert's classes

into a composite classroom situation to illustrate the variety of conflicts and problems

teachers have to attend to in an hour of class:

> *An hour in the life of a middle school teacher.* The bell rings and two boys sitting
> next to me are talking even though they are supposed to be writing in their
> notebook. Ms. T walks over, bends down, puts her elbows on one of the boy's
> desk, and rests her chin in her hands. She looks directly at the boy sitting there
> and calmly asks, "_____ will you please read the procedures for walking into
> class?" He looks over her shoulder at the bulletin board on the front wall and
> reads aloud the posted procedures one by one, "Walk into class quietly; sit down;
> get your notebook out. . ." "Ah-ha! That's the one you missed!" she responds.
> As she flashes him a now-get-to-work look and walks away a girl (G) slowly
> walks into class tardy.
>
> T: _____, do we have a pass?
> G: No.
> T: Could you please go get one?
>
> The girl walks back out of room just as a boy walks up to Ms. T standing at the
> front and in the center of the room. He asks her for a pencil, but she replies with
> another question, "Where's your I.D. tag?" He shrugs and mumbles, "I don't
> know," and slowly walks back to his seat. Ms. T lightheartedly tells him, "You
> don't know? You guys are falling apart these last few weeks of school. It's not a
> good thing. It's a very bad thing." Her tone, however, is lined with irritation.
> She then starts class by asking the students to turn in an assignment.
>
> T: Pass in your papers.
> G: I don't have mine.
> T: You weren't here on Monday, so just put absent.
> G: But I don't have Monday's assignment or last Wednesday's, or Thursday's.
> T: You were here on those days. Talk to me after class.
>
> Another student walks up to Ms. T.

T: What do you need?
G: What?
T: You said my name.
G: Oh. (Laughs.)

As she walks down the aisles and collects the papers, she patiently responds to students as they continue to bombard her with questions.

B: Can I go get my book out of my locker?
T: Why did you not bring it?
B: I forgot.
T: Okay, you got 2 minutes. You better be back in 2 minutes.

He leaves and comes back in what seems like less than 15 seconds.

T: Thank you for coming back on time.
B: Can I have a pencil?
T: And how do we ask for a pencil?
B: May I have a pencil?

As she hands him a pencil, another boy asks the same question. Ms. T tells him, "Okay, how about you get rid of the gum and I'll give you a pencil." The boy smiles and so does Ms. T, but her smile contradicts the you-know-better-than-that look in her eyes. The boy nonchalantly walks over to the trashcan and pretends to spit out his gum. He sees that I witness the scam, but he is not threatened by me and just looks at me mischievously. He walks over to retrieve his reward. Ms. T hands the over a pencil and reminds him, "Just be sure to give it back at the end of the hour."

A girl across the room asks to get a drink of water. Ms. T nods and the girl walks out of the room. A boy hears this and asks, "Can I go, too?" She doesn't hear his request, so he stays seated at his desk trying to get her attention. "Ms. T! I'm going to go get one, too." She still doesn't hear him, but he leaves the classroom anyway. I wonder if he feels less guilty about going because he technically asked. He comes back into the room very quickly. It is not that Ms. T is not paying enough attention to her class. On the contrary, she is multi-tasking as several students vie for her attention. At the same time, I don't think the boy was intentionally trying to be disrespectful by leaving to get a drink; he probably thought it was a harmless act.

Ms. T catches the boy who pretended to throw out his gum. She tells him, "_____, gum." This is such a teacher-like thing to do. She knows he is well aware of the rules, so she doesn't need to recite the rule he is breaking. The strategy works. He gets up, walks back over to the trashcan, and actually throws

out his gum. This time Ms. T follows him with disappointed eyes; a look I'm sure she perfected years ago.

Ms. T proceeds to walk toward the back of the classroom to pick up more papers. A boy sitting in the back does not turn in an assignment. He is sleeping with his head cradled in his left arm, which is lying on the table. He does this almost every day. As she walks by him, his head stays down with his arm crossed over his eyes. She asks if he has anything, but the boy doesn't respond. She doesn't even hesitate for a second. Judging from how the boy has been disconnected from the class in the past, I'm guessing Ms. T is used to the boy not having his assignments done. Perhaps it doesn't even faze her anymore.

After she finishes collecting papers, Ms. T walks back over to the boy in back and stands next to him. The boy doesn't realize this since his eyes are still closed. She finally whispers in his ear, "You cannot come to class and sleep. Let's go kiddo. What do you need?" (Pause.) The student does not respond, but the teacher continues and encouragingly says, "You have five more weeks. You can do it. Let's go!" I see the boy's eyes open, but his head is still on the desk. He gives a slight nod and raises his head. Ms. T walks away.

Ms. T gets the attention of the class and says, "The sub left a good report. You don't know how much I appreciate your good behavior when I'm gone." She stops and notices two boys talking. "_____, that's why I don't sit you there." She motions for him to move into another seat and continues, "I'm sorry the sub didn't show you the right video. She must not have read my directions." She sounds a little annoyed as if this has happened before. "Remember the cards we worked on? It seems we still need some work. There are concepts I felt some people didn't quite understand, so I thought I might clarify these. There are just some things that need to be re-taught." She quickly flips through her textbook at the same time telling the class, "Now folks, look up here. I'm going to go over this section really fast because it's not on the state test, but you need to know it for your worksheets." She begins reviewing information on cystic fibrosis and asks the class a question. She calls on a girl, who thinks Ms. T wants an answer from her. She quickly finds out that's not the case.

T: I called on you because you have something to get rid of. Ladies and gentlemen, it is not a game to see whom the teacher can catch.
G: I don't got nothin'!
T: Mmmhmm.

The girl most definitely has gum. I'm even a little annoyed with her. She has a major attitude. She finally stands up, walks to the trash, and spits out her gum.

Ms. T asks another question to the class. The two boys sitting next to me have rarely known the answer when she has called on them in the past. They often flip through the pages of the textbook trying to find the answer most likely because they do not read their assignments. Today Ms. T calls on one of the boys and sure enough, he sits, flipping through pages unsure of where to find the

answer. She doesn't try to embarrass the boy, even though she knows he wasn't paying attention, but instead she waits patiently. After it's clear the boy is not going to find the answer, she asks a student in front of him to help him out. A few questions later, she asks the boy another question and this time he knows the answer.

Just as Ms. T is about to move on to the next question, she notices that the same boy who got in trouble for sitting in the wrong spot earlier is again sitting in the wrong spot. She firmly tells the boy, "_____, that's not where you belong. That's very distracting to me." The boy gets up, and with a nervous smile indicating his embarrassment he walks over to his proper seat, which happens to be right next to me. After he moves, he starts immediately talking to the boy in front of him and Ms. T explains to him, "Just because you moved, doesn't mean you start talking."

Ms. T is beginning to lose her patience with the students. They are sluggish this morning. She attempts to snap them out of their lull by excitedly telling them, "Ladies and gentlemen, we need to wake up!" Confident that her enthusiasm has solved the problem, she asks them, "What is a hybrid?" but they remain just as quiet as before. She calls on a boy who's not paying attention. He looks down at his book with an unsure look on his face. "You're not going to find it because you're on the wrong page." (She pauses for a moment.) "Ladies and gentlemen, we just went over this not too long ago." She seems worried and her frustration is starting to become more noticeable. At this moment, I begin to empathize with the teacher more so than I have before. She calls on another student, but this student merely reads the answer out of the book. Ms. T asks her, "That's what the book states, but what does that mean in your own words?" Before the girl can answer, another girl walks in. Ms. T asks for an excuse note, but the girl doesn't have one. Ms. T tells her, "Go see the principal." Moments later, the girl comes back with the principal who explains the student was in the office.

She decides to have students take turns reading sections from the chapter. She asks a girl to read a paragraph from the book, but it's hard to hear the girl. Ms. T asks her to speak up, but the girl continues to read softly. The girl is reading very slowly compared to her peers; it's evident she is quite behind on her reading skills. Ms. T has to help her sound out some of the words, which must be embarrassing for the girl, but Ms. T is trying to help without drawing too much attention to her poor reading. If I had to guess, the girl, who is at least a 7th grader, probably reads at a 4th or 5th grade level. Although, it is possible she's just nervous. I always hated reading aloud in class. I wasn't necessarily a slow reader, but I never felt like I was as fast as some of my peers either, so it made me self-conscious.

In between readers, another girl asks, "Can I go to the bathroom?" Ms. T quickly responds, "Go," before calling on another student to read. As the next student reads, a boy is sleeping with his head resting on the desk and his arms tucked inside his shirt. Ms. T calls on him to read next. He doesn't respond and

the teacher looks up and notices him sleeping. She walks over to him and whispers, "Dear, you have to sleep at home." He wakes up and begins reading where she points on the page. When the boy finishes reading, he doesn't go back to sleep, but he lays with his head down. He then suddenly sits up and starts writing, as if he knows that if he keeps his head down he'll fall asleep again. I imagine Ms. T has to deal with this frequently during 1st hour. What do you do with students you can't keep awake?

For the past couple of minutes, one of the boys is drumming his pencil on his table. Ms. T, her voice illustrating just as much irritation as I am feeling, says to the boy, "Before I continue, I think I need to ask for my pencils back because I'm not going to compete with your drumming." I'm so happy she said this because the noise was really getting on my nerves.

Ms. T moves on to an activity and a girl walks in while she is explaining the directions. Without looking at the student and without missing a beat, she reaches out her hand and the girl, without ever stopping, hands Ms. T a hall pass.

A boy is throwing paper balls into the trash and Ms. T stops mid-sentence.
T: Please stop!
B: I'll pick them up… (As if he's asking to continue doing it.)
T: It doesn't matter; it's a disruption to me and everyone else around you.
Announcement: "Excuse the interruption, would _____ and _____ please report to the Parent Room."

Ms. T continues but is soon distracted by two students walking down the aisle toward her desk. She sees the students and says, "What are you doing? Sit down. That's rude. You guys do not need to be getting up from your seat when I'm talking."

She finally finishes explaining the activity. A few minutes later, she walks over to a boy and tells him, "I think it would be very difficult to do this assignment without your book open." The boy asks her what page he needs to be on. She gives a faint smile and says, "I gave you page numbers, don't even go there."

The boy caught sleeping during reading time raises his hand and quietly says, "Ms. T, I don't have any paper." She goes into the back room and comes out with what appears to be a blank notebook in her hands. She hands him the notebook and jokingly tells him, "You owe me a quarter."

Ms. T detects two girls talking to each other when they should be working on the activity alone.

T: Why are we looking and talking to each other? This is the biggest thing with students. You don't want to ask a question because you're afraid of looking stupid, but it doesn't make you look stupid. It actually makes you look smart. So don't be afraid to ask if you don't understand something. If anyone has a

question, please come and see me. Remember, asking for help isn't a sign of weakness. It's a sign of intelligence.

She walks over to another boy and asks him where his book is. He tells her he lost it at the beginning of the semester.
Announcement: "_____, please come the office. Bring your stuff. You're going home."
Something catches Ms. T's eye. She looks directly at a girl sitting towards the back of the room. "I'll take that!" She walks over to her, holds out an opened hand, and the girl gives her a note. Ms. T walks up to another girl, guilty of passing the note in the first place, and says, "Stop passing notes in my class" with a firm tone. The accused girl innocently looks up at her and says, "It wasn't me!" The girl attempts to pretend like she doesn't know what the teacher is talking about.

A boy walks by the class and waves to someone in the classroom. Ms. T doesn't see him, but she sees one of her students waving back. She walks out the door and looks down the hallway. "Hey, get to class and stop waving at people in my class!" She walks back in, makes a joke, and the students laugh.

One of the boys isn't following directions. Ms T sighs and gives him a disappointed look.

T: You were supposed to grab 2 papers. That was your responsibility. (The boy mumbles.) I like how you guys try to blame things on me. Don't you think if it were my fault I would tell you. (A boy across the room replies, "No.") Sure I would. You need to be responsible for your own actions. That's what the RP are all about.

Ms. T sits at her desk and a girl comes up and asks her a question that I can't hear. Ms. T then says to the class, "Please understand that when you're absent, it's your job to find out what you missed."   Interestingly, I still have to tell this to the college students in my class.

The two girls Ms. T heard whispering to each other earlier are again caught talking, but this time, she suspects them of cheating.
T: It's the end of the year. I know you're not checking your answers. If I catch you cheating, you're getting an F on this AND the final.
Later on the class starts to get a bit loud and Ms. T reminds the class, "Everyone should be working on the assignment!"

B: We only have 15 minutes.
T: Sweetheart, the way my class has always worked, and has worked for the entire year, is that we work on assignments when we have any time to do so at the end of the class. I'm not going to have you talk for 15 minutes straight.

She walks around the room monitoring the students' work and passes a group of students talking excitedly to each other, but as Ms. T gets near, the students stop

talking. She tells them, "See, if you were talking about Math, you wouldn't stop talking when I came over here." Classic.

Ms. T gives the answers to the activity out loud and then stops because many of the students are still talking. Exasperated, Ms. T yells, "Again with the talking!" She is finally able to give the answers and when she finishes, she asks the class to get out another assignment they had worked on the day before. Again, many of them are talking and not paying attention. I can tell her patience is wearing thin when she says, "You all are wasting time. I'm not joking."

There are a few minutes left of class and Ms. T uses this time to talk to the withdrawn, sleeping boy sitting in the back. Sounding disappointed, she says to the student, "What are you doing?" He shrugs and she continues, "If you're not doing my work, what are you doing in your other classes? And my class is easy!" The boy is unresponsive. Ms. T is interrupted by another student asking her, "When does the bell ring?" "Uh, the bell rings when the big hand is on the six." She focuses back on the withdrawn student and says, "I need to see that you're trying." The bell rings and the boy walks past the teacher and out of the room. I commend this teacher for trying to understand what's going on with this student. I wish time had allowed her to talk with him longer. He seems physically and emotionally distant from his classmates; I worry about him.

After sitting in these classes for nearly four months, I am glad to be teaching college and not middle school. I empathize with the teachers because I understand why they view RP as an extra burden; it is not because they do not want to use them, but it is because they have many responsibilities in the classroom (e.g., managing the classroom and teaching the required curriculum). But are coordinators and administrators aware of the extra burden RP place on teachers? I ask coordinators and the superintendent if they think there any responsibilities teachers have that may make it challenging for them to implement restorative practices.

V: Well, sure. There's tremendous pressure on teachers for their kids to perform well on standardized tests and if [teachers] are going to spend time away from them and do, for example, a circle, that does takes some time. In the end, it will probably benefit [a teacher] to do the circle, but to save time the easier way to go about it is to just send the kid to the office or send them into the hallway and go on. [They think], "The kids don't want to learn." That's their mindset. The [difficult] part [is] getting teachers to find a balance where [they're] just not

sitting around [with their class] talking about the problems or issues, but actually doing some academic[s].

C1: Honestly, I've tried to understand what's making a lot of teachers from implementing it fully and I've done some reflection trying to figure out, "Well, why wouldn't they?" Then again, I understand that with the curriculum and the other things they have to do in the classroom, it can be frowned upon [and viewed as], "Oh, here's something else I have to do." What I try to tell those who make that statement is, "There's five or ten minutes per day that you're taking time out to put out fires in the classroom in addition to the stress level that you're enduring every day. If you would just take five of those minutes and have a circle and discuss it, it could be 20 minutes per week instead of 50." Once kids have been trained on how to get into a circle they can do it really quick.

C2: Yes, absolutely. They're teaching curriculum, they are not teaching children. I've seen this for several years. They like to just teach the curriculum, push it in there and forget about the child. That's what a lot of [teachers] are dealing with. They're dealing with, "I've got to cover *this* amount of curriculum in the book." If a child talks or if a child is off task, they're taking the time away from everyone else. Restorative practices do take time and [teachers] are not seeing it as the instant fix they need.

Although coordinators and administrators claim to understand the pressure teachers feel to add RP with their other classroom responsibilities, they indicate that this excuse is not justified. Moreover, C2 suggests that teachers do not want to be child-centered and because of this they feel burdened by RP. Regardless, teachers insist there is not enough time to perform RP in the classroom.

The teachers I spoke with seem willing to use the practices. Still, their willingness has not been enough for them to put all the practices to use in their classrooms. Instead, the pressure to teach required curriculum in a limited amount of time appears to be a major factor prohibiting them from using RP in the classroom. As the "An hour in the life of a teacher" narrative illustrates, teachers find it difficult to use class time to teach required curricula because of behavioral conditions. Thus, if teachers

use RP inside the classroom, more time may be taken away from curricula. The narrative also demonstrates that performing the practices can be impossible for a teacher supervising an entire class of students. In other words, if she is doing RP with a group or student, the other students in the class will be unattended to. Therefore, teachers may feel too overwhelmed to perform RP in the classroom and hence, choose not to.

Challenge 2: Inconsistent interpretations of RP. Teachers also suggest that they do not understand RP. Barbara explains why the practices are confusing to her.

> B: We've been given so many in-services that I don't know what's a restorative practice and what's not. I don't know what's part of what anymore. (Laughs.) We've [learned] so many things and they're called *this*, but then they're *not* really *this*, they're called something else. I really don't know.

Barbara is uncertain of what teaching strategies are considered RP and she is not alone. As I speak with teachers, Dana, Jean, and Greg, I notice the inconsistencies between their explanations of RP. I first ask teachers to provide their general definition of RP.

> B: I guess I still don't understand all of what RP are. They didn't even do enough as far as giving us information of the whole thing because I really don't quite understand all of the concepts.

> L: Oh, that's a tough one because I haven't had a lot of experience. It's a different way of looking at kids. It's a different way of dealing with kids, trying to be more positive than negative, trying to get them to think more about their actions, and to know that they have to own up to what they do. That's not really a definition, but that's my general overview of how I see it as.

> K: What is your definition of RP?
> R: I don't want to answer that one. You're making me think. (Pause.) Classroom management? To me, that's what it is.

> A: The coordinator has been giving us a lot of literature on restorative justice. We've read a lot of the literature, so everyone in the building should know a lot about restorative justice. We've also gone through the training and the poster.
> K: If someone were to come to you and say, "I hear you're doing RP. Can you explain to me what those are?" How would you describe them to that person?

A: I would say whatever it takes, implement it and try it.

K: But, how would you define them?

A: A program where [we] use positive reinforcement and stay away from negativity. Absolutely.

K: So for you, they are about positive reinforcement?

A: The more positive reinforcement [teachers] give [students], the happier they are! Like, "Good job! Yay! Excellent!" instead of saying, "You got this wrong! How did you do that?" They'd be crushed!

E: I'd tell them that it's a program that is supposed to make people consider the consequences of their actions. It's going to go back and revisit the error, look at how it could've been corrected and avoided, and how it can be avoided in the future. That part is wonderful, but then I would also caveat that with, "but in [RPPSD] fashion, we've blown that."

The teachers have a general idea of what RP entail, but many of the definitions appear to be lacking. So I ask Dana to explain to me her definition of RP.

D: RP are a philosophy that we are adopting not only at [RPMS], but through the school system that helps the children repair the harm they have caused, be it defiant behavior, or inappropriate actions. Each circumstance is different, but our goal is for students to repair the harm they've caused. [Our goal is for students] to also learn a very valuable life lesson from the harm they've caused, be it throwing a pencil or writing a hit list. They need to fix what they've done and learn something from how they fixed it.

Since Jean brought the program into the district and Greg trained faculty on RP, I also ask them to define RP.

J: Restorative practices is the starting point for building that inner locus of control [where] you do things that are right as a student and as a teacher not because Mrs. [enter J's last name] is standing over you looking at you, but because it's the right thing to do and you want to be in what we call "a democracy." Restorative practices is a different way of looking at discipline and it's a way of helping kids take full responsibility for whatever decisions they make and they have to suffer the consequences whatever those might be, but because they generate it from within, because *they* want to make things right, it becomes very powerful.

G: In a school setting, the idea is that there are two typical ways of dealing with misbehavior, or not just dealing with misbehavior, but promoting a productive and supportive learning environment in the classroom. One concept is to be very controlling and to be very authoritarian in terms of enforcing rules and to have a

zero tolerance approach to any misconduct. That's certainly the dominant approach. Another is to be permissive. To let things slide and not really hold kids accountable because we don't want to suspend them. That's kind of a common de facto approach. We don't admit to it, but if you look at many classrooms, that's actually what's going on. Students are not being held accountable. They disrupt the classroom and nothing happens. So there are two pretty unproductive approaches. The first one creates defiance and resentment and a kids vs. adult culture that is unproductive to learning. The second creates chaos and harm to students and harm to student learning. The third approach says, "Let's enforce the rules, but let's not do it only as adults being in charge, but let's work with the students to help them understand why the rules are important and encourage their sense of empathy towards others so they're less likely to be hurtful." Those are done through affective statements and questions, impromptu conferences, formal conferences, and circles. So, the definition of RP in the school context is working with kids to build a respectful, supportive, and productive learning culture.

Ethan's definition of RP is more consistent with Dana, Jean, and Greg's definition than other teachers' definition. In general, however, teachers seem unsure of what RP entail, which may make teachers hesitant to bring the practices into the classroom.

Conferences and peacemaking circles are often confused with each other. For example, a training participant notes on her/his evaluation that there was "some conceptual blurring between circles and conferences" during her/his training. Therefore, I ask teachers to explain the differences between them.

B: I believe a conference is between the facilitator and the student and a peacemaking circle is between the people who are injured in the situation. It may be the student along with the teacher if there is a conflict. Then each member is allowed to bring a friend or someone that is supportive into the circle. I'm not even sure if I'm right, but that's my interpretation from what little [training] we've had.

L: A conference is set up with the people involved with the conflict. A lot of times we'll bring in parents, teachers, and whoever is affected and we have a discussion over what happened. A peacemaking circle is more preventative than it is [something] done after the fact. I think the conference is done after the fact; the peacemaking circle is more like, "Let's get these kids in here who have been known to have problems before and get them to know one another better." If the

kids can get to know one another better, they might not go after each other as much. I think that's the difference. The conference is something that happens after the fact. The peacemaking circle is something that should be ongoing, once a month just to get these kids who don't like each other to see each other in a different light.

R: I've never been in the peacemaking circles. They've shown how it works, but the way they showed it in the beginning [of training], the conference was basically the same. When I had my students in for the conference on, "What to do to change the climate of class," the two students that caused [the problem] weren't there, so there was no peacemaking. They never came to the class to say, "I'm sorry," which they should have or, "It's our fault. We shouldn't be doing it." To me, that's all restorative. Accepting the blame and saying, "I'm going to work to try to…" The two students who did [the conference], I never had a problem with again. One of them is already gone because she left. A peacemaking circle, to me, that's just one on one with the two students trying to work out a solution. With the conference, it's the teacher and the student working to resolve something. That's how we've used it with me. The classroom and the teacher resolve[s] the issue.

A: Well, for a peacemaking circle, [I] get them in a circle and try to make peace. I love peacemaking circles. [I] talk to the kids, shake hands, and they become friends. They're totally different [than the conference]. [We're] not as close in a conference.
K: So if I looked at a peacemaking circle and I looked at a conference, how might they look different?
A: What kind of conference are you talking about? A parent-teacher conference?
K: The restorative conferences that the coordinator facilitates.
A: Oh, well, if you're talking about that, they're the same thing.
K: You think conferences and peacemaking circles are the same thing?
A: Oh, yeah, yeah.
K: So what do they do?
A: They make [students] think positive. They make [students] think that [they're] worth something. Makes them think they can do it. They can be successful. "No, you're not worthless. You can do it. You're somebody!"

E: To me, the peacemaking circle has the arrangement of a circle. It also has a moderator and it's scripted. A circle involves several people. Everyone that may have possibly been offended is included in the circle. A conference involves a smaller group focusing on what the event was.

These various explanations leave me questioning how I differentiate between the two practices. I ask Dana to provide some insight.

D: I'll start with how I differentiate between which one I'm doing. I do a restorative conference when there is a clear-cut victim and offender. I do a peacemaking circle typically when the offender and the victim play both roles. So, the peacemaking circle has a gray line.

K: Is this how you've always viewed conferences and peacemaking circles? Or did it take you awhile to figure out how to separate the two?

D: A lot of times when I was talking with the consultant he'd say, "What does your gut say?" and I'd say, "My gut is saying I need to do a peacemaking circle versus a conference because I honestly don't know who's more at fault." As a parent, the kid who threw the first punch may be more at fault, but if I were the child who was just called a douche bag, I would be the victim. That was something I just winged because of not knowing, but really [the definition of] a conference is [how a person defines it]. Is a conference *not* a peacemaking circle? Our goal was to resolve an issue and we sat in a circle? (She gives me a look that says, "So, why wouldn't it be a circle?") Honestly, I don't even think I see a difference between a peacemaking circle and conference besides a conference is scripted and a peacemaking circle is not. But I also script my peacemaking circles. I still use the same questions, but it's not as formal. Typically, in a peacemaking circle I won't have the parents. It will just be the students and that's usually when it's two groups going against each other. Where, in the conference that you saw, I don't think anyone was really going against anyone. They wanted what was in the best interest of the kids.

Dana refers to a conference I observed pertaining to a hit list two girls created in one of their classes. Interestingly, I thought it was a peacemaking circle. Dana's confession about not really knowing the difference between the two practices is compelling. If she, as an RP coordinator, has difficulty distinguishing between them, it is not surprising why teachers have a hard time understanding the difference, too. Nonetheless, Greg attempts to clear up the confusion.

G: A conference is a response to wrong doing in which there is an admission of responsibility by the offending student and a willingness to resolve the issue that brings him or her face to face with the people who were harmed. It is a disciplinary response that is restorative in the sense that it has a tendency to repair or restore relationships that have been damaged in the process of the wrongdoing. A circle is a conflict resolution or community building model that may or may not be dealing with an offense, although it can deal with a general disruption, which is offensive. It is more of an opportunity for students and teachers to talk to each

other in a respectful way without necessarily having the objective of a contract, which results from a conference.

Greg's seems to suggest that the only thing making a conference different from a peacemaking circle is the use of a contract. This minor difference could explain why teachers have trouble distinguishing between the two practices and why they do not perform them.

Clearly, there are inconsistencies between administrators', coordinators', and teachers' interpretations of RP. Yet, how is it that the teachers' definitions are inconsistent with each other? To answer this question, I ask teachers about the training they received for RP. Ethan explains that the information he received provided a clear definition of RP, but it is inconsistent with how his school implements the practices.

> E: Yeah, there was a clear definition and it was clearly explained, but never clearly implemented. (Laughs.) It kind of makes [me] mad when [I] know what's supposed to be happening, but it's not happening.

Consequently, the inconsistent use of RP may add to teachers' confusion over what the practices entail. Additionally, even though Ethan and Anita believe their training gave them enough information to implement RP into their classrooms, Barbara, Liz, and Robert think otherwise.

> K: Do you think the training sessions gave you enough information on how to implement restorative practices?
> B: No, I think it was a good overview, but I know there's got to be more to the program. It seems like certain aspects were pulled out and shown to us. It was like [they presented] what they wanted us to implement or what they thought was good for us to implement. I don't think we got an overview of the whole program. They gave us a five-minute overview and then talked about the peacemaking circles and the affective questioning, but it wasn't enough.

Barbara implies that the training was inadequate because it either glossed over or did not

touch on other aspects of the program. Robert agrees and feels the training was shoved

down his throat.

> K: Do you think the training sessions gave you enough information on how to implement restorative practices?
> R: No.
> K: Do you think that was maybe due to not having enough training sessions?
> R: I think it was due to [the consultant] being on a six-month contract and him just trying to shove it down our throats instead of having better training. It should've been a heads-up training. But, I came here this year and I guess other teachers had training last year, too.

Liz also says the training did not give enough information and explains, "We were

trained once and expected to be able to throw together a circle!" She thinks her lack of

proper training prevents her from using the practices in her classroom.

> L: During our first training session last year, we got in a peacemaking circle and it was powerful. The questions he had us [answer] while we went around in the circle [caused] some of us to be near tears [because of the] things we were sharing with each other. It was powerful being in that circumstance [because] [we're] not normally in that situation with people [we] work with. Did [the session] help me use [peacemaking circles] in my classroom? No, not at all. After we had our peacemaking circles [in training], we were supposed to come back to school and start doing them in our academic support class so that the kids would get comfortable with them and get familiar with them and know what they're all about. But again, [if teachers] have a half hour training day, [they] don't feel comfortable coming in and doing it. At the beginning of this year, I probably did a couple of...I don't even know if [I'd] want to call them peacemaking circles because the kids were very leery about talking. I had a ball I passed around as our talking stick and [I] started off [asking] general [questions] like, "What's your favorite color? What's your favorite movie?" just to get students comfortable talking. That lasted a couple weeks. Then, they didn't want to do it anymore. We couldn't think of anything really cool to talk about and they were sick of talking about their favorite food and their favorite this and their favorite that. Again, if I had more training and knew how to bring more things into it, it probably would have been more beneficial.
> K: You think it would have helped if you had more sessions?
> L: Yes, more sessions [would have helped]. There are so many [aspects] to RP and I think we were only given one. We've heard and read about others, but

having not been through training on them, I came back [to my classroom] and didn't know if I could do [the kind of circle presented in our training]. I don't know if I'd know how to start it or get the materials ready for it. It would be great if I could, but I don't know if I have those tools. Then summer vacation came and [I] forgot about it over the summer. We had some training at the beginning of the year, but I was pulled out of that to go to a different training for a data program they're supposed to be putting together. This year I had no training other than the Nurtured Heart approach training we had a while ago.

Like Barbara, Liz, and Robert, Dana argues that the training did not present enough information, but she also believes that inconsistent training led to incongruous descriptions of RP, especially peacemaking circles and conferences.

D: No, [the sessions did not give enough information].
K: Why do you think that is?
D: This [critique] is not towards the consultant, but I don't think the presentation was done the right way. I think it was a learning experience for [Greg]. The first one I went to was an all-day session and it dealt with circles and affective statements. Nothing was said about restorative conferences, so some faculty members don't know what a restorative conference is. (She explains how they confuse them with circles.) We're not using the same lexicon or vocabulary. Also, some people may not have heard the same thing others might have in their session because [later sessions] were changed based on reviews.

Thus, teachers may be misinterpreting RP because they did not attend enough training sessions or did not receive enough information at the sessions. Also, as Dana points out, faculty might not have had similar training. For instance, Robert attended a training session that was facilitated by another RP practitioner because the consultant and coordinators were at a conference.

R: The way [the consultant] approached it and the way the person from Philadelphia approached it were 2 different ways. [The guy from Philadelphia] was rolling his eyes when we were talking about how these kids have gone to four or five circles already and nothing's been done. [The consultant] says, "No you have to keep doing it and you'll see results." [The guy from Philadelphia] is like, "Absolutely not. These are disturbances. They're on a contract and it is like probation. If they don't follow that contract they get their punishment." The kids aren't really seeing the punishment. They're breaking the rules, they're having a

peacemaking circle or a conference, and they're put on a contract, but when they break the contract, [faculty and staff] are not following up on it.

K: It seems as though it's unclear when you're supposed to do RP and when you're supposed to suspend.

R: Well, [the guy from Philadelphia] made it clear.

Conflicting views on the proper use of RP that are witnessed by teachers, like Robert, conceivably add to teachers' confusion.

Dana explains that a clear definition of restorative practices has not been provided for faculty and because of this, she worries the multiple interpretations of RP will eventually hurt the program.

D: In three years, if we don't get the training we're supposed to, then yes. I know we're supposed to be getting a lot of training in the next year for the coordinators [and] the staff from the IIRP. If we all get one concise set of trainings, guidelines and philosophies, we'll be okay. This year it was kind of muddy waters. I don't think it's going to hurt anyone in the long run that there were [initially] different points of views, but if we don't get a defined point of view soon, then we're going to have issues.

Therefore, the many interpretations of RP flowing through the district may intimidate teachers from using the practices or they may be using the practices improperly, which could lead to unfavorable results and negative perceptions of the practices. Either way, teachers' misunderstanding of the practices is a challenge for teachers using RP in their classroom. As Dana implies, consistent training may be the only way to resolve this issue.

Challenge 3: Students receive contradicting messages on conduct. Teachers and coordinators explain that students receive contradicting messages regarding conduct from parents and the RP program. According to teachers and coordinators, these contradicting messages prevent RP from being effective. However, as I analyzed what

teachers and coordinators described as "contradiction," I concluded that the contradiction

may be much more an issue of communication between the school community and the

parental community. In describing this Challenge 3, I address these two issues together.

Coordinators and teachers imply that parents are at fault for teaching students

negative behavior because they witness parents' conduct (which teachers view as

unfavorable). Anita points out specific lifestyles of parents that she believes are not

proper behaviors for students to witness.

> K: Are there specific things you've heard teachers say about RP?
> A: Yeah, "It's a waste of time. These kids are nuts, it's a waste of time." [We] can't say that because look at the lifestyle these kids have at home. I remember talking to someone (another teacher?) downstairs and I said, "I need help with my students." He looked at my students and said, "His mother's a prostitute, his mother's a crack head, and his mother's a lesbian. Should I comment anymore?" I said, "No, no, no, no." Who knows what these kids see at home. He said, "And that one, men come in and out of that house all day." I knew how [this city] was when I was a kid and I can't believe how much it's changed. I mean, these kids are exposed to that!

Anita insinuates some parents are not positive role models (although the equation of a

lesbian mother and a negative role model is heterosexist). Barbara also suggests parents

exhibit negative behaviors, especially during conflict management, that contradict RP and

make it difficult for the school to communicate the philosophy of RP to students and

transform their behavior (although Barbara seems to insinuate that parents' negative

conflict management style is influenced by their culture).

> B: We are an interesting group because of [the many ethnicities and cultures we have]. You're not going to find a lot of that in suburban schools. For some ethnicities, RP will work and for others it will not.
> K: Do you mean because of the cultural differences?
> B: Yes.
> K: Is this what you were talking about with the parent telling their child, "You don't walk away because that shows you're weak."

B: Yes, and that's exactly what I heard. [Two students] got into a fistfight and one walked away [from it]. The mother was irate and basically said, "Didn't I teach you better? You're *supposed* to hit back." RP weren't going to work because there's supposed to be a peaceful resolution. [Teachers] can try to change [students'] behavior and [students] can try to change their behavior, but we only see them for six hours of the day. Then they go back into their family situation and the environment they live in, and it's very hard for them to change their ways.

K: I remember a woman in one of the training sessions asked the consultant, "What do you do when the parent's behavior is worse than the student's?"

B: Yeah, and in one of the workshops I remember someone saying something about a parent and the consultant said, "Well, it's not the parent's fault. We're not blaming the parent. We're not looking at the parent. We're trying to change the child." But there are outside factors [affecting the student] and they can't be totally isolated. Yes, there are teachers who blame the parent and sometimes it's rightfully so.

Like Barbara, Ethan indicates there are contradicting messages students receive from their parents and the school.

E: Yeah, [a student's] mom will go, "C'mon, get in the car or I'm going to beat your ass." (He then pretends to be a child sarcastically responding the mother.) "Hey ma, we just spent six hours learning that you probably shouldn't say that." I've been raising my own kids throughout the years and in this community they have no idea what a regular kid looks like. They just don't know the thought processes that go through a regular kid's head. It's very sad and disturbing. A part of that goes back to that fact that we spend too much time on the academics and not enough time on trying to give [students] their own identity and helping them realize that, "Your home is your home. Your parents love you, but they may not be going about it the right way. Here's what you need to do as a human being when you feel this sort of thing come on. Understand that they're doing the best they can, but it may not be the right thing."

Coordinators, like Dana and C2, also recognize parents' conflict management styles as an obstacle when teaching students how to use RP.

D: We have to look at the home environment. I'm not putting down our parents, but there are some homes where the students are cursed at and they curse back at their parents. This is the only method they've known to express their feelings. They've done this for 13 or 14 years. I'm not going to undo that in two conferences, but it's slowly teaching them.

C2 explains that some parents contribute to her school's underlying racial problem.

> C2: There's a huge underlying racial problem at the school that I've addressed many times. We have a lot of parents who are telling their children, "Our race is better than the other ones." Children will tell us this and we're like, "We're not going to tell you that you're dad is wrong."

Afterward, she describes a conference she had with hostile parents, which caused her to

stop doing conferences with parents.

> C2: I do not do the formal conferences with the parents for one reason. We attempted one. We had all the right people and the right set up, but the parents yelled at each other. The parents were yelling back and forth in Arabic, so we couldn't help them in any way. I saw behavior that was uncontrollable [for me] because they were speaking in another language. (She then explains how she had to have two separate conferences with each of the families and another one with just the children.) The two children and I [met after the meeting with the parents], which is sort of backwards, but the children saw their parent's behavior and that's what the children discussed [in their meeting]. They said, "We don't want to fight like that." They haven't been in a fight like that since.
> K: So there was no way to mediate between the two parents?
> C2: No, I couldn't. And they were standing up...because one was a woman and one was a man and that doesn't happen with the Arabic people. He wasn't going to listen to an Arabic woman...to a white woman, fine, but to an Arabic woman, no.
> K: Whoa.
> C2: Oh yes, that's very cultural. And the kids just watched…these are little kids!

C2's experience illustrates how parents' conflict management styles present a challenge.

However, from administrators', coordinators', and Greg's point of view, parents embrace

RP. Although parents may not entirely understand RP, Markus explains how parents are

pleased with the outcome of RP after participating in them.

> M: The parents still can't figure [RP] out. When [we] mention conferencing they think, "Oh, we're going to sit and talk." But I've seen some of the parents participate and they're very surprised [by] the outcome of the conference. We had a student, for example, who bumped into a teacher. Whether it was an accident [or not], the teacher took it as being a physical assault. Both parties agreed to an RP circle and the parents of the student came in and were surprised by what came

out [of it]. The student admitted to things she had done in school that had nothing to do with the incident.

C1 and Greg claim parents like RP because they are unlike zero tolerance.

> C1: Parents absolutely love it! They love the fact that if [their] child never gets in trouble, but just this one time [their] child was struck and reacted [by] defending themselves, it's not going to be [resolved by the school with] zero tolerance both children are suspended. "No, your child never gets in trouble. This is just something we have to talk to your child about. We understand it was in defense. We can right this wrong, clean slate it, and keep going." (She says this as if she's talking to a parent.) So they really appreciate it.

> G: I've talked to parents. Parents are always, almost always appreciative and it's not just my anecdotal experience. There is research, surveyed research, indicating that parents satisfaction rates are generally in the 90th percentile after these kinds of interventions with their children because parents see it as much more developmentally appropriate and much more beneficial than conventional punishment.

Therefore, even though parents' conflict management styles are unlike RP, parents may be willing to use methods similar to RP in the home as they continue to see positive results from their child's participation in the practices.

It is important to mention that this challenge is not something I witness because I do not have the opportunity to speak with parents about their conflict management styles. It is also important to mention that there may be a lack of communication between parents and the school, which may distort coordinators' and teachers' understanding of what happens in students' homes. For instance, Anita argues that parents are not as involved with the school as they should be and she blames them for students' poor performance in school. In fact, the school's Annual Education Report indicates that only 50% of parents attended parent-teacher conferences in the spring of 2010. But what is

most telling is that Anita thinks that parents' lack of involvement indicates that they do

not care about their children.

> A: It's rough. [Faculty and staff] try to do the best [they] can. "Here's a pencil. Here's a folder. Here's money." (She acts like she's talking to a student.) I don't know what they're missing? I went to [university] years ago in '72. They said, "If you're in a high performance district, it's because there's parental involvement." I said, "What?" but it is so true. [This community] is a very tough and very diverse community. Anything could happen if we just had more parent involvement. One year, we had this big spaghetti dinner. Everything was free, transportation was free, and childcare was free. They made so much spaghetti because they were expecting about 400 people. Ten parents showed up. The parent involvement here is awful, just awful.
> K: Why do you think that is?
> A: They don't care! They don't care because if [they] cared about [their] child, [they'd] be here. During open house I might have 20 parents, but I have 80 students. Whereas, if [I] go to Carbondale,[9] [I] can't find a parking space [at its school]! It's packed! If [our school] had some parents involved, these students wouldn't be the way they are.

Although parental involvement may be low, I am reluctant to believe that RPMS parents

do not care, as Anita claims. When I was growing up, my mother did not attend many

school functions, but even so, I knew she cared about me. So I email my mother after

speaking with Anita:

> Mom,
> I spoke with a teacher in the school I'm studying today and our conversation made me uneasy. She seems to think that the lack of parental involvement at the school means parents don't care. I just can't believe that is entirely true. When I was younger, you weren't able to be as involved with my school, but I knew it wasn't because you didn't care. In fact, now that I think about it, I'm impressed you were able to make it to as many school functions as you did, especially when I think about how chaotic your life was during that time. What's your take on this?
> Katie

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[9] The name of the city is changed.

My mom responds to my email. She describes her experience as a single mother who frequently missed school functions. She also gives insight into why teachers may think parents do not care about their child if they are absent from the school.

> Katie,
> Coming from a small, county school, my classmates and I knew that if issues arose, our teachers would be calling our parents to discuss it (generally, before we got home from school that day). The teachers and parents actually knew each other as friends and acquaintances! To us, our parents were too involved. That was a different time, a slower time. Twenty years later, I was a single parent with three children living in the same rural area. Before your dad left us, I worked on the farm and in the home. After he was gone, I attempted to be two parents with a job 20 miles away, one child in grade school, and two in high school. The grade school was only 8 miles away, but the high school was 30 miles away. As you know, everything in a rural area depends upon transportation. The cost of transportation, the absence of your father, the stress of raising you and your sisters on one income, and returning home from work at 6:00 in the evening certainly caused a decrease in my attendance of parent-teacher conferences and school functions. It might have given the impression that I didn't care or didn't want to be involved. My children mean everything to me and I know how important parental involvement is, but so is a roof over their heads, food, clothing, electricity, books, and transportation. It is unfortunate that working so hard for these basic concerns sometimes does not allow time or energy for poorer parents to be involved in their children's education, while more affluent parents can be more involved. Anyway, there's my take. I hope you're getting plenty of rest!
> Love, Mom

My mom points out that her absence from my school did not mean she did not care about me, but there were circumstances beyond her control preventing her from attending school functions. As I describe earlier in the chapter, RPMS is in a city that is economically poor. As such, RPMS parents may be absent from schools not because they do not care about their children, but because their circumstances prevent them from being there, which was the case for my mom.

There is also a language barrier between school employees and parents, which also limits communication between them. For instance, I witnessed a conference where

the parents involved had difficulty speaking to one another. I refer to this instance to

Dana weeks later:

> K: During that conference, I realized the obstacle of using RP in a school where there are parents who don't speak English as their first language. For instance, during the conference there were two parents who were speaking English because it is the only language they have in common. Do you see this as being an obstacle when trying to do RP, especially with parents?
> D: Yeah, I asked one parent (the father of one of the girls that created the list) [beforehand] if he needed a translator. For the most part, I understood what he was saying, but yes, it was an obstacle.
> K: Yeah, at one point, it seemed as if the two parents were saying the same thing, but they didn't realize it.
> D: Yes, they couldn't grasp that that was going on.

Though this instance specifically addresses how language differences can make it

challenging to perform RP, it also illustrates that administrators, coordinators, and

teachers may have difficulties effectively communicating with parents on a daily basis.

Furthermore, it also demonstrates that communication difficulties due to language may

impede parents' involvement with the school; thus, it may have nothing to do with them

not caring about their child as Anita insinuates. Therefore, though coordinators and

teachers point out that parents' conflict management styles contradict RP, it is unclear

how coordinators and teachers come to this conclusion since it appears there may be a

lack of communication between them and parents. Nevertheless, RP may encourage

communication between parents and the school, stimulate parental involvement in the

school, and solidify the community as well. In general, Dana believes community

involvement in children's lives has decreased over generations (something my mom

emphasizes as well in her email above), especially in the area surrounding RPPSD, which

is why she thinks the implementation of RP into schools is vital.

> K: In general, what are your thoughts on the restorative practices program?
>
> D: I think it's a phenomenal idea. I think it's something that all schools need to look at. Traditional discipline is something that's not working for this next generation.
>
> K: So you think it's a generational thing? You think the practices work well with this generation as opposed to others?
>
> D: Well, I think it would work with any generation, but I think this generation needs it more than others. I grew up in this community. Twenty years ago, if [a child] did something wrong on the street the neighbor could say, "Hey, what are you doing? Why are you doing that?" The RP consultant has also said, "In this generation, [we] can't speak to someone else's child without permission and say, 'Hey, why are you riding your bike in the street?'" It's much [less] confrontational [today]. [We] leave other people's children alone. I don't think this generation is necessarily getting the same community involvement we once had.
>
> K: So you think the community isn't as cohesive as before?
>
> D: Absolutely! And I don't think it's just our community, I think it's all communities.

Dana notes that communities are no longer viewed as having an obligation to care for its

children. Instead, adults look the other way if they witness alarming behavior. However,

RP may encourage parents to communicate with other parents, which may lead to more

community involvement. Dana describes a conference where this was the case:

> D: It was beautiful to see how the community came together. We had Bengali parents, we had Bosnian parents, we had African American parents come in and talk together as a group. The majority of the parents weren't there because they were scared for their child, but they were scared for their community. They wanted to know that the young ladies had the help they needed to realize the scope of what they had done. There was one or two that wanted the traditional expulsion but, for the most part, parents were like, "Here's how I can express myself as a community member and make sure that our schools are safe and we get to participate in other children's lives." To me, that's what RP are supposed to be [about].

This illustrates how RP can bring parents together who may not otherwise get the

opportunity to communicate with each other, which may encourage parents to build

relationships with each other and lead to a more cohesive community that takes a more

active role in the lives of its children. Jean witnesses these possible benefits of RP when

she speaks to an African American and Arab parent after an RP conference.

> J: I went to a conference where [before RP were implemented into the district] these two students would have been suspended from school. They stole money out of a consultant's purse. They admitted to it and we [had] a full-blown conference. The parents came from two different cultures. It was an Arabic parent and an African-American parent. They came in [to the conference] very hostile. By the time they left the conference, both of them were thanking us for giving their children a second chance. They actually were bonding with each other. They had made a commitment to watch out for each other's child; they were going to keep in communication. Then they walked out and again said, "Thank you so much. This school really wants to help our children. This is not acceptable behavior. We do not accept that our children will be able to steal. We don't want them doing that." One of the things that came out of the conference besides the stealing was that these two girls were not [keeping up with] their academics. They could do it, but they weren't turning in homework; so part of the contract [for] the conference [indicated] that they were going to start turning in homework and putting some effort into their studies. The parents fully agreed and they were very happy. Then everybody signed the contract. I asked about them [recently] and they are handing in their homework. Their parents actually said to them at home, "Don't forget you have to hand in your homework because that's part of the contract you agreed to." They know if [their child] breaks the contract, we bring it back to the conference and it won't be pretty. There'll be a more serious consequence. They might be suspended because they did not fulfill their end of the bargain.

Jean's story illustrates that parents participating in RP may view the school positively

because they see that their child's well being is a concern for the school. Thus, RP may

lead to a stronger relationship between the school and its parents. Jean's story also

signifies that RP may cause parents to build relationships with other parents, which may

lead to a more cohesive community.

RP are challenging for teachers to use in the classroom because of limited

classroom time, inconsistent interpretations of RP, and the contradicting messages

students receive regarding conduct. Yet, only people who use or attempt to use RP (i.e.,

naturally restorative and middle ones) may witness these challenges. At the same time, so-called boulders may use these factors as reasons for not using RP (even though they may have never tried to use RP). As such, the line between a boulder, a middle one, and a naturally restorative teacher is blurred. If a boulder acts as an obstacle by not using RP, then are those not using RP, or not using RP to their full potential, boulders, too? Or is a boulder merely a teacher with a negative state of mind? Either way, the fact remains that teachers I spoke with, whom I would not label as boulders, have their reasons for not using RP. Still, if the contradicting messages students receive regarding conduct did not present a challenge, and if an abundance of classroom time and RP training were provided, would teachers resist using RP? In the next section, I highlight reasons describing why teachers may resist using RP even if challenges did not exist.

Reasons for Resistance

Even though there may be many challenges preventing teachers from using RP, teachers may choose not to use the practices for reasons beyond these challenges. Teachers emphasize reasons for why they may resist the program altogether during my conversations with them, which include skepticism for programs considered to be the new and trendy resolution to school problems (or the "flavor of the month") and troubled relationships with administrators and coordinators. In this section, I elaborate on these reasons for resistance.

Skepticism for the flavor of the month. While administrators are optimistic that RP will resolve their suspension and expulsion problem, those in support of RP may be hesitant to use the practices, not because they think they will not work, but because they

believe the program may be replaced. Greg recognizes that faculty and staff could be desensitized because of their overexposure to the next big thing.

> G: One problem we have in education [is] there are hundreds of guys like me who have the answer and they just come in and wow everybody with the solution they have to present. Then a few months later somebody else comes along and wows everybody. It's called the *flavor of the month* and it's a real problem in our field. I think partly because our field is so complex and the research is so sparse in terms of what really does work.

I must confess that I was initially skeptical of Greg and questioned his motives for advocating RP; he is, of course, biased since his paycheck depends on the district hiring him to train the faculty. Also, I am of skeptical of anyone attempting to sell schools on the idea that a particular method is going to save them from their troubles, as though the method is a prescription that if taken by doctor's orders will cure them of their illness. As such, Greg first appeared to me as a charming snake oil man using the audience's vulnerabilities to sell a bogus treatment, leaving nothing but empty pockets as he escapes through a lingering smoke filled with distrust that the audience is forced to breathe for years to come. Robert exhibits a similar impression of Greg after explaining to me that the training sessions did not give him enough information on RP.

> K: Do you think it was because the consultant was limited with time?
> R: Yeah.
> K: I guess that was a problem for him since he was only on a six-month contract.
> R: Well, I don't think it was much of a problem with him. He took the money and ran. He's a businessperson. I understand.

My impression of Greg changed as I got to know him better (maybe he charmed me too, but I prefer to think otherwise). However, since teachers likely witness many snake oil men and women come through their doors with a flavor of the month, they may be skeptical of Greg and RP. Moreover, faculty reveal their initial skepticism on their

evaluations of the training sessions. When asked what they first thought of the session,

faculty (F) give the following responses:

> F14: It was just one more new thing.
> F23: Here we go again (smiley face) a band-aid fix.
> F37: Great, another session telling me how to deal with kids gone wild!
> F38: Oh! No! Another goofy workshop.
> F76: Another program that will not be followed through.
> F102: I thought this would be the same old stuff.
> F109: Same old stuff.
> F134: No thoughts, just another seminar. I know I'll learn better.
> F140: Another professional development.
> F141: Here we go again.

These responses indicate that faculty may be overexposed and desensitized to ideas

claiming to be the key to resolving problems in their school; thus, they may be skeptical

of RP's promise. Skepticism appears to be a major obstacle for teachers to fully

implement or rather, trust the program, as Ethan suggests when he gives a general

description of past programs.

> E: Yeah, they've come up with the soup of the day for discipline. They tried
> Love and Logic. They've tried…I can't think of it now, but it was about seeking
> out good behaviors and positively rewarding them. If [we] blended them all
> together, [we'd] probably come up with a pretty good thing.

To Ethan, it appears RP taste the same as all the other soups handed to him and his

colleagues as remedies for discipline problems. Even Barbara feels many of the

programs brought in to the district sound similar to each other.

> B: They've always had certain programs and then someone resurrects them with a
> different name, but it's like, "Wait a minute, it sounds just like *this* that we did ten
> years ago." It's not anything new.

Perhaps teachers feel they are promised satisfying, chunky soup only to find the same

plain chicken broth placed in front of them over and over again.

While teachers may view past programs as similar, they do not convey that these programs were necessarily unhelpful. Instead, their time as the flavor of the month may have ended when funding was no longer available. To explain this more thoroughly, I use one of the programs, Team Teaching, as an example to illustrate why teachers may perceive these programs as flighty. Barbara provides a detailed description of the program.

> B: Team Teaching was [a] concept where if [a class] had a small enough group, [they] could be considered a family. So this group traveled from class to class. It was the same group of kids that were in the same classes together for all five hours. As a group, we had two teachers, so we had 60 students among the two of us. We were like the parents of this group. If anything happened, we could be right on it. They knew us and we knew them and it worked. It really did [work], but it also meant that [we] had to have more staffing. Of course with budget cuts, that program also left, but the teachers were very positive about it. The students were very positive about it and I think it really worked. They're talking about a resurgence of it, but it costs money.
> K: The reactions of the teachers and students were positive?
> B: Very positive.

Dana, who was a teacher in the middle school before she became an RP coordinator, provides insight into the lives of Team Teaching and other programs.

> D: Through a different initiative we had [Team Teaching], which isn't necessarily a restorative practice, but it had a lot of elements of RP in it. That was here for five or six years until funding did not allow it. We've had quite a few different initiatives [and], depending on who the leader of the district or the building is, they come and they go.

Robert also mentions Team Teaching and explains why funding for the program was eventually cut.

> K: So what happened to Team Teaching?
> R: Too much money because we had an extra prep that we were getting paid for and the other teachers were complaining in the district.
> K: Did anyone fight to keep it?

R: Oh, we all fought for it! Our scores went up because we had the same students all year, all four of us (teachers). We had interdisciplinary plans. We had disciplinary plans, we did projects with each other, and it was just a big learning community. Now there's three or four 7th grade Social Studies, so we [can't] really plan something in Science with Social Studies.

K: If Team Teaching worked well, why didn't they put more money into resurrecting it or continuing it?

R: Because that was four or five years ago when the first lay offs started here. They were out of money and no one would write grants. It was the first of many monetary problems we started having.

As Dana notes, Team Teaching was around for five or six years, which means it had a longer life than other programs mentioned to me. Its longer life span could explain why so many teachers remembered the program in the first place. While educators in general may argue that a program lasting 5 or 6 years should not be described as short-lived, the fact that a stable and successful program was cut because of funding illustrates that no program is safe. The RP program is no exception, as Dana points out when I ask her if she thinks the district will use RP in the future.

D: I think [the RP program] will be here as long as the government allows it to be here. Some people say, "Oh, it will be gone in three years. Once there is a new regime, the program is gone." But with all of our challenging circumstances between the economy, the languages, and for the most part, socioeconomics, we need something that works with our students and teaches them valuable skills to be productive citizens. My hope is that it is here for the next 20 years. Realistically, I can see it being gone in three because that's the cycle [of programs] in the district.

Dana's skeptically hopeful response demonstrates that even strong supporters of RP cannot guarantee that the RP program will continue for more than a few years. Since funding plays a huge factor in whether or not a program continues, I ask Jean and Victor where RPPSD is getting the money to implement RP into the district and their thoughts on the future of the program.

J: My big concern is sustaining the model, but beyond sustaining the model, I have to think about the financial picture. I am funding this through Title I (a federal program for at-risk students), which is soft money. However, I am not funding it through the additional Title I money. I'm funding it through the Title I money I am aware this district has had for the last four or five years I've been here, so I feel like I'm funding it with solid money. The only way that we would be in trouble financially is if suddenly the federal government said Title I is [gone] or cut by 75%. Then we would not be able to continue it. That always remains a concern [for me] because [we] never know about federal funding. As long as the Title I money is there, I plan on keeping this in Title I. As a matter of fact, I'll give up something else before I give up [the RP program] because this is going to make learning possible.

Jean acknowledges the possibility that funds could disappear if Title I is drastically cut, but still, she seems confident that will not happen. Victor, however, indicates that future funding will not be the only factor determining if the program is sustained or cut.

V: As long as there continues to be Title 1 money approved for it and a perception that it's working, [it will have funding]. Whether it's working or not is part of the way of evaluating it. The other part is [the local board's] perception. If the perception is that it's not working, even if it is in individual cases, then we will abandon it. But I don't see that [happening] for at least 2 or 3 years.

Therefore, the decision to maintain RP is based half on actual results of the program and half on the local board's perception of the program. Even if the program is successful, its life is fragile if board members have a negative impression of it.

The unstable nature of programs can be detrimental to teachers' attitudes toward new programs like the RP program. Liz explains her and other teachers' frustration over the fleeting character of many programs.

L: Being here 15 years, it gets rather frustrating because every year they throw something new at [us]. We've had so many things given to us as a one shot deal. So, here comes this person who knows so much about *this*, whatever *this* may be. They come in and we have this great in-service and it could be powerful. It could be a great thing and then it's never mentioned again. [Programs] have come and gone so much that I think there are a lot of teachers who are jaded and feel like,

"I'm wasting a day sitting here because this is going to come and in two years, it'll be gone," because we've seen that [happen] over and over and over again.

Consequently, teachers like Liz may be reluctant to put in the time and effort to learn how to use RP in their classrooms, even if the practices appear to have the potential to work, because tomorrow they may be asked to adhere to another program. Furthermore, teachers may resent administrators for implementing an RP program that may easily be taken away from them and as a result, resist using the practices.

Troubled relationships. Teachers describe their relationship with administrators and coordinators as troubled. Thus, I separate this section into two parts to examine the relationship between teachers and administrators and the relationship between teachers and coordinators. Though I separate these relationships, they are ultimately related because teachers tend to view coordinators as administrators. Therefore, the problems existing within one relationship may likely be found in the other. Nevertheless, these troubled relationships may cause teachers to resist the practices because of the power that administrators and coordinators exert on teachers.

Teachers and administrators. Teachers indicate that they have a troubled relationship with administrators which stems from the power they have to ignore teachers' voice. Barbara and Liz make it clear to me that I cannot ignore these matters. To be clear, both of them are on the School Improvement Team at RPMS. As the name suggests, the purpose of the team is to discuss ways to improve the school. They illustrate their frustration towards the administrators of the district for not recognizing them as useful resources to improve the well being of their school.

B: In this district, most of the programs are top down. They come from the Central Office and they pick and choose the programs without looking at the schools' needs assessment. The Central Office saw there were many discipline [problems], referrals, [and] and suspensions, [but] they didn't take the time to look at why. I hate to say it, but they just threw a program at us. The same thing happened when they noticed our low reading scores. They throw things at us even on the federal level. We have a grant (I assume the grant is to help improve reading scores), but we couldn't even use the grant the way we saw fit through our needs analysis. We had to do it according to what Central Office saw, which was a totally different view.

K: It seems as though they're trying to fix problems without knowing the reasons for why they exist.

B: And our district has many students receiving free/reduced lunch, so we tend to get a lot of federal money and we have to spend it. Instead of asking us our input, they don't. They just say, "Okay, we got this money and this is what we're going to spend it on." At one point, we had Title I money that needed to be spent, so they decided to put two or three student computers in the classroom. Well, in a classroom with 30 students, what am I going to do with two or three student computers? The teachers can't use them. They can only be used for students! (Laughs.) They spend all of this money and instead of giving us a computer room, they gave us this piece meal? It's people who have no education background making these decisions without coming to us. As [part of] the School Improvement Team, we are supposed to look at a needs analysis. We *know* what our needs are, but no one wants to ask us what our needs are.

K: It seems counterproductive.

B: It is.

K: Doesn't it make their job harder in the end?

B: It doesn't make it harder [for them] because they throw [a program] at us and then we're responsible for doing it. If we don't do it, then they come down on us [without] realizing that it was not what we needed.

L: They don't ask us what we think is going to work. They just pick it out and bring people in to train us. Sometimes we feel like things are just shoved down our throats. Especially, being a part of the School Improvement Team, we know where we need help. We know the kinds of professional development we want to have, but we don't get a choice. It gets really frustrating. We got all this stimulus money last year and they ordered these net books. They're small, word-processing [computers]. They had so much Title I money [left over] and nobody asked us! All of a sudden all these boxes were delivered to the school. The principal didn't even know what they were. We're being trained on using them and it's essentially a word-processor. We're like, "You could get us SMART boards. You could get us projectors and hook them up to a flat screen TV. There are so many things you could do for us! You're going to give us word-processors?" How is that going to help in a Science class? How is that going to

help in a Math class? It's great for a reading and writing class, but you just spent millions of dollars on equipment and trainers and the [word-processors] have not been used all year. It gets really frustrating because the district thinks they're doing something really great, but they never talk to the teachers. For instance, they're ordering net books for kids next year. All the kids next year are going to have a net book. It's a great idea, but did they put any thought behind it? We give students textbooks and they don't return them. We're going to give them a $400 net book and expect that it's not going to get stolen? It just doesn't seem right. Also, by 5th hour they're going to lose battery and there are no plugs around here. In some rooms, there's only one by the light switch! We're going to have one extension cord [charging the students' batteries], which is a huge fire hazard.
K: Especially in such an old building...
L: Yeah, everything is made of wood!

Barbara and Liz indicate that the team of teachers could be a resource for the district to determine specific needs for the school, but they believe their voices are unacknowledged when administrators make decisions for allocating funds. Because of this, Barbara and Liz imply that their knowledge of the school is irrelevant to the district. When administrators turn a deaf ear, some teachers, like Ethan, may resent their decisions and have difficulty trusting that they have teachers' best interests in mind.

E: [RP] genuinely have excellent components if done properly. Again, we should only take RP so far, and people that are pro-RP, the people hired to set them up, think that RP are an end all to end all. I really believe that in our society there comes a point in time where legal measures need to be in place. For instance, [when a student] threatens a teacher's life or another student's life, we shouldn't have a circle about it because we're not professionals [skilled in handling such an issue]. If [a circle] fails and the kid comes to school and shoots somebody, everything's gone. There's a loss of life. There's a total lack of support for the system at that point and [the district] is willing to make that gamble. I brought up [this concern] in a meeting earlier in the year and they turned a deaf ear to it.
K: They didn't respond to your concern?
E: No, and I told them how I'd received death threats from a student [who wrote in his notebook] that he was going to get a gun and sniper my big ass until I was dead in the street. I said, "You know what, I'm somebody's dad. I'm somebody's husband. I don't want to put my life, security, and well-being in your hands [so we can] sit around and talk to a kid about what he did and how that made me feel."

Barbara, Liz, and Ethan's explanations reveal teachers' unacknowledged voice and lack

of empowerment in the school. Therefore, it is possible that their lack thereof may deter

them from supporting the practices and resist the program altogether. As a result, this

could significantly affect RP's ability to provide a space for student voice and

empowerment. Overall, teachers' unacknowledged voice and lack of empowerment in

the school may prevent RPMS from witnessing any anticipated positive effects from RP.

Teachers and coordinators. While teachers may be distrustful of administrators,

they may transfer these feelings onto other members of the school who are perceived as

taking on administrative roles. For instance, Robert notes that faculty often view Dana as

an assistant principal and therefore, as part of administration.

> R: Teachers [are] either liking [the program] or they're not. It seems to some of
> them, because I'm the union rep and I hear it all, that [the coordinator] is turning
> into a Vice Principal. She shouldn't let the Principal give her other things to do.
> She should be doing RP and that's it, but it seems that's what it's turned in to.
> K: So maybe there's not a clear understanding of what her role is or a clear job
> description?
> R: Well, there isn't one in any of them. (I think he meant that her role isn't made
> clear in either her or the principal's job description.) [The coordinator] is in our
> [teacher's] union, so if they take on administrative duties and screw up, there's
> really nothing we can do to protect [her] because [she's] acting as an
> administrator. It's a gray area. We've talked about it in our meetings, but [the
> coordinator] will say, "Well, I'm not doing that." But, at the other buildings I
> hear [the coordinators] are just sitting there being a vice principal. I don't think
> there was a clear-cut [job description for the coordinators given] to the principals.
> There was no job description. Administrators have on the bottom of their job
> description, "and anything else the administration wants you to do," but it doesn't
> have it on mine…and [the coordinator] is part of the union. (Robert is suggesting
> that the coordinator doesn't have the same line at the bottom of her job
> description since she is a part of the teacher's union.) They pick these
> coordinators that are "yes" people. They don't want to say "no" to the principal.

Coordinators indicate that they are aware of teachers' perception that coordinators are taking on an administrator's role, but Dana points out its affects on her and her relationships with teachers.

> D: When [I was] in the classroom, [I was] equals [with the faculty]. Now I'm looked at as an outsider in some ways. It's a hard role [for us] to find [our] place in because [we] are not administrators, [we] are not teachers, [we] are not counselors, but [we] are all those roles in one. But, I wouldn't give it up.
> K: Another coordinator said that she had to be on the side of the students, but also on the side of the teachers. So you have to…
> D: Balance.
> K: Especially since these were your colleagues? Well, they're still your colleagues, but like you said, you were all on one level and now you have this different role.
> D: But, [I] also see them differently because [I] may hear in the lounge people complaining about this or this or this, but when [I'm] in the office and hear both sides, or see the number of referrals or issues coming to the office, [I'm] like, "Wait a minute. I may have wrote up one kid a month [when I was teaching] and it was usually for hallway behavior." And when someone [an administrator] would come to me [about it] I'd be say, "I don't care what you do with [the student]. I'm writing it up because they know I heard them or they know I saw them, so I had to write it up." So, it's a balancing act.

It would seem that Dana should benefit from the close relationships she acquired with teachers when she was a teacher at RPMS; however, it appears her new role has separated her from them because they now view her as an administrator.

> K: How is your professional relationship with the principal?
> D: Right now, we're the two closest things we have to each other as peers. Even though I'm still in the teacher's union and I'm still technically a teacher by staffing. I've lost some of my peer relationships through RP because I'm not in the teacher's lounge eating lunch. Sometimes the teachers are upset by some of the decisions that have not necessarily been made [through] RP, but were made by the main office. I get lumped together with [the people in the main office] in the school. For the most part [the principal and I] work really well as a team because sometimes it's him and me against the building…not *against* the building, but like I said he's the closest thing I have as peer at this point in time.

Unfortunately, if teachers view Dana as an administrator, she may not be able to communicate to her colleagues the same way she did when she was a teacher. Other coordinators mention the balancing act of helping students, while not stepping on the toes of the teachers in their school. One coordinator tells me about an incident where a teacher did not carry out a promise made to her/his student after a conference.

> C1: Later on, one of the students came to me and said, "I don't feel like I have to keep my commitment because the teacher isn't keeping hers."
> K: What do you do in that situation when it's the adult who's not keeping their end of the bargain?
> C1: What's happening is that I'm trying to keep relationships with the staff, so that's tough…
> K: That puts you in an awkward situation.
> C1: Yes! I talked to the student and said, "Would you mind if I go back and talk to the teacher?" She said, "Yeah, we can talk together." I went to the teacher and I said, "A student told me that this is what's going on and you're breaking the agreement." The teacher said, "Yeah, you know, sometimes I just forget." It didn't stick unfortunately.
> K: It's hard to get people to break bad habits, especially teachers who have been teaching for so long. For me, I know it takes me a while to change something I do in the classroom.
> C1: It does, but the thing is, we don't realize that it also takes time for these students to change, just like it's hard for us. Sometimes we expect them to instantly change.
> K: There isn't too many staff in that in-between stage. You seem to be for the student, but also for the teachers. Then you're also trying to bring those two groups together.
> C1: Yeah, that's exactly who I am. I try to be as supportive as I can with the teachers. I'm trying to keep relationships with these teachers [because] I have to work with them for, I don't know, how many years? Students come, they move on, and then they're done. But at the same time, I feel like I have to be an advocate for some of these students because there's good in everybody.

Thus, coordinators appear to walk a fine line between pleasing students and pleasing their colleagues. When coordinators are not able to please teachers, their relationship and communication with each other may become limited as teachers begin to grow distrustful of coordinators' role in the school.

Though coordinators believe they are in a state of limbo, teachers appear to view coordinators as being administrators, which is likely due to the fact that coordinators and administrators are responsible for bringing RP into the schools. The distrust teachers have for administrators and coordinators illustrates how easily these relationships can be strained or altogether nonexistent. Furthermore, it may cause teachers to resist RP since they are being asked to use the practices by those they distrust. Hence, the district's ability to witness positive effects from RP may be drastically affected by teachers' distrust and the damaged relationships between groups in the district.

RPMS Students and RP

I do not wish to suggest that students are an afterthought by discussing them towards the end of my ethnography. On the contrary, they are, in my opinion, the most important group of all. Students are affected by the actions and decisions made by administrators and teachers. However, I had to first understand the reasons for utilizing RP and the obstacles interfering with teachers' use of them because these factors determine RP's influence on students. To appreciate my approach to studying RP's influence on students, however, I must explain how I was initially introduced to the practices. When I began my project, I did not know anything about restorative justice (RJ) or RP. Therefore, I read an extensive amount of research on the topics and found that there are RJ/RP scholars emphasizing RP's ability to encourage the acknowledgement of student voice and empowerment. For instance, Cavanaugh (2009) claims RP can "[provide] students…with a space to voice their emotions and concerns and listen to the voices of others who had been affected" (p. 59). As a result, when

students or participants contribute their voice to a discussion regarding a conflict or issue affecting them, it can lead them to a sense of empowerment. In fact, Morrison (2007) proclaims that one of the goals of RP is to empower participants.

RPPSD administrators, coordinators, and teachers recognize voice as a positive aspect of RP because students get to explain what occurred during a conflict; thus, administrators, coordinators, and teachers also suggest student empowerment is a possible effect of the program. Yet, voice and empowerment are not concepts associated with the main objectives of the program or even primary concerns of the district. Still, I am interested in finding out if RP may promote voice and empowerment because literature highlights these concepts as significant benefits of RP.

Greg, who I consider to be an expert on RP, discusses student voice and empowerment in one of our conversations:

> K: I heard you say that RP, like the peacemaking circle, can be empowering for the student because they can voice their opinion or feelings about an issue. Could you explain the idea of student empowerment?
> G: I think the general principle is that people feel more comfortable complying with rules. They feel more agreeable to authority when they perceive they are a part of the interaction. They feel like they are a part of the decision-making. So, in terms of empowerment, I'm thinking of a purely democratic approach where everybody has a say instead of just having a principle with autocratic authority. In a controlled way, students have ways of providing input [in a circle]. It doesn't mean that adults and authority figures don't have final decision-making powers, but we want to have a more participatory school where students feel that they do have a voice. Also, because students are largely denied a voice, in any kind of democratic decision-making, the disruptive students end up having more power. The circle provides an opportunity in a safe forum, so students, who don't like the disruption and feel too intimidated to speak up against it, have the opportunity to say how they feel about the disruption.
> K: Do you think RP programs strive for student empowerment and voice?
> G: I've come to understand RP as promoting a higher level of respectful human interaction, being truly more democratic than what is typically done in schools, being more supportive of students, and creating a culture of kindness and respect.

The [outcomes] manifested from these [aspects] are lower suspension rates, less conflict, and fewer fights. Some people see [RP] as ways to discipline differently and to resolve conflict. Generally speaking, what educators are looking for is a way to manage the school environment to encourage student learning. In a way, they look at RP as ways to assist that outcome. They don't really see it as a way to promote a better way for people to live with each other. But, ultimately, if we're going to have more control, we need to improve the way students treat each other and teachers and other staff. If we're going to have higher learning outcomes, we need to have that level of respect. Some people in favor of RP view them as ways to control the environment better; some people will look at them in terms of changing the whole culture in which we live.

K: So student voice and empowerment could be understood as indirect effects of RP?

G: Right. Of course a lot people are not in favor of empowering kids because they don't understand that positive empowerment is good. In fact, it is difficult for adults because sometimes when we empower kids they say things that are critical of adults. We give voice to students and then students say things that make us feel uncomfortable. The problem is that RP promote [student voice and empowerment] and that's threatening to adults. I would suggest that we are going to get a lot farther with students if we give them that voice and take into consideration what they have to say.

In spite of the fact that voice and empowerment are not directly linked to the objectives of RPPSD, RP seem to have the potential to promote these notions; even Dana thinks the district may witness these effects as the program matures. Before I explain whether or not RP can provide a space for student voice and empowerment, however, I discuss three significant issues concerning RPMS students: students' understanding of RP, the silencing of students, and students' opportunities for dialogue. These three issues provide insight into the current state of students' world within RPMS. Finally, I reveal the results from a questionnaire where I ask students if their RP experience promoted voice and empowerment.

Students' understanding of RP. During conferences and peacemaking circles, students are provided an opportunity to give their account of a conflict and/or express

their opinions and concerns over a particular issue. Students harming others during a conflict are also given the chance to repair the harm and their relationship with an individual(s) and/or the community. Thus, students can remain an active member of the community, instead of being excluded or being refused the chance to confront the people or person that harmed them. The end result is not only a peaceful resolution between two or more individuals, but also individuals who recognize they have a voice and are empowered through this recognition. Yet, this sense of voice and empowerment largely depends on students' participation and perception of the practices. If students do not actively participate (e.g., a student sits in a conference, but says nothing) or have a negative perception of the practices, then recognizing their voice and empowerment through RP may be unlikely. Nevertheless, for students to actively participate and have a perception of RP (negative or positive), they need to know what RP entail. Unfortunately, due to my time and accessibility constraints, I am unable to ask students if they understand the practices. Instead, I ask the teachers, principal, and coordinator at the middle school, Dana, if they think students understand RP. Specifically, I ask if students know the difference between a conference and a peacemaking circle since these are commonly confused with each other among faculty. Many faculty members tell me that students do not necessarily know the difference between these practices; however, Liz and Ethan contend that students who have participated in a circle or a conference may understand these practices.

> L: I think there are a lot of kids who don't know what a peacemaking circle is. There are probably a lot of kids who don't know what a conference is because they haven't been involved in a conflict, nor are they part of the group who causes problems in the school. I don't think that they would know the difference just

because they don't even know what either one of them is. If you ask the [students] involved with them, they will be able to tell you the difference.

E: Yeah. Once they go into a room where the chairs are arranged in a circle they know they really screwed up. (Laughs.)

Unlike Liz and Ethan, Anita is not sure if students participating in these practices truly understand them.

A: They say, "I went to the circle and spoke," but I don't think they know what it means. [My students] know what a peacemaking circle is because we've incorporated it [in my classroom]. A conference, I don't know.

Barbara questions students' motives for wanting to participate in the practices and because of this, she also wonders if they know the difference between the two.

B: I believe they don't know the difference because they keep having the same circles with the same kids over and over again. The same group of girls will circle up at least once a week, if not more. Sometimes I wonder if they think it's just a way [for them] to get out of class.

Despite the fact that most of the teachers question students' understanding of circles and conferences, Markus, the principal, is optimistic and believes students are learning.

M: I think they're learning. I don't think at the beginning they knew [the difference]. They used the terms [circles and conferences] interchangeably. Now, they're learning the difference between them. They are learning to participate because they realize it's not a free for all. It's not a discussion where one dominates. It is the opportunity for everyone to express opinions. In a conference, they've learned to communicate and trust the system. They know that at the end of it, there will be a resolution. It's not like, "If you admit to something, you're going to get penalized." There's no penalty. The only consequence is allowing the other person to express how they feel about the act or the action.

Though Markus is confident students are beginning to understand the practices, the faculty's confusion over conferences and circles causes me to remain skeptical. I assume students having attended both a conference and a peacemaking circle may know the

difference between the two, but I ask Ethan if he thinks students having not been involved with the practices know the difference. He admits, "No. They've never been [introduced] to the system." Since faculty went through training, I ask teachers if students were introduced to RP in a similar fashion or perhaps during a meeting discussing the practices. Barbara, Liz, and Robert agree that any introduction to the program given is only provided to some students.

> K: Did the students have any training or any kind of introduction beforehand?
> B: No. The students weren't really told about RP until there was an infraction. Then the coordinator would bring them together and give them an overview of what they were going to do and why they were going to do it. I know that when [RP] were introduced they started peacemaking circles with some of the groups of kids that were causing problems or if a teacher wanted to try it with a group of students in their academic support (homeroom). As far as [providing] an overview of the whole program [to the students], no.

> L: I don't think there was. We introduced RP [to the school] in April of last school year. I believe [the coordinator] went to each of the classes. She explained to them who she was because she was a classroom teacher before and now all of a sudden she's in the office. So, there was some kind of an introduction, but again, it was at the end of the school year and then we had summer [break]. I don't know how many of the kids [remember]. Then we had the 7th graders come in and I don't think there was anything at the beginning of the school year to reiterate [the program].

> R: No. We were given the option to use it in our advisory class (homeroom). [The coordinator] asked us if anyone wanted to do a circle and [if so], [she] would show the students how it works. Some of the teachers took advantage of [the offer] and some of the teachers didn't, so it only got to some of the students. There was no assembly to show how it was going to work, which [we] probably should've [had].

Markus admits that students were introduced to RP, but there was no training given to all students.

> M: At the beginning of the school year, [the coordinator] went to the academic support classes and introduced the system. There was no training, unless they were asked to participate [in the conferences or peacemaking circles], so some

students may not have been involved in a conference because there was no conflict. There was no need for them to be involved. A lot of peacemaking circles have been held in the classrooms at the request of the teachers.

Although Dana, the RPMS coordinator, may have went to students classes', it is unclear what was said or done during these introductions. Also, as Liz indicates, any introduction given was done at the end of last year; seventh graders coming into the school this year were likely not introduced. Students that received a more thorough explanation were likely in classes with teachers that asked Dana to come in and do a peacemaking circle. As a result, there may be students that missed out on information because their teachers did not take advantage of Dana as a resource. In general, students are probably at different levels of understanding RP.

The silencing of students. My conversation with teachers and my classroom observations reveal that students are often silenced in school. Ethan notes how this is a problem within the district and he claims the district has never made steps toward encouraging students' voice so they may become empowered.

> K: Some restorative practices literature discusses using restorative practices to teach students about democracy and to promote student empowerment and student voice. Do you think these are things this program is striving for?
> E: No, not at all. This district has never made a step to self-empower students. Even at the high school level student council. Rather than [talking about] issues in school, [students] are handing out muffins on Teacher Appreciation Day. No, give these kids a worth. Give them a voice in what they're doing. Even on the middle school level, start it off there! But we don't. We tell them, "This is how it is. Like it or don't like it." There's never any room for discussion with the kids. And that's a big shame [for] this district. [Our students] don't act like kids in the suburbs because we never listen to them. [We] couldn't run a school like this in the suburbs. Kids would just reject it 100%. They have an identity. They feel good about themselves when they walk in the door. We don't give [kids here] any say-so at all. They should be able to make their own rules [and] to have locker clean-outs when they want to do it. They should be able to make some decisions on how they want their school to look and we don't [let them].

K: Do you think the way this school is implementing RP helps with student voice and empowerment?

E: It does, but only with the kids that come in contact with the process. [They] got to screw up before [they] realize [they] got a voice about what [they] did. But what about the A student who's never had a referral or never been suspended? They're still just going along in the stream like school fish. They never get to spread their wings. We don't even have a student of the month to step forward and do the pledge of allegiance in this school. So the minute a student walks in here, they are just channeled throughout the day. They have no say-so on what's going on.

Ethan believes students have no opportunity to make decisions in the school. Similarly, Barbara points out how students are often left out of conversations about decisions that affect them. Barbara elaborates on why students were not given information on RP before the program was implemented.

B: Like most things, I believe a lot of people don't see kids as human beings and they don't explain to them why we do what we do and why we do what we do with them. I think if they were told and if they were given some background, they would be a lot more receptive and understand. Telling the kids they need to do well on the state's standardized test because it's going to determine if they are in a remedial reading class gives them a reason for doing well on it, instead of randomly giving answers. The same thing with [RP], if [we] gave them an explanation as to why this was happening, they'd have an understanding and it would work better than just having them [think], "Oh, this is a way for me to get out of class." In this building and in this district, we tend not to explain the rationale behind [what we do] to the students.

K: I think that probably happens a lot. I think adults tend to think kids that age don't need to know why. I was the kind of kid who wanted to know why. As soon as it was explained to me, I'd usually do it. But without an explanation, I would just be like, "Well, why do I need to do it? Why waste my time?"

B: Right, and then [students] get an attitude and [adults] wonder why.

K: Oh yeah, and *I* had an attitude.

B: And rightfully so! Although, I was brought up where parents told [children] what to do and [they] weren't supposed to ask why. [Children] did not need to know! It was a different way of working with kids. Being on the School Improvement [committee], I try to explain to kids the rationale behind everything and [I] pretty much can get them to work with [me].

Barbara's explanation is telling because she reveals a hidden students-shouldn't-ask and teachers-shouldn't-tell policy of the school suggesting students do not need an explanation for adults' actions; they should just do what they are told without question. But as Barbara notes from experience, this method can cause children to respond negatively by acting out toward the teacher or another peer. Barbara reminds me of a conversation I witnessed between Robert and a girl during his class:

> *Classroom field note, May 3, 2010: "I have traffic school and I don't know why."*
> The bell rings and a girl raises her hand and asks Robert a question about a referral she received requiring her to attend Traffic School.
>> G: I have Traffic School and I don't know why.
>> R: You had too many traffic tickets. (Apparently, students get traffic tickets if they misbehave in the hallway.)
>> G: But I didn't get any tickets.
>> R: We don't tell you when you get tickets.
> Another girl gets in the conversation and asks, "How are we supposed to know then?" Robert explains, "It's like when you go to some states and you run a red light. You don't get stopped. They take a picture of your license plate as you go through and they send the ticket in the mail." The girl having to attend Traffic School asks, "What if I don't go to Traffic School?" Robert tells her, "You'll be suspended."

I admit I am troubled by this conversation. Since students are not told when they receive a ticket or why they are receiving a ticket, how do they know the behavior they need to change to avoid getting another ticket? It seems the only thing they know is that they better not make a mistake because a teacher may be watching them at any point. Moreover, the protocol for ticketing does not allow students a chance to give any rational explanation for behaving inappropriately, which is evident during a conversation I have with Robert where he justifies the use of the tickets:

> K: Have you used restorative practices outside of the classroom?
> R: Yeah. [I use] affective statements when they're pushing each other [in the hallway].

K: How do students usually respond to that?

R: They know that they're doing it and it's almost like some of them are just saying what [they] want [teachers] to hear and then [the students] go back [to what they were doing]. That's why we have the traffic tickets too.

Robert suggests that teachers give tickets instead of confronting students because what they say is insignificant anyway. An instance in Liz's class also demonstrates this silencing of students:

Classroom field note, April 27, 2010: Excuses stop here. Liz is giving directions for a quiz the class is taking today. During the instructions, a boy grabs a pencil from Liz's desk, accidentally knocking something over at the same time. After the boy gets back to his seat, he raises his hand and asks the teacher a question about the quiz. Liz tells him, "Had you not been up at my desk, goofing around, knocking things over, you may have heard the directions." Since Liz was preoccupied with giving directions, I'm not sure she realized that the student was only grabbing a pencil off of her desk; I think this is acceptable to do in this class since I've seen several other students do it without any punishment. His knocking over things was merely an accident. I'm not sure I would categorize anything he was doing as goofing around; however, the student didn't have a chance to tell Liz what happened.

Ironically, I look up to see a poster taped above my head on the back wall that says, "EXCUSES STOP HERE!" The "O" in "STOP" is in the shape of a trashcan full of trash and small slips of paper littering the area surrounding it. Each slip lists a common excuse teachers hear from students:

Tired.

But…

I overslept.

My dog ate it.

Too hard.

I can't.

Nobody told me.

My sister did.

Students are often taught not to give excuses and if they do, it can be interpreted as talking back or being disrespectful; as a student, it frustrated me to be silenced in this way. In fact, if there is one thing I absolutely hated about being an adolescent, it was feeling like my voice was insignificant. Even if I had a logical explanation for why I

acted "bad," I often kept quiet. I thought, "Adults are always right, so I must be wrong no matter what." This no excuses attitude teachers (including me) display, makes me wonder if their students will become adults that accept their disempowerment without question.

Overall, the culture of RPMS does not appear to encourage student voice and as such, it may inhibit RP's ability to benefit students. Barbara and Robert imply that teachers identify students as passive beings existing in teachers' world, instead of existing with teachers in a shared world. If this is true, then the extent to which students voice their concerns or problems or believe their voice is relevant in a conference, circle, or in the school may be negligible. Furthermore, Roche (2006) states, "evidence suggests that restorative justice works best when it is used in conjunction with the threat of tougher enforcement" (p. 235) (e.g. suspension or expulsion). Still, scholars claim that RP are meant to empower students, so it is unclear how the use of a threat works in combination with RP since it may easily contradict the philosophy behind the practices. Therefore, if RP are used in conjunction with procedures like Traffic School, RP's ability to promote student voice and empowerment at RPMS may be limited.

Students' opportunities for dialogue. Since students are often silenced it seems logical to assume that they have little opportunity for student dialogue. However, their opportunity may also be minimized because adults in the school seem to suggest that particular issues are not a concern for students; therefore, students may be uncomfortable or discouraged from speaking about these matters. For instance, Markus thinks student

conflicts are often viewed as being caused by ethnic or racial issues when they really are

not.

> M: We are an inner-city school and like any inner-city school, or *any* school, we have the same problems and issues. The problems here are magnified because we have such a diversity of students. A fight, for example, between two students is because one is Arabic and the other is African American. It all of a sudden becomes an ethnic issue. I think restorative conferences has eliminated some of those differences and has made the conflict just what they are, a conflict between two students, instead of something more. We get a lot of students from [a nearby city], from the Middle East, and different ethnic backgrounds. Hopefully, with the continuation of this program it will have [an] impact.
> K: Do you think it may change how students view conflict and help them to not let conflicts escalate?
> M: Exactly. It won't become something it really is not. We all know that kids will have conflict, will argue and start fights. It's not because one is from a different ethnic group or a different religion. It's unfortunate that in this district [conflicts] take that appearance sometimes.

Markus seems to suggest that just because two students with different ethnic or racial

backgrounds fight, it should not be assumed that it is because of their different

backgrounds. I do not think he is insinuating that fights do not occur for this reason, but

he expects that RP will uncover alternative causes for conflicts by allowing students to

talk to each other and discuss the conflict from their point of view. Dana may agree with

Markus because she suggests the diversity of her school may play a role in conflicts, but

is not truly the cause for them.

> K: I just found that really interesting. I guess it just made me realize how unique this school is in just that way.
> D: Even the elementary schools have [students speaking different] languages, but one elementary is more Arab. One elementary is more Bosnian and Bengali. One is more African American. [Each elementary] only has one or maybe two groups to worry about, but we're the meeting ground for all three, so we get them all.
> [This city] is still somewhat segregated. Certain groups live in certain neighborhoods, so they go to certain elementary schools.
> K: It seems like [the middle school] is a breeding ground for conflict because of those differences.

D: Well, in middle school, they don't see color. They really don't. We just took our 8th grade field trip and it was the most diverse group we've taken. Normally, a lot of our African American [students] do not go [on the trip], but we had 8 or 9 go [this year], [which was the] majority [of the group]. It becomes a racial issue when they have older brothers, sisters, or cousins at the high school. Truly, in the middle school, [there could be] a boy and another boy's brother fighting in the high school and [the younger brothers] will go on their [racial/ethnic] sides, African American or Arab or whatever it may be. Two weeks later, once those tensions between the older kids have died down, [the younger brothers] are friends again. So, I really don't think race is an issue in our building. They may use the "n" word or the "a" word, but that's just part of their culture. Like, when they use the term *A*-rab (she emphasizes the A (ai) sound) versus Arab, [they'll say] "They say it!" They don't see anything wrong with it, but adults tell them, "You can't say that." I think sometimes we put more on *them* (students) and make them aware of the racial issues more than they are.

Though Markus and Dana imply that the diverse racial and ethnic makeup of their school can cause conflict, they seem to underestimate their influence. Therefore, administrators, coordinators, and teachers like Markus and Dana may not consider how these issues relate to student conflict when students are in a conference or circle. If so, students may not have the opportunity to discuss these issues when they happen to be causing their conflict, which will prevent student dialogue. Unlike Markus and Dana, Greg emphasizes the need for RP in the school district because of its diverse makeup.

G: [The city] is one of the most culturally diverse and ethnically diverse community and city in the nation. It has all the typical urban challenges that urban schools face, from drugs, violence, gangs, to high mobility rates (Greg seems to be referring to the high student turnover rate of urban schools), but what's unique about it is that it represents different languages and different cultural backgrounds. To me [this] means there is even a greater need for opportunities for students to talk to each other in respectful ways, to hear each other's stories, to understand each other. For instance, we did a conference a couple of weeks ago and it involved an African American family and a Bosnian family. These families really saw each other, not as ethnic categories, but as human beings as each family member told a story. The Bosnian family told a story about the trauma they experienced with the army taking their home and their family members disappearing. The African American family was able to talk about their struggles. So, RP really promote empathetic views between and

among groups and individuals. It's that kind of community building, that kind of relationship building, that we know from decades of research prevents crime and violence.

Greg believes RP will allow people with different backgrounds to communicate with one another and begin to understand each other. Greg also implies that by doing so, RP can help prevent crime and violence that is also familiar to the area. Unfortunately, Ethan seems less optimistic that student dialogue will occur through RP because other conflict resolution programs brought into the district have not been successful.

> E: Unfortunately, the community the school is in doesn't support proper behavior. We were in a program where we were teaching kids to count to ten [when in a conflict and think of something positive to say]. Have a sense of humor. It all worked well within the confines of the building, but if they walked out of the school, they were going to get punched in the face for taking that course because it's a violent community. It doesn't work. There's a jungle mentality out there that these kids step into and it's very difficult for them to step out of it when they come into the school. [A student] can't ask hardened criminal types to discuss what they've just done or tell them, "I feel *blank* about what you just did." They're going to punch [the student] in the nose and make [her/him] feel a lot worse. Some people can't be dealt with at that level. Those were the communication skills we were trying to impart to the kids, but it failed the minute they walked out of the building.

While Ethan does not refer to RP specifically, he argues that since the community does not currently foster a positive environment, it prevents students from applying positive conflict management and communication skills in conversations with their peers. Therefore, it may discourage students from using RP as empowering tools during student dialogue.

Overall, while it seems likely that students involved in RP will have an opportunity to dialogue with peers, they may be inadequate for students to discuss racial, ethnic, and cultural issues contributing to their conflict. Furthermore, students may not

have the opportunity for dialogue outside of RP if administrators, coordinators, and teachers do not believe these issues affect their students.

RP's ability to promote voice and empowerment. Since RPMS students likely do not understand the practices and since the school culture appears to encourage the silencing of students, RP seem to be confronted with disadvantageous conditions for promoting student voice and empowerment in the school. Yet, we still have not heard from students who experience RP. Are the practices fostering student voice and empowerment among these students? To answer this question, I distribute questionnaires (see Appendix F) to RPMS students so they may explain to me if they felt their voice was acknowledged and/or they were empowered by participating in a conference. I focus the questionnaire on their experience with a conference because it is more likely the conflict directly affected the student, which means s/he might have played an active role in the process. On the other hand, a topic or conflict discussed in a peacemaking circle might have indirectly affected the student; thus, s/he might have played an inactive role. Hence, I ask about conferences only to be sure that the student's experience is relevant to the questions and not because of an assumption that conferences encourage voice and empowerment any more than peacemaking circles. Nevertheless, some students seem to comment on their peacemaking circle experience, which demonstrates that students may not fully understand the differences between the two practices (a concern I note above and will elaborate on below). Despite this possibility, I argue that these responses become relevant when questioning RP's contribution to student voice and empowerment.

Altogether, 77 students complete the questionnaire. Some responses are unreadable because of students' handwriting, some demonstrate that the question does not apply to them, and some are unclear as to what they are referring to. As such, I do not place these responses under any particular category, but I do mention a few to illustrate how students feel about RP or their school culture. Many times students merely write yes or no responses, but those providing a thorough explanation are mentioned below. Along these same lines, some students provide explanations that are similar to others, and as a result, I do not reiterate these. Instead, I often supply one that gives a more insightful statement.

On voice. Question one, two, four, and five focus on student voice. Question one asks students if they had a chance to tell their side of the problem that occurred between them and other people involved in the conference. I ask this question to understand if students think they were given an opportunity or a space for their voice to be acknowledged. Forty-seven students claim they had a chance to tell their account as illustrated by the following comments:

> S4: Yes, I had my chance to tell my side of the story when I got blamed for throwing a ball at a student.
> S18: Once, I had a fight with this kid in my 3rd hour. He was cursing at me and I was cursing back at him. A kid and I fought 3 times (rounds). At the last fight, a security guard caught us. We went to [the coordinator] and we talked to her. We each got a chance to talk, which is good. [She] helped us solve the problem and then we both became friends.
> S59: Yes, I was able to tell what happened to me. I was doing my work and someone stapled me in my back.
> S60: Yes, I had a chance. Everyone had a turn to talk and describe how he or she felt about the situation/discussion.
> S70: We both told our sides of the story and had a chance to talk without being interrupted.

S75: Every time I went, me and the other person told a side of the story. So, I felt I did.

Eight of the 47 students say they did, but their opportunity was limited or it was unsatisfying in some way. For example:

S1: I have been able to tell [my] side of the story, but they always believe the other person.
S17: Yes, but I don't think it works.
S35: Yes, I did. I didn't tell the whole story because that would just take a long time.
S50: Yes, I did. Sometimes other people would cut me off, like the person I have my conflict with, but the teacher/counselor would stop them.
S63: Yes, I did tell my side of the story. If I didn't, I would of got into trouble. There were only 2 situations of me getting in trouble, but my friend gets in trouble. My friend told them the truth. We both didn't get in trouble.
S77: Well, see I did have a chance to tell my side of the story, but I got in trouble. I almost got jumped and the student told [the coordinator] that my friend and I were bullying them. We got put on a contract for 3 days.

Six students imply they only got to explain their side sometimes, but it is difficult to tell if they are talking about an experience with a particular conference. Some may be referring to multiple conferences/circles they had or their ability to tell their side of a story to others they encounter in their everyday lives:

S10: Sometimes, but not all the time.
S11: Yes, most of the times, but not all the times because [there was] favoritism.
S28: Sometimes I can tell my side and sometimes I can't because they switch to the next subject and I forget about it. But most the time I do tell my side.
S47: Sometimes I get a chance to tell my side of the story and other times, no, not really. Then they make you say, "Yeah," or, "no."
S56: Every now and then.
S72: Yes, I did have a chance to tell my side of the problem at most of the meetings.

Six students believe they did not get a chance to say what happened. For instance:

S16: Nope, they always interrupted.

S38: No, not really. If you do one thing wrong, then the people don't care what you do next. So, when you do something the next time they will get you in trouble.

S52: No, I didn't have a chance to tell my side of the problem that occurred. They wouldn't let me explain.

Eight responses either do not make sense or do not signify if the students had a chance to tell their side of the story. Even so, a few of these responses reveal students' feelings about the experience in general:

S19: I felt relieved.

S43: I wanted to talk to someone.

S66: I did not feel good to sign a contract when I had to.

Though students may think they were not given a chance to explain their side of the story, most students thought they were given an opportunity or space to give their account of what happened during the conflict.

Question two asks students to explain if they were listened to when they told their side of the story. My intention for asking this question is to determine if their voice was acknowledged in some way. Fifty-two students suspect they were listened to by at least someone in the conference. Some point out why they think they were listened to:

S3: I think I was listened to because everyone was quiet when I was talking.

S4: I felt like I was listened to when I was telling my side of the story because the teacher believed me.

S12: There were a group of girls, and whenever I talked they got quiet and listened.

S15: Yes, because she talked too after I told my side of the story.

S32: I was listened to because she summarized what I told her.

S35: I was. [The coordinator] was patient and all ears.

S36: I'm 100% positive I was because everyone gave me feedback and advice.

S39: [The coordinator] listened to me and paid attention to my side. She seemed like she cared.

S50: I know I was listened to because when I was done talking the teacher/counselor would repeat things I said to make sure I said what I meant.

S63: I felt they were listening because everything I told them they just kept nodding and telling me questions.

S64: I was listened to because it was quiet while I was talking [and] everyone paid attention to me.

S68: I did because they asked us questions about why we did it and why it happened.

S71: Yes, I think I was listened to [because] everyone listened and responded to my questions and answers.

These responses are compelling. They illustrate that students' voices were acknowledged in some way because students were aware of others' reciprocating behavior. Three assert they were listened to only sometimes and four students are uncertain if they were listened to. Seven students declare they were not listened to:

S1: I don't feel like I've been listened to because [the conflict continued] after we went to the counselor.

S8: No, not really because still nothing happened. The problem is still going on.

S16: No, they just talked over my voice.

S21: Nope. "The teacher" didn't even care.

S44: I felt like I was listened to, but it felt as if my side [meant] nothing.

S49: I don't think they really listened to me because they thought I was at fault.

S52: I didn't get to explain my side of the story.

Except for S52, students give the impression that their story was only heard, not listened to, by others. To be clear, my reasoning for interpreting S44's response in this manner is because s/he does not feel as though his/her voice mattered. Therefore, s/he may perceive this as being merely heard. S24's response does not belong to any of the categories above, but s/he states, "I like it and I don't because they only talk about what happens if you do it again." S/he gives the impression that the focus of the conference was restricted to talking about future consequences and thus, it might have limited his/her voice. However, most students responding to question two imply that they were listened to when they gave their account of the conflict during the conference.

Next, question four asks students if their experience made them feel like what they had to say was important. Again, responses to this question should identify if student voice acknowledgement occurred. Thirty-eight students proclaim that it did. For example:

> S4: I think it did help because it shows that teachers do care about what we think.
> S12: It did because whenever I asked a question or stated an opinion I was helped out with advice.
> S19: The experience did make what I said important because it was how I felt.
> S32: Yes, because they discussed it [with] me.
> S39: I felt like it just wasn't what the teacher said. I had a voice too. [The coordinator] listened to me.
> S50: It made me feel like what I said was important because I listened and went over what I did wrong and the other person realized what they did wrong.
> S65: Actually, yes because we all listened to each other.
> S73: It did make me feel like what I had to say was important because [the coordinator] listened.
> S74: It did make me feel like what I said was important because when we filled out the contract she asked what we thought was best to do.

Four students maintain the experience made them feel like an important individual:

> S22: It made me feel very important and I was happy and the problem got solved easily.
> S36: It did. It made me think more highly of myself and feel like people care about me.
> S45: I think that it made me feel important because she helped me and she cared about my problem.
> S67: Yes, it made me feel important because it made me feel like I matter.

While one student, S17, writes that it made her/him feel like what s/he said was important, the feeling might have changed when the coordinator or teacher was not around. S/he states, "Yes, but [the coordinator/faculty] can't see everything and that's [why] it's scary when you tell someone about your problems." Four students indicate that the experience left them feeling like what they had/have to say was/is sometimes important:

S10: It made me feel like [only some things] I had to say was important.
S28: Sometimes it will seem important and sometimes it feels like she doesn't really care and she's just trying to hurry up and resolve the problem.
S51: Sometimes I think it is important what I have to say.
S72: Sometimes yes, other times no.

Fifteen students' contend they do not feel like what they said was considered important.

For instance:

S1: No, it didn't make me feel like what I said was important. It's like they just don't care.
S13: It honestly wasn't because it wasn't a BIG deal.
S15: It was not important because I really didn't need it.
S21: Apparently, "the teacher" didn't give a rat's butt.
S44: This experience made me feel like everything I said was heard but means nothing.
S53: Nothing I say is important unless someone is hurt or someone told me to tell someone that is really important.

Even so, responses from question four reveal that the experience made most students feel like what they had to say was important or it made them feel like an important individual.

The fifth question asks students to explain if their experience made them feel like their opinion matters to their friends, classmates, and/or teachers. I hoped this question would detect if students think their opinion is important when interacting with people outside of the conference/circle. Unfortunately, many responses reveal that students might have thought I was referring to friends, classmates, and/or teachers in the conference. Either way, responses should establish if students believe their voice was acknowledged. Thirty students indicate their opinion mattered to at least one group of people (friends, classmates, and/or teachers). For example:

S3: It did make me feel like my opinion mattered because when I was finished talking someone else had something else to say about my opinion.
S7: It made me important to the world.
S13: It matters to a point where maybe it can make a difference.

S32: Yes, because it made me feel they cared.
S36: It definitely does! People confronted me and asked for my advice. It makes you feel good.

Four students acknowledge that their opinion matters to at least one of the groups (friends, classmates, or teachers), but not to another:

S1: It mattered to my friends, but my classmates made it worse.
S22: It doesn't matter to teachers, but everyone else. Teachers don't care, they're mean, and don't like us at all.
S45: I don't think students care about my problem, but the teachers did.
S68: Not really my classmates, but some of the teachers care.

Two students specifically mention their opinion not mattering to classmates:

S17: No, to classmates because they've threatened me afterwards a few days [after the conference/circle]. They've got short-term memory.
S64: Not really, because the entire class saw and heard how everyone felt about the bad behavior in the classroom and still the problem people continued making problems, disrupting the class, and preventing people from learning.

Twelve students give no indication that they imagine their opinion mattering to anyone, as the following comments demonstrate:

S21: Like I said, they don't care. Now I'm like a criminal.
S44: Apparently to my teachers my opinion means nothing after the experience.
S60. Well, no because to the person you had a conflict with it doesn't matter!

Overall, many students suggest they believe their opinion mattered to at least someone.

Students' comments from question one, two, four and five are evidence of RP's potential to promote a space for student voice. Yet, there are many responses suggesting that some students' voice may not have been acknowledged, either due to interruptions or their perception of others not caring. The former is easier to resolve than the latter, but RP practitioners may need to be conscientious of how they present themselves during RP. For instance, if the coordinator or teacher rushes the process, they may be perceived as

not caring or not listening. They also may want to be sure to allow each student to speak for the same amount of time without interruption. If not, students could interpret it as the coordinator or teacher showing favoritism toward certain students. These conclusions should only be construed as suggestions for creating an environment that assures students that RP provide a space where their voice matters and is acknowledged. If RP are viewed in this way, they may encourage students to trust in RP to resolve their future conflicts.

On student empowerment. Question six, seven, and eight focus on student empowerment. The sixth question asks students if they will be able to tell people how they feel when future problems occur between them and others. This question is asked to establish if the experience empowers students to voice their thoughts or concerns when another conflict arises. Thirty-three students state they will be able to do this in the future. For example:

> S4: I feel like if I get blamed for something I'll be able to tell my side of a story and have a chance to explain myself.
> S7: I will tell people how I feel so I can feel better.
> S8: Yes, because if I have some thing to say then I must say it and not hold my tongue.
> S12: I feel like I can trust these people, because whatever happens in the circle stays in it, so I always speak the truth.
> S19: It made me feel open, meaning I'm not afraid to let others like adults know what troubles I [am] feeling.
> S20: I will because after talking one time I will have the courage to talk the next time.
> S32: I will be able to tell people how I feel because when I did it made things better.
> S33: I felt relieved [after the conference/circle], so I won't have to hold it in.
> S36: I will, of course. I feel more open now and like everyone cares.
> S37: Yes, I will tell my friends so they [can] give me advice [on] what to do.
> S39: I feel I can sit down and talk to people instead of getting an attitude or getting mad.
> S48: I will be able to tell what I'm feeling. I don't think I will be shy to express my feelings anymore.

S50: I actually feel more comfortable talking to people about my problems now.
S55: Yes, I felt like I can go to [the coordinator] and tell her anything because she listen[s] and she is nice.
S74: I will feel more comfortable telling people I trust [about] my problem and getting help from them.

Four of the 33 students explain they may sometimes and/or it depends on certain factors:

S2: Yes! And NO!
S45: I think that if I'm with someone I know very well, I can express my problem.
S67: Yes, I could but I would need a little more support from [the RP coordinator].
S72: Yeah, sometimes I can but not when I'm really mad.

S2 suggests to me that it may depend on the circumstance. Ten students imply they would not be able to do this in the future, as the following responses indicate:

S5: I don't feel comfortable talking after a problem.
S16: It probably won't happen.
S17: Well, I felt like a cow stuck in a[n] electric fence full of rabid coyotes, meaning I was scared to look for help because it was like I had none.
S21: Never in my life.
S38: Since I don't have a lot of confidence in the group, I don't think so.
S44: I'm not able to tell anyone anything after this experience.
S68: No, I'm not like that. I try not to show feelings.

Three students do not know if they will express their feelings in the future. In particular, S51 is not sure because s/he thinks some people will not listen. S/he states, "I don't know if I can tell what I [will] feel in the future because some people will not listen." In general, according to the responses from question six, more students feel they will be able to tell people how they feel when future problems occur between them and others than students that do not feel this way.

For the seventh question, I ask students to explain if they think their experience will make them settle their problems with friends, classmates, and/or teachers differently. I ask this question to determine if RP give students the tools to be an empowered, self-

sufficient student. Twenty-five students claim it will with some explaining how and why

they will settle future problems differently. For instance:

> S7: It will happen quickly and will not have a lot of arguing.
> S12: It definitely will because we talk about what's occurring in the school, and then we [talk about] what we can do to not make it collide into something bigger.
> S20: Because I will be able to talk to them more kindly and gentler than before.
> S36: It will because now I have a whole list of things to do instead of start drama.
> S48: It will help me settle more things with my words instead of fighting.
> S50: I think I'll handle my problems more maturely now.
> S59: Yes, I will be able to tell someone more often [if] me, a classmate, or a friend is hurt.
> S61: It will. It is a better solution to solving a problem other than just getting in trouble.
> S64: Yes it will because sooner or later the teacher will realize how bad behavior is affecting grades and learning.
> S67: Yes, because they will understand what is too much and that enough is enough.
> S73: Yes, I think it will because now I know what to say and how to say it.
> S74: I think this will help settle future problems better because I already experienced it.
> S76: Yes, it will [be]cause they will see how I feel and I will see how they feel.

However, four of the 25 students indicate that it depends on the circumstance:

> S10: Yes, this experience will make me settle my problems with my friends, classmates and teachers differently (sometimes).
> S28: I think it depends on which friends/classmates that it will settle the problem. But with teachers it will absolutely solve the problem.
> S47: Yes, some, so what.
> S53: It will settle it with friends, but not classmates because I don't know them and they don't know me.

Fifteen students admit that how they go about settling problems would not change. For

instance:

> S17: Well, to me NO! But that's my opinion on classmates. Everything else is fine. They forget after awhile, but for a time after the second time, I felt too scared to go to school.
> S21: Like that will ever happen.
> S29: It won't. It'll still be handled badly because people don't like snitches.

S35: It helped me out, but no. When it comes down to the point where lots of people are running up [to me] there's a 50/50 chance I might fight back.
S52: I don't think this experience will make me settle problems differently.
S60: I thought it would but it didn't. The conflict continued.
S66: No, because the only people that I want to tell is my teachers, etc.

Nine students are not sure if they will change. Overall, more students think the experience will change how they settle problems; however, of the 49 responses providing a clear answer, a large portion of these students say their conflict management skills will not change or are unsure.

Question eight asks students to explain if their experience makes them feel like they have the power or ability to influence problems for the better in the future. Again, I ask this question to see if students feel an overall sense of empowerment and more specifically, if they believe they have the capability to be an active citizen and impact their world in a positive way. Thirty-two students insinuate they have the power or ability to influence problems for the better in the future. Some students explain why the experience makes them feel this way and some explain why they think it is necessary for them to have this power. For instance:

S3: It does because I can now prevent problems in the future more.
S11: Yes, because I want my future to be good.
S12: Now I know what to tell others in a nice way to stop.
S20: I have the power because I get to speak and be heard on what I have to say.
S32: I think I can influence people to talk out their problems in the future.
S39: It definitely made me feel like I had power.
S45: I think I can tell anyone my problems and I can express them. Also they will listen.
S48: It made me feel better and it did influence me to do better.
S50: I help my friends settle their problems now.
S64: Yes, because after speaking I now know how I behaved/acted and how it affected my grades by not being able to concentrate.
S66: It did because it will help me get a better job [so] I can make more money to feed my family and help me buy clothes and shoes for me.

S67: Now I know if I have a problem that I can't control, I can talk to [the coordinator].

S68: Yeah, because I will try to talk it out first.

Six of these 32 students express that it made them feel like they have the power or ability to influence problems for the better in the future, but they appear to be reluctant to give a definite answer:

S1: It probably will, but right now it's worsening.

S29: It kind of [did] but I'm still going to handle it myself instead of telling.

S38: I have a little power since I said some things.

S49: Yeah, because it's better to let everything out. But, having adults interfere is kind of irritating and [they] can make things worse.

S71: A little bit, but I don't think it made much difference.

S76: Well, yes I do and no I don't, but it will all work out in the future.

Twelve students feel they do not have the power to influence problems for the better as the following responses suggest:

S17: This paper, yes, but not restorative practices because I never wanted to do it because of all the chances given for the child to hurt you repeatedly. (I believe this student is implying that s/he has the power to influence problems in the future by participating in the questionnaire.)

S21: Maybe…when pigs fly!

S24: No, because they didn't [say] anything that could influence [the] problem.

S53: No. Problems can't be stopped. They are put in your fate and they are bound to happen.

S65: No! It did help me, but I don't think I have that power.

Responses from question eight demonstrate many students feel they have power to influence problems for the better in the future.

While there are students that do not believe they possess a sense of empowerment, the responses from question six, seven, and eight allude to students attaining a sense of empowerment through RP. Thus, RP appear to have the potential to empower students.

RP's ability to empower students at RPMS may strengthen as the program progresses and as students and faculty become more familiar with the practices.

On students' experience. Finally, although I do not ask question three to unveil RP's ability to promote student voice and empowerment, the responses reveal that most students had a good experience with RP. In fact, 49 students assert their experience was good. Nineteen of these students had a good experience because the conference/circle helped them resolve the problem and/or prevent problems from occurring with the other person(s) in the future. For instance:

> S2: It was a good for me because it worked [out] the problem, so we didn't have a fight.
> S3: Because it helped us resolve our problems. It's still not perfect, but it's better than before.
> S15: It was good for me because it help[ed] me not have any problems with them anymore.
> S22: It was good for me because I had the chance to really connect with the other person and solve our problem.
> S23: It was good because we did not fight after school.
> S55: Good because it help[ed] solve the problem between me and the other person.
> S67: It was good because the conflict was resolved and nothing [happened] after that, just peace.
> S74: Every time I did meet with them the problem was always settled and we got in trouble less.

Eleven of the 49 students suggest they had a good experience because they were able to talk to others and/or express their feelings, as the following comments indicate:

> S19: It was good because I was able to talk it over with an adult and was listened to about what happened between others.
> S20: Because it gave you time to say what you had to say to that person and how it hurt your feelings.
> S37: It was actually good because I could express my feelings.
> S40: It was good for me because I got out some aggression.
> S45: It was good because I got a lot of things off my chest. I felt better about myself.

> S48: It was good because it was [a way] for me and others to explain the way [we] feel.
>
> S59: It's good because you can express your feelings to [the coordinator] and explain what happened to you.

Five students simply mention it was good because it gave them a second chance and they did not get suspended. For example, S73 states, "It was good because it solved things. Instead of getting suspended, we talked it out." Two students mention it was good because it helped the coordinator understand the conflict:

> S4: I think meeting with [the coordinator] helped because it helped her get to know how we feel about things.
>
> S26: So [the coordinator] can know [who's] telling the right thing or the bad thing.

Two students insist it was good because of the coordinator's ability to understand them:

> S1: It was good for me because it's like [the coordinator] understands me while everyone else is still trying.
>
> S36: It was good. [The coordinator] understands kids and she gives great feedback we can relate to, but [it's] also good for us. It definitely helped instead of starting drama.

Two students declare it was good because the outcome helped them with their grades/education:

> S66: It was good because I was missing my learning time. [Now] I can get an education.
>
> S71: It was good for me because my grades were slipping at the time and it inspired me to do better.

Some students mention other reasons why it was good:

> S24: It was good because now I know what will happen if I do it again.
>
> S63: It's good because you won't try to do a bad thing again.
>
> S65: It was good because we got to know each other.
>
> S72: They're good because they make it easier for me to stay out of trouble.

Four students feel their experience was good and bad:

S8: It was good, but it also was bad. Good because there are no fights, but bad because they keep talking, [and they're] still starting drama.

S17: Both. It was bad [because of] the possibility of [me] getting threatened or hurt. Good because of the protection given.

S47: It's good because sometimes it makes things better, but other times it doesn't.

S68: It's kind of both. [It's good] because they'll try to help solve the problem and bad because the other student will think you're a snitch and another problem will happen.

Four students are unsure if it helped and one, S64, indicates this was due to students behaving differently in front of the coordinator. **"**I'm not so sure it helped at the moment because while [the coordinator] was with us, everyone was good, but when we got back to class, everyone misbehaved again." Only five students describe their experience as completely bad:

S16: They accused me for something I didn't do.

S44: The meetings with [the coordinator] made things worse for me because she made a contract and the person used it to suspend me because I asked her to pick up my pencil.

S49: It got me mad actually because it wasn't a big deal. At the end, it still continued and I didn't think she should have interfered.

S53: It is bad because it makes you feel like a snitch.

S77: It is bad because if we are in the same room we might get into a fight or argument.

Therefore, even though some students discredit RP in their responses to other questions, for the most part many had a favorable experience.

Overall, RP seem to provide a space for student voice and empowerment. Still, since some students did not feel RP gave them an opportunity for their voice to be acknowledged or for them to be empowered, RP's ability to do so appears limited. Furthermore, most students' RP experience was good and this may empower them to

share their voice if they participate in RP in the future. Yet, students who had a bad experience may be inclined to remain silent.

Conclusion

In the first section of this chapter, I provided a description of the middle school, the area surrounding RPPSD, and the characters in my ethnography. As you read through the text, these descriptions may have helped you come to your own conclusions for why the people of RPPSD react to RP in the manner they do. While perusing the text, you may have felt a little anxious trying to make sense of the culture, which is similar to how I felt during the faculty meeting I attended near the beginning of my study. Or, if you never heard of RP before picking up this text you may have been unsure of what to think of the them, which is seemingly similar to how faculty felt during RP training sessions.

Administrators have multiple objectives for the RP program, which include reducing suspension and expulsion, restoring the district's image, and rebuilding the student population. These objectives relate to the district's objective to resolve its troubled financial situation. Additionally, coordinators emphasize creating a positive school climate with RP. Some teachers believe that RP were implemented to create a positive atmosphere, but others think administrators are using the program to cover up the suspension and expulsion problem in the district. This skepticism may make it difficult for administrators and coordinators to convince teachers to use the practices. Administrators and coordinators are dependent on teachers to use the practices in the classrooms, but yet they teachers resist the most. Teachers who resist the practices are identified as boulders, which administrators, coordinators, and even teachers perceive as

angry, old school, and stubborn teachers. However, it is possible that boulders do not use the practices because they can be challenging to implement into the classroom because of limited time, inconsistent interpretations of RP, and the contradicting messages students receive on conduct from parents and the school.

Although administrators and coordinators would likely agree that more training is needed for teachers to understand the practices and coordinators seem to agree that the contradicting messages students receive regarding conduct make using RP challenging, administrators and coordinators feel that limited classroom time is not a justified excuse to not use RP. They believe teachers simply need to be doing more, which conveys a lack of trust with teachers. Ethan points out this lack of trust when he asserts, "There's that dynamic of mistrust between teachers and administration [in this district] that poisons the positive aspect of RP." Therefore, teachers admitting that they do not have time to do RP in the classroom may feel slighted because their concerns appear insignificant, which may cause them to not address these concerns in the future.

Though it may be challenging for teachers to use RP in the classroom, teachers may resist the program because it could be taken away at any moment due to funding problems or because they are distrustful of administrators and coordinators. These reasons for resistance may be detrimental to the program if left unresolved. Furthermore, teachers and coordinators appear to have a negative perception of parents, which may be due to a lack of communication between parents and the school. These relationships may need to be repaired if the district wants a more cohesive school community that can promote RP.

The culture of RPMS does not seem to acknowledge student voice as students are often silenced (although this characteristic does not necessarily make RPMS unique when compared to most schools). Adults expect students to do what they are told without question and students usually oblige because they do not want to get in trouble. Student empowerment also seems rather restricted because there does not appear to be many opportunities for student dialogue. However, RP may promote spaces for voice and empowerment, but even they appear to be limited in their ability to do so. Still, an exceptional number of students have had a positive experience with RP; therefore, they seem to have strong potential to contribute to student voice and empowerment in the future because the likelihood of students actively participating in RP in the future seems high. Student empowerment may also be restricted because students do not appear to completely understand RP. When I gave them instructions for the questionnaire, I explained that if the RP coordinator invited them to a conference to talk about a problem they had with another student, the questionnaire applies to them. However, the coordinator also facilitates peacemaking circles focusing on specific problems (e.g., a recurring problem in the school or among a group of students) or a theme (e.g., gossip or bullying). Either way, if the student felt that the discussion in the circle affected her/him directly, it is easy to see how s/he may think the circle was a conference. In fact, some students commented on their experience with peacemaking circles. Students' confusion may mean they are not fully aware of the program being implemented into their school or there are inconsistent descriptions of conferences and peacemaking circles being communicated in the school. Both conclusions may be accurate since the amount of

information students acquire about RP varies and since faculty give multiple descriptions of conferences and peacemaking circles to me. Nevertheless, it may be beneficial for the school to establish specific descriptions of RP and to communicate these to students and faculty.

Whether or not RP will continue promoting student voice and empowerment at RPMS is difficult to tell. Though their ability to promote student voice and empowerment is limited, their limitation may be due to flaws in their execution. However, teachers, like Ethan, Robert, and Barbara, believe RP only work with students who sometimes get in trouble.

> K: Do you think this program favors bad students over good students?
> E: No, no, not at all. I think it favors the good students over the bad students because it gives good kids a venue other than suspension.
> K: So it favors the students in the middle (students who rarely get in trouble)?
> E: Yeah. I think the middle of the road student that occasionally gets in trouble responds well to RP. I think they are a nice, polite, positive, intervention for student behavior. I think most teachers would go along with that statement, but for the habitual, chronic, disruptive student, they learn to play the game. They look at [RP] as a game. Actually, [RP] handcuff teachers to a point where we get diminished in other students' eyes. Most people (students?) look at [us] and say, "Why did you let them talk to you like that? How come [students] can act like that and stay in school?" There's a lot of head scratching and a lot of questioning going on about RP and those extreme cases.

> R: It's going to help the students that are on the cusp of being bad or being good because [they'll be] like, "Oh, okay, I made a mistake. I got to do this," but when [a student] is fighting 5 or 6 or 7 times a year, it's not doing anything for [her/him]. I walked [into a classroom] and there was a fight. There was a sub in the room [and] there was a student beating up a little kid. He was actually stomping on [the little kid's] head. When I grabbed him and took him off of [the little kid], he went through me to get back to the kid and I used as much force as I could use to get him out of the room. I got him out, wrote up what I saw, and nothing. He just got his regular [RP contract]. He was above and beyond what he should have been doing. He should have been gone. [He] is now out [of school] for a year for fighting. (I think Robert means that the boy was suspended later for a different fight he was involved in.)

K: Do you think the school has benefited or not benefited from the program?

B: It's hard to tell. I talk to the coordinator, so I kind of have the inside piece. I don't think [the school] has benefited, but it's not because we didn't try [or] didn't put the program together but in order for the program to work, the students have to have a moral compass to begin with. Some of these students don't have a moral compass.   [They] don't realize that what they're doing is not correct behavior and they don't have anything to relate it to. So when we're telling them they're doing something wrong, they look at us like, "Well, no I'm not." So it works for the students who know right from wrong and who have a certain set of morals and values, but for our students who don't [have these], it doesn't work. There are some kids that have gone through the process all year and still are having problems with their behavior. The ones that have a basis or a foundation with different values and morals are going to have it a lot easier and will only [need to] be reminded once or twice. Whereas the other ones coming from a situation where there isn't discipline at home, they just keep going back. It's like a revolving door for them.

Thus, according to teachers, RP may not help the students who need the most help, such as recurring offenders, as Jean refers to them. Even if this is not the case, teachers may determine RP's ability to provide a space for student voice and empowerment by identifying students as good, bad, or in the middle. These labels could become self-fulfilling prophecies for students, which is potentially disempowering, especially for students labeled as bad. Alongside this, teachers may silence students they believe to be bad. Adults in schools need to be conscious of the negative influence labeling has on shaping students identities. My reflection on my middle school years throughout my ethnography illustrates how adults have the power to affect students' experience in schools. Whether students have positive experiences is dependent on adults because they are able to decide upon school practices and policies that set the atmosphere of the school.

In general, the implementation of RP in the RPPSD district highlights the complexities of educational institutions. In fact, the conclusion I present here does not fully explain their complex nature. However, in the next chapter, I elaborate on certain findings and the implications for them. I also note how future research may contribute to our understanding of voice and empowerment and the lack of communication existing between school members.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, FUTURE DIRECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter, I discuss the findings from my fieldwork at the Restorative Practices Public School District (RPPSD) and the Restorative Practices Middle School (RPMS). In particular, I examine the ability of restorative practices (RP) to promote student voice and empowerment and the challenges of implementing the RP program into RPMS. I also offer future directions for communication and RP research. Furthermore, I note RP's potential as praxis for critical pedagogy (CP) and argue for the use of autoethnography in communication research. Finally, I provide a conclusion for my dissertation.

RP and Student Voice and Empowerment

As I note in Chapter 2, scholars claim that RP promote student voice and empowerment. For instance, Hopkins (2002) indicates that student empowerment is one of the values embedded in the RP paradigm. Similarly, Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005) assert, "personal and institutional empowerment and integrity is the outcome restorative justice seeks to achieve" (p. 354). Through voice and empowerment, scholars suggest that RP programs have the potential to teach students how to be responsible, democratic citizens who will contribute positively to their communities (Cavanaugh, 2007; Haft, 1999, Karp & Breslin, 2001; Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005; Varnham, 2005). However, these concepts are not discussed as objectives for the RP program at RPPSD. Nevertheless, administrators, coordinators, and teachers consider the acknowledgement of student voice and empowerment to be desirable, indirect effects of RP. The responses from the student questionnaire I distributed at RPMS reveal that the program appears to

be providing a space for student voice and empowerment. Several students express that their voice was acknowledged while participating in a conference/peacemaking circle and that the practices empower them with tools to resolve future conflicts. These findings support claims declaring RP's ability to provide an opportunity for student voice and empowerment, but it is also important to note that some students did not feel the same way. This may simply be due to the fact that acknowledging student voice and encouraging empowerment are not objectives for the specific program at RPMS. Still, scholars assume that RP promote student voice and empowerment regardless of program objectives. Therefore, it is important that I offer possible explanations for why some students did not feel their voice was acknowledged or that the practices empowered them: (1) School employees conflate physical voice with theoretical voice; (2) there is an underlying *permission to speak* protocol for students at RPMS; (3) students are overall reliant on adults to facilitate RP; and (4) adults label students unfavorably.

First, school employees assume that they acknowledge student voices when students are actually speaking. The adults conflate students' physical, speaking voices with the theoretical notion of voice. This could be the reason why some students disclosed on the questionnaire that they didn't feel as though school adults acknowledged their voice, and that RP did not empower them. School employees admit to this during my interviews with them; they appear to understand voice as the physical act of speaking and therefore, a burden of the student, which is problematic. If students speak and no one listens to or considers what they are saying, then their voice remains unacknowledged and does not exist within that space. As such, if administrators, coordinators, and

teachers failed to display that they were listening (e.g., providing verbal or nonverbal feedback) or did not express to students that what they said was important during a restorative practice, students may have interpreted their voice to be insignificant. Thus, they may have perceived themselves as powerless or irrelevant.

Second, there seems to be an underlying *permission to speak* protocol for students at RPMS, which may influence their decision to actively participate while taking part in RP. Adults in the school continually enforce this protocol on a daily basis when they emphasize that they do not want to hear excuses from students and students should not socialize with peers between class periods. Students participating in RP, therefore, are likely to naturally surrender to this expectation. Furthermore, even when an adult encourages students to speak during a conference or peacemaking circle, students may feel that their voice is constricted because the scripts for these practices do not necessarily allow students to speak about possible underlying reasons for their behavior during a conflict (see Appendix A). Consequently, students may feel silenced or disempowered because these reasons are left unsaid, unexplored, and unresolved.

Third, while students are at varying stages of implementing RP on their own, they are overall reliant on adults to facilitate RP, which contradicts the notion of empowerment. This is not to say that the practices are not empowering, but it does suggest that they may not be reaching their full potential of empowering students in the school because they may not use RP to settle their conflicts without the assistance of an adult. However, the program is in its beginning stages of implementation, so students are likely still learning how to resolve their conflicts with RP. It was unclear to me if

students received an introduction to the program. Students may be unaware that they could initiate RP themselves because adults have not encouraged them to do so. Moreover, teachers seem to suggest that most students do not quite understand the practices and need more information on RP, especially students who have yet to participate in the practices. Therefore, RP's ability to empower students may be limited to a small group of students who have participated in the practices thus far, but even these students may not feel confident using the practices without the guidance of an adult.

Finally, adults label students unfavorably, which can prevent their voice from being acknowledged. Some teachers categorize students as either good, bad, or in the middle. Nonetheless, teachers indicate that good and middle students may benefit from RP, but they will not benefit bad students because they are too bad to be helped (as if they have reached the point of no return). When adults label students as bad, they may be perceived as not worth listening to, and students recognizing this may choose to remain silent. They may think there is no point explaining their side because their "bad" label damages their credibility.

Overall, RP appear to have the potential to provide a space for student voice and empowerment. Yet, their ability to do so may be affected by administrators', coordinators', and teachers' conflation of physical voice with theoretical voice, the school's underlying *permission to speak* protocol, students' reliance on adults to facilitate RP, and adults' unfavorable labeling of students.

Challenges of the RP Program

The RP program at RPMS illustrates two of the challenges that RP scholars warn schools about when implementing an RP program: (1) the time needed to implement RP into the classroom, and (2) problems with training.

First, teachers find the practices to be difficult to use in the classroom because they take a lot of time, especially conferences and peacemaking circles. This criticism is not unfounded. However, the problem is not simply that RP take time to perform. If this were the case, it would imply that teachers are lazy. On the contrary, most teachers are trying to make use of the available time they have to teach required curriculum so that students perform well on the state's standardized tests. This burden alone puts a strain on teachers and pressure to utilize RP heightens it. Therefore, when teachers prioritize their list of responsibilities, RP likely fall to the end of their list. Interestingly, although administrators and coordinators try persuade teachers that the long-term benefit of using RP will be less classroom disruptions, and therefore, more time for curriculum, teachers may be skeptical because it is not clear just how long it takes to see this benefit. Therefore, teachers have two options: implement RP and risk losing precious teaching time, or do not implement RP and deal with students in a way that is familiar but perhaps exacerbates the school's suspension and expulsion problem. Teachers may likely choose the latter since RP are not guaranteed to work and thus, this option is less of a risk.

Second, training problems obscure the details of RP, as evidenced by the range of responses teachers give when asked to describe RP, despite their participation in similar training sessions by the same coordinator. The RP coordinators receive more training

than what the teachers receive. However, even the coordinators' training is inconsistent. When coordinators inconsistently apply RP in their schools, it may complicate the practices for teachers. As teachers witness varying applications for a particular restorative practice, they may accordingly misunderstand the logistics of performing it. More importantly, when coordinators vary their use of RP, it may make it difficult for other coordinators and teachers to use RP with students in the future. An example of this inconsistency is found in the naming and implementation of one of the practices: Dana refers to circles as *peacemaking circles*, while one of the elementary coordinators calls them *friendship circles*. There are also slight differences between how she and Dana perform these circles. Consequently, when elementary students transition into middle school, they may misunderstand what is expected from them during and after participation in RP. Students then may need to be reintroduced to RP when they enter middle school, which could stunt or regress the district's implementation efforts. Thus, there is the potential for future implementation problems at RPPSD if coordinators and teachers do not receive consistent training, which is something Dana notes as well.

Overall, it is possible that challenges pertaining to time and training are magnified because the program is still in its beginning stages of implementation. The school was finishing its first year using RP when I completed my observations and interviews. Since it can take as long as four years before a school notices the benefits of using RP (Shaw, 2007), it may explain why teachers at RPMS were not utilizing RP because their effectiveness is still in question. Nevertheless, RPPSD and its schools are

likely to endure even more challenges in the next couple of years as they strive to justify the program and its continuation while they anxiously wait to witness its benefits.

Future Directions for RP and Communication Research

Through my study, I found that there are issues schools should consider before implementing an RP program, which indicate directions for future research in RP and communication. These issues include: (1) a lack of dialogue between adults in schools, (2) teachers and administrators' disempowerment, (3) the interpretation of resistance as deviance, (4) and the coexistence of RP with suspension and expulsion.

Lack of dialogue between adults in schools. There seems to be a lack of dialogue between the adults involved in the RPMS school community. The first issue here involves discrepancy in objectives. Administrators' primary objectives appear to be reducing the district's suspension and expulsion rate, restoring its image, and rebuilding its student population, all of which are hoped to result in more money being brought into the district. As a secondary objective, administrators want RP to create a safe and positive environment for students. Here is the first discrepancy: such an environment is the *primary* objective for the coordinator, and some teachers perceive this to be administrators' main goal. As may be obvious, this discrepancy does not seem like it will necessarily negatively affect the program, as such an environment will likely fulfill administrator's primary objectives. Other teachers, however, think that the program is merely a way for administrators to show that they are actively resolving the district's high suspension and expulsion rate to the community, when in reality, administrators are not necessarily interested in improving the causes for the suspension and expulsion problem.

In other words, these teachers perceive the program to be a symbolic rather than substantive effort of reform. In fact, Levrant, Cullen, Fulton, and Wozniak (1999) mention that restorative justice (RJ) programs may fall victim to becoming symbolic acts of reform when those implementing these programs reap all the benefits of doing so (e.g., praise from the community) without having to apply all the resources necessary for these programs to benefit the community. Thus, administrators may need to articulate throughout the implementation process their commitment to the program and to applying the means needed for the district to witness benefits from the program. It appears there is a communication barrier obstructing dialogue between teachers and administrators and as a result, teachers view administrators as uninterested in doing what is best for the schools in the district.

Second, while teachers shake their finger at administrators for their lack of concern, administrators and coordinators are shaking their fingers at teachers just as ferociously. Since administrators and coordinators believe using RP is in the best interest of students, they imply that teachers (or boulders) are irrational for not using RP, are to blame for harming RP's implementation into the district, and do not prioritize RP. However, in addition to the challenge of lack of actual class time for implementation, inadequate training on RP contributes to teachers' misunderstanding of the practices and may prohibit them from using the practices altogether. This presents a conundrum: teachers are potentially pressured to use the practices by administrators[10], but at the same

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[10] Teachers did not indicate feeling pressure from Dana to use the practices, and since I never spoke with any elementary teachers I am not sure if they felt pressure from their coordinators.

time, unable to because of inadequate training to competently and successfully use RP. Thus, teachers insinuate that administrators are at fault for the unsuccessful implementation of RP into the district. In general, administrators/coordinators and teachers convey animosity toward each other and members of each group become increasingly divided as they succumb to an us-versus-them mentality. Unfortunately, this impairs their ability to dialogue on many issues, but in particular, it threatens the district's ability to implement RP effectively.

Finally, there also appears to be tension between teachers/coordinators and parents of students that prevents dialogue and thus, hinders the implementation of RP. There are two possible reasons for why this tension exists: (1) Teachers and coordinators seem to blame their inability to successfully apply RP on parents, and (2) parents may sense this accusation. First, teachers and coordinators seem to blame their inability to successfully apply RP because students receive contradicting messages from parents and the school regarding conduct. Yet, instead of pointing these out as aspects for the school to consider, they seem to suggest that these are problems for parents (and in some way the child) to resolve so that RP are effective. Research points out that teachers feel they lack parent support regarding disciplinary actions against students (Barge & Loges, 2003); thus, teachers may perceive parents' lack of support as enabling "bad" behavior. Second, though I was unable to speak with parents, they may sense that the school blames them for the negative atmosphere of the school. In fact, research indicates that school faculty may criticize parents, especially in regards to how they discipline their children (Barge & Loges, 2003); therefore, if parents feel like the school blames them for

the school's shortfalls parents may be less likely to build a relationship with the school. Overall, this placing of blame may prevent dialogue and relationship building between parents and school employees. Yet, there is an even bigger issue at hand: if parents and school employees feel it is too difficult to effectively communicate with each other because of language differences, these two groups may not initiate dialogue. Nevertheless, the lack of dialogue between parent and the school may hurt the RP program.

Future directions in communication research should focus on repairing relationships between adults involved in school communities. Research should be guided to improve the lack of dialogue between adults involved in schools. For instance, Barge and Loges (2003) suggest administrators, faculty, staff, and parents create a dialogue on forming a relationship with each other. As such, RP would benefit from communication research that addresses ways for these adults to initiate a dialogue.

Teachers' and administrators' voice are unacknowledged and they lack empowerment. Interestingly, I was originally interested in studying RP because I am intrigued by their emphasis on student voice and empowerment. Yet, my study found that (1) RPMS teachers' voice are unacknowledged and they lack empowerment, and (2) RPPSD administrators lack empowerment as well.

First, teachers' voices are unacknowledged and they lack empowerment. Teachers blame administrators for not acknowledging teachers' voice and for disempowering teachers. Some teachers specifically mention that their voice is ignored by administration. For instance, Barbara and Liz explain that administrators do not pay

heed to recommendations provided by RPMS' School Improvement Team. Instead, as teachers point out, programs are "shoved down their throats" and taken away after 2 or 3 years even if they witness positive results. Their general descriptions of past programs demonstrate teachers' general powerlessness over choosing programs for the school. Also, Barbara and Robert reveal that standardized curriculum and testing disempower teachers from being able to decide what to teach and how to teach. These constraints seem to make teachers dissatisfied with the educational system and may result in perceiving RP as another burden placed upon them by administrators and an unfair burden since teachers feel like they did not receive enough training from the district to perform RP. In essence, teachers' unacknowledged voice and lack of empowerment may explain why teachers resist the RP program. More importantly, however, their disempowerment and unacknowledged voice illustrates their distrust in administrators (and coordinators as they are viewed as filling an administrative role).

Second, administrators lack empowerment. While administrators' actions perpetuate teacher disempowerment, administrators are not necessarily to blame and they are limited as to what they can do to resolve it because of their own disempowerment. In other words, administrators are often constricted in what they can do because of circumstances outside of their control. Administrators' disempowerment is a result of, but not limited to, state educational policies, financial constraints, and expectations (issues that are too immense to thoroughly discuss in this dissertation). As such, there are structural constraints underlying educational institutions that perpetuate teacher disempowerment, as well as administrator disempowerment. For instance, programs are

often short-lived because of the state's limited financial resources. Moreover, it may be impractical to allow teachers input in decision-making processes when administrators are pressured by the state to make quick decisions to rapidly fix a problem, which was the case when they decided to implement RP.. Also, quality and quantity of training is dependent upon the district's resources, such as money, which is sparse. Finally, classroom time is limited because specific curriculum must be taught to prepare students for the state's standardized test, which is mandated by the state, not by administrators. Nevertheless, as teachers perceive administrators as representatives of the state, the distrust between teachers and administrators grows, and the need for dialogue becomes even more crucial.

Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005) contend, "restorative justice is about empowerment of the school community" (p. 341), and they articulate the significance of delegating leadership to empower all members. Empowering teachers is especially important because as Fine (1991) contends, "Disempowered teachers are unlikely to create democratic communities inside their classrooms," (p. 140), which is the type of communities RP strives to create. Morrison et al. (2005) also note the importance of dialogue (or social engagement) and developing professional relationships within schools for RP to be effective. However, here lies the obstacle: The lack of empowerment, dialogue, and relationship building must be addressed *before* RP programs are placed into schools or else teachers will likely resist the program from the start.

The constraints perpetuating teacher and administrator disempowerment are not impossible to change. Yet, to do this, Gitlin and Margonis (1995) state, "The educational

hierarchy ought to be transformed so that school administrators and district personnel support the efforts of teachers" (p. 403). Although this seems to make teachers reliant on administrators and thus, disempowering, Vaughn (2002) suggests that power can be used for transformative purposes. She states that strategically using power "is a necessary component of empowerment. It's the function and implementation of that strategy that can be negatively manipulated to perpetuate dependency" (p. 199). Therefore, the power that administrators have is not in itself negative; it becomes negative when administrators use their power so that teachers are dependent on administrators' power. Unlike teachers, administrators have greater access to officials who can enact change in policies, making administrators ideal candidates to express teachers' concerns to local and state boards when teachers' voices are not present. Therefore, administrators can take action on a state and local level to improve teachers' conditions. Still, for this collaborative effort to ensue, trust must be instilled into the relationship between administrators and teachers through dialogue. Ultimately, it is the trust that occurs through dialogue that will restore not only relationships, but also education so that it mirrors a democracy that lends itself to be critically analyzed, including the power relations within it. Through these critical analyses, individuals will be empowered to transform instances where they are physically, mentally, or economically harmed, and likewise, individuals perpetuating these harms can begin to understand how they do so. Dialogue seems like a simple solution and I am well aware of its Utopian undertone, yet it is this very step that continues to be lacking in education. In other words, if it is so simple, then why is it not simply being done? Therefore, research that rhetorically and critically analyzes our

educational system is needed. In particular, these analyses should focus on education policies concerning curriculum, financial resources, and discipline. These analyses are well suited for scholars interested in communication education, critical organizational communication, and critical education policy.

Resistance is interpreted as deviance. During my time in the district, I noticed that school employees appear to perceive teachers as deviant if they resist RP. These teachers are thought of as "boulders." However, resistance should not be confused with deviance. Resistance is often misconstrued as deviance by conservative educational theorists (Stanley, 1992). Stanley (1992) contends, "the conservative educational theorists' explanation of resistance as a form of deviant or inferior behavior [is] an analysis that amounts to a rationalization of the status quo" (p. 100). Essentially, those who challenge the status quo are portrayed as deviant, irrational, and bad; thus, by default those adhering to ideologies maintained by the status quo appear to be rational and good. For example, teachers who do not follow school procedures or policies may be portrayed as deviant (especially by those administering the procedures or policies) because they interfere with the process the institutional structure (agreed upon by the dominant culture) has put in to place: administrators are policy makers and teachers are policy performers. Therefore, school employees identify teachers who do not support or use RP as angry and stubborn and assume teachers' decision to not use RP is irrational (they are merely angry, stubborn teachers). But their reasons for not using RP are not necessarily based on irrationality.

Teachers note issues with time and training make it difficult for them to use the

practices, and therefore it appears teachers are performing acts of resistance, not acts of

deviance.   As Kanpol (1994) explains, "resistance involves the conscious and

unconscious attempt by anyone to challenge the dominant and/or hegemonic values in

our society" (p. 37).   However, the main problem that should concern RP scholars is not

merely that people mistakenly call those who resist deviants.   It is that viewing teachers

as deviant has negative consequences for RP programs.   For teachers, being labeled as

deviant or bad (or boulders) may eliminate their voice from discussions concerning the

implementation of an RP program into their school.   Teachers may choose not to question

their school's use of RP for fear of being labeled as a boulder or challenging authority.

This consequence may be minor for some, but for others it could be a chance not worth

taking.   As Burbules (1986) explains, "the constraints of institutional survival in most

schools discourage teachers from...questioning the prevailing beliefs and values in the

particular community which pays for [their] salary" (p. 109).   As such, those most

vulnerable (e.g., newly hired or untenured teachers) may keep quiet and not risk the

possibility of being scrutinized by administrators (or even worse, laid-off, which teachers

are too familiar with at RPPSD).   Hence, it is possible these teachers repress their voice,

and at the same time quietly abstain from using RP.   Consequently, problems that could

be resolved by administrators go unnoticed.. As Gitlin and Margonis (1995) suggest,

> while resistant acts are likely to be ambiguous, they should not be immediately
> disregarded. They can direct our attention beyond the limits of the school change
> discourse to the fundamental institutional relations and school structures that help
> define relationships, roles, and the nature of teacher's work. (p. 393)

Therefore, RP scholars need to reexamine teachers' resistance toward RP because it may

highlight   problems   needing   addressed   before   the   practices   can   be   effectively

implemented into schools. Communication research focusing on teacher resistance can assist RP scholars in this endeavor. In particular, organizational communication research examining employee resistance to top-down approaches to decision-making may be beneficial to RP scholars.

Conceptualizing voice and empowerment. In general, it appears RP have the potential to provide a space promoting student voice and empowerment. Currently, however, the terms voice and empowerment are not thoroughly conceptualized in RP literature, which future research in RP should resolve. Scholars often mention student voice and empowerment as benefits without explaining what needs to occur for student voice to be acknowledged and for students to feel empowered, why these ideas are important for schools to strive for when implementing RP, or furthermore, the notable role adults play in these processes. Until scholars attend to these matters, the practices' appear limited in their ability to promote student voice and empowerment. RP literature provides detailed recommendations for implementing the practices into schools (for instance, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005) and performing the practices, and developing restorative responses (e.g., affective statements and questions) to conflict. In particular, however, scholars note that the school culture must transform into one that is conducive to the values of RP for the practices to be effective (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Cavanaugh, 2008; Hopkins, 2004). Yet, if a transformation of culture must occur, literature cannot merely be dedicated to the practical application of RP; it must also emphasize the need for adults to critically examine their relationships with students, which is commonly laden with distrust. Adults in schools are often suspicious of

students, which prevents adults from listening to students' voice, engaging in dialogue with them, recognizing them as capable, ambitious, and responsible individuals, and perceiving their ideas, opinions, and problems as relevant. Therefore, transforming the culture depends on infusing trust back into adult-student relationships. Thus, what I am suggesting is not *just* a call for future research in RP; instead, I argue that RP's future is contingent upon conceptualizing voice and empowerment. If not, schools like RPMS will continue to consider student voice and empowerment as merely ideal (but not necessary) outcomes instead of essential to the transformation of culture and thus, the effectiveness of RP. Specifically, research in CP can assist RP scholars because it addresses the distrust underlying adult-student relationships in schools. Communication research examining ways in which adults convey distrust to students may also contribute to RP research. Furthermore, RP research can also benefit from communication research pertaining to empowerment as a communicative process between teacher and student (for example, Vaughn, 2002).

The co-existence of RP and suspension and expulsion. Though administrators, coordinators, and teachers suggest that the program's objective is to transform RPMS into a positive culture, it did not seem as though this transformation had occurred before I left the school. Obviously, as I mention in Chapter 2, transforming a culture is difficult and can take a long time; therefore, I am not suggesting that the school is not making an effort to change, but it seems they may still have a long way to go before they witness a difference in the culture. Nonetheless, the school is using suspension and expulsion with RP and because of this, it is possible that some students, especially those identified as

offenders, may not feel that they can voice certain concerns. The threat of these disciplinary measures may cause students to be cautious of being perceived as too difficult for RP. But suggesting that schools should completely trust in RP and overthrow suspension and expulsion is an unfair request. I do not necessarily agree with these measures; however, I realize schools cannot suddenly stop using one method and entirely replace it with another that *may* work without receiving immense backlash from parents and the community. Be that as it may, this explains the complexity of transforming school culture, especially school culture. Still, if schools must transform their culture for RP to be effective, it is questionable how much the culture can transform when students continue to be excluded. It is also questionable if the voices of these excluded students exist during a restorative practice after they return to school since they may suffer the consequences of being labeled as bad. In other words, even when students are not physically excluded from the school, their voice may continue to be excluded, especially during RP. As I note in Chapter 2, studies show that many schools continue to rely on suspension and expulsion after implementing RP. Roche (2006) even insists that RP works well with the threat of suspension and expulsion. But can RP ever reach their full potential if schools continue excluding students? Furthermore, as I also point out in Chapter 2, it is suggested that RP may ignore issues of power, class, gender, and race that may influence student conflict (McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al., 2008). For example, affective questions and conference scripts do not necessarily allow students to address these issues as possible causes of a conflict. If these possible causes remain unrecognized, the school-to-prison pipeline may remain open as low-income, ethnic

males continue to be perceived as offenders in a conflict. In general, these are important matters and questions for RP scholars to address more thoroughly so that they can attend to critics claiming that RP are merely zero tolerance wrapped in a new package. Communication research can contribute to RP research by examining what schools communicate to students, faculty, and staff when RP is used in conjunction with suspension and expulsion. For instance, does the threat of suspension and expulsion discredit RP, prohibiting culture transformation? Communication scholars may also analyze how school employees' negotiate using one method over the other. For example, what are these decisions based on? Are they based on similar deciding factors for enacting zero tolerance? If so, then are schools merely favoring the same voices they favored before implementing RP?

Overall, RPMS illustrates (1) a lack of dialogue between adults in schools, (2) unacknowledged voice and disempowerment among teachers and administrators, (3) an interpretation of resistance as deviance in schools, (4) the need to conceptualize voice and empowerment, and (5) the need to further examine the co-existence of RP and suspension and expulsion in schools. Future research in RP and communication research should attend to these issues so that RP can be effective.

Restorative Practices' Potential as Praxis for Critical Pedagogy

One of the main critiques of CP is that it offers few, if any, practical applications. This is a challenge because it avoids any kind of prescriptive techniques or methods since such techniques go against the very essence of CP. As Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2003) explain, "no formula or homogenous representation exists for the universal

implementation of any form of CP. In fact, it is precisely this distinguishing factor that constitutes its critical nature" (p. 10). Nevertheless, Knight and Pearl (2000) assert, "critical pedagogy offers no direction" (p. 197) for teaching democracy in schools and they criticize CP for "its inapplicability to the reality of classroom experiences" (p. 198). Although many critical pedagogues argue against the use of prescriptive methods, they should consider RP as practices of possibility as they also strive for schools to be a democratic space. RP may not be a perfected method for shaping students into democratic citizens; however, CP scholars focusing on voice and empowerment should consider RP as a route to study such concepts in the realm of education. RP, with their focus on conflict, have the potential to encourage students to discuss larger social issues infiltrating their daily lives (like gun control/violence, sex, teenage pregnancy, bullying, literacy, limited education, race/ethnicity/gender issues, etc.). Thus, in theory, RP may open up spaces for students to discuss, analyze, and question these issues and therefore, allow students will feel empowered to take an active role in their world as they critically analyze these issues and discover that they can transform their world through dialogue. However, critical pedagogues in communication should analyze the structure of education that makes it problematic for RP to be effective and construct democratic spaces within schools.

Autoethnography as Communication Research

As I mention in Chapter 3, using autoethnography (a/e) as a method is controversial, and using a/e in communication is no exception. It is noted that many communication scholars do not regard a/e as legitimate research (Ferdinand, 2009) and

this is likely due to their belief that a/e is incredibly narcissistic. Scholars who view a/e in this regard may be better suited using other research methods. However, instead of focusing on what autoethnographers gain from writing a/e, scholars should focus on what can be learned from the stories they share (Ferdinand, 2009). A/e contributes to communication research because it furthers our understanding of identity as a social construction. Through a/e, I found that my middle school experience played a major role in constructing my identity, which is still evident today. Although I do not completely understand the extent to which it has affected my identity I believe my a/e demonstrates at least two ways in which it has. First, it instilled in me that a person's social worth is in part determined by the amount of money she or he have (or *appear* to have), which affects how I perceive myself. For instance, this past summer I had to rely on loans from my family because I did not have enough money to pay my bills. I disclosed my situation to friends but not without embarrassment, which I believe stems from being viewed as poor when I was young and the social consequences I endured from this perception. Even though I know better than to succumb to the idea that I will be a social outcast if I do not have money, I continue to worry about my financial status and its social repercussions. Therefore, my poor kid self still resides in me, influencing my daily decisions, such as whether or not I should hide my financial woes from friends. This finding has led me to further reflect on my schooling experience and contemplate the following questions: how does my schooling experience affect how I perceive others (e.g., students, colleagues, friends, family, and strangers)? How does it affect my relationships? How does it affect how and what I teach in the classroom?

Second, my middle school experience also instilled in me the belief that people who do not obey rules are "bad." For example, during my first couple of years of teaching, if students did not follow instructions for an assignment or classroom policies my interpretation of their disobedience was often that they were bad students. Or, when they questioned my authority I thought of them as disrespectful. Of course, my present teacher self tries to refrain from labeling students as such, but it is possible that she does it subconsciously. Thus, the fear I have for authority, which my middle school experience contributes to, affects my perception of students. This finding has inspired me to question my teacher self. For instance, how does my schooling experience affect my teaching? More importantly, what am I teaching students if I punish them for not following instructions or policies? Am I suggesting to students that their ability to follow instructions and policies is more important than their learning or creativity? If so, how does it affect their ability to become democratic citizens? Will they become citizens that unquestionably obey authority? Furthermore, if I equate obedient students with good students, how does it affect my relationship with them? Do they see me as a dictator instead of a caring and understanding teacher?

The questions I list above should serve as a basis for future communication research because it can uncover how schooling experiences shape identity. As Giroux (1988) states,

> teachers and administrators should approach education by examining their own perspectives about society, schools, and emancipation. Rather than attempt to escape from their own ideologies and values, educators should confront them critically so as to understand how society has shaped them as individuals, what it is they believe, and how to structure more positively the effects they have upon students and others. . . .[They] must attempt to understand how issues of class,

gender, and race have left an imprint upon how they think and act. Such a critical interrogation provides the foundation for a democratic school. (p. 9)

Therefore, it is important for teachers to examine communicative acts in the classroom (e.g., policies, curriculum, discipline, etc.) and how they impact the development of democratic citizens. Thus, it is vital that communication scholars (as they are likely teachers as well), especially those adhering to social constructivism, examine their role in the democratization of schools. Communication education scholars are well suited to attend to this call as they are largely concerned with teacher/student interaction. Alongside this, they should consider using autoethnography to write about their experience in educational institutions because it can expose how their experience impacts their teaching and their interaction with students. Furthermore, I encourage scholars who had been suspended or expelled from school to write about their experience and how it has affected their identity. Such work can shed light on the effects these acts, and the power relations they reveal, have on identity formation. I also recommend that autoethnographers consider visiting places where events occurred. While writing my a/e I visited my middle school where I spoke with my former teachers, walked through the halls of the building, and sat in the classes I had taken as a student, which evoked feelings and memories that I had long forgotten. Moreover, I was able to confirm parts of my story about Jay (the boy who got in a fight where he shoved a boy into the school's trophy case) when I spoke with the teacher who had broken up the fight. Thus, it may be beneficial for autoethnographers to visit places that are significant to their experience. Alongside this, I encourage autoethnographers to explore creative techniques that may help them recall memories and provide vivid stories for readers.

Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I reviewed RP research and applied CP to critique the practices and understand their possible limitations to provide a space for student voice and empowerment. In Chapter 3, I explained the methods I used to study the implementation of an RP program into a middle school. After conducting ethnography and performing autoethnography, I found that RP have the potential to promote student voice and empowerment; yet, their ability to do so may be affected by administrators', coordinators', and teachers' assumption that students' voice is acknowledged when they simply speak about the conflict, the school's underlying *permission to speak* protocol, students' reliance on adults to facilitate RP, and adults' unfavorable labeling of students. Furthermore, my study indicated that there are unresolved challenges to implementing RP into schools, which include the time needed to perform RP in classrooms and train teachers on how to appropriately use the practices. While RP literature highlight these challenges, my findings also illustrate that there are other significant issues for RP scholars to consider, which includes a lack of dialogue between adults in schools, unacknowledged voice and disempowerment among teachers and administrators, an interpretation of resistance as deviance in schools, the need to conceptualize voice and empowerment, and the co-existence of RP and suspension and expulsion in schools. Future research in RP and communication should attend to these issues so that RP can be effective in schools. Furthermore, I noted that RP have potential as praxis for CP. RP may not be a perfected method for shaping students into democratic citizens; however, CP scholars should consider RP as practices of possibility as they strive for schools to be

a democratic space. Finally, I argued for the use of a/e in communication research because it can further our understanding of identity as a social construction.

Overall, I feel obligated to sum up my dissertation by addressing the two main audiences it may be of interest to: critical communication scholars and RP scholars. First, for critical communication scholars (especially those interested in critical pedagogy), the RP program described throughout my dissertation illustrates the difficulty of merely studying a program as an isolated event. Although understanding it completely is not possible, without looking at the political relationships (infiltrated with power) related to the program the reader would miss significant issues existing within the educational system that can only be understood by uncovering these relationships. Thus, the fact that this dissertation focused on RP may be unimportant for critical communication scholars; instead, they may be more interested in the idea that programs (especially those meant to change student behavior) implemented into schools highlight the power relations obstructing the democratization of schools. Thus, I recommend studying school programs to uncover the political within schools.

Second, for RP scholars, this dissertation may simply outline some of the challenges schools may face when implementing RP programs. Therefore, RP scholars may read it and ask, "How can we resolve these matters?" Unfortunately, some may think I provide vague and general answers to this question. However, there is no simple answer to it since many of the challenges are interconnected and are caused by issues within our educational system too immense to discuss in a dissertation. To do so, would require analyzing the history of discipline in education, numerous dominant ideologies

imposed within education, and power founded on class, race, gender, and sexuality

exhibited within school culture. Thus, some RP scholars may ask, "Why does she think

these matters are for us to resolve?" But instead, I suggest scholars ask how RP can play

a significant role in interrogating these issues (not necessarily resolving them).

Answering this question then becomes simple: through dialogue.

As a final thought, I would like to share an email correspondence I had with my

mother after she read parts of my dissertation. Interestingly, my mother and I

experienced the negative feelings related to being labeled "poor."

> Katie, I really enjoyed [reading your chapter] and I am so proud of you!
> However, I felt bad when you described yourself as a poor kid in middle school
> because I was also a poor kid all through school. I remember feeling ashamed
> about my clothes not being in style and the fact that there were certain things I
> could not do because Mom and Dad didn't have the money. I remember groups
> that I had to work very hard to belong to. Of course, as a kid, I was certain
> that my folks didn't know what I was going through. It makes me feel even more
> upset at myself for allowing myself to be in such a state of mind after your dad
> left that I couldn't help you through this [time in your life]. You would still have
> been a poor kid, but it might not have been so rough. That is no excuse, but I
> wish I had centered on you kids more than myself. I know that those years caused
> problems later for you; they still cause problems for all of us. All of our years
> shape us into what we are today and you turned out to be a great daughter maybe
> because of those years. We really need to talk about that when you are home.
> Love, Mom

> Mom, in regards to my poor-kid days, I believe what doesn't kill you, makes you
> stronger. I've grown up to appreciate many other things in life other than
> materialistic junk. I actually feel sorry for those who go through life motivated by
> "toys." We're taught at such a young age that without these toys we aren't
> important and I think this is why so many adults are depressed. Anyway, I hope
> that by talking about my past in my dissertation I will illustrate how class and
> poverty affects students (which is obvious to me). At the end of my dissertation, I
> hope to bring it full circle and talk about how lucky I am to have come out of that
> experience with a positive outlook on life because I had great family, friends, and
> mentors to help me along the way. Unfortunately, however, not all kids have that.
> Love ya! Katie

It is important to remember that as educators we play a large role in shaping the identities of the students we teach. Even though it was tough growing up feeling like an outcast because of my poorness, I was extremely lucky to have not only friends and family to support me but also a few teachers who listened to me and made me feel like I had something to offer the world. If I hadn't had these teachers, I may not have the confidence I have today. Therefore, as teachers, we should keep in mind that we may be the only form of support a student has, and the impact (either good or bad) we make on the student may carry with her/him for years to come.

APPENDIX A

CONFERENCE FACILITATOR'S SCRIPT[11]

1. Preamble

"Welcome. As you know, my name is (your name) and I will be facilitating this conference."

Now introduce each conference participant and state his/her relationship to the offender/s or victim/s.

"Thank you all for attending. I know that this is difficult for all of you, but your presence will help us deal with the matter that has brought us together. This is an opportunity for all of you to be involved in repairing the harm that has been done."

"This conference will focus on an incident which happened (state the date, place and nature of offense without elaborating). It is important to understand that we will focus on what (offender name/s) did and how that unacceptable behavior has affected others. We are not here to decide whether (offender name/s) is/are good or bad. We want to explore in what way people have been affected and hopefully work toward repairing the harm that has resulted. Does everyone understand this?"

"(Offender name/s) has/have admitted his/her/their part in the incident."

Say to offender/s: "I must tell you that you do not have to participate in this conference and are free to leave at any time, as is anyone else. If you do leave, the matter may be referred to court/handled by the school disciplinary policy/handled in another way."

"This matter, however, may be finalized if you participate in a positive manner and comply with the conference agreement."

Say to offender/s: "Do you understand?"

2. Offender/s

"We'll start with (one of offenders' names)."

If there is more than one offender, have each respond to all of the following questions.

• "What happened?"

• "What were you thinking about at the time?"

• "What have you thought about since the incident?"

• "Who do you think has been affected by your actions?"

• "How have they been affected?"

3. Victim/s

If there is more than one victim, have each respond to all of the following questions.

• "What was your reaction at the time of the incident?"

• "How do you feel about what happened?"

• "What has been the hardest thing for you?"

• "How did your family and friends react when they heard about the incident?"

4. Victim Supporters

Have each respond to all of the following questions.

• "What did you think when you heard about the incident?"

• "How do you feel about what happened?"

• "What has been the hardest thing for you?"

• "What do you think are the main issues?"

5. Offender Supporters

To parent/caregiver ask: "This has been difficult for you, hasn't it? Would you like to tell us about it?"

Have each respond to all of the following questions.

• "What did you think when you heard about the incident?"

• "How do you feel about what happened?"

• "What has been the hardest thing for you?"

• "What do you think are the main issues?"

6. Offender/s

Ask the offender/s: "Is there anything you want to say at this time?"

7. Reaching an Agreement

Ask the victim/s: "What would you like from today's conference?"

Ask the offender/s to respond.

At this point, the participants discuss what should be in the final agreement. Solicit comments from participants.

It is important that you ask the offender/s to respond to each suggestion before the group moves to the next suggestion, asking "What do you think about that?" Then determine that the offender/s agree/s before moving on. Allow for negotiation.

As the agreement develops, clarify each item and make the written document as specific as possible, including details, deadlines and follow-up arrangements.

As you sense that the agreement discussion is drawing to a close, say to the participants: "Before I prepare the written agreement, I'd like to make sure that I have accurately recorded what has been decided."

Read the items in the agreement aloud and look to the participants for acknowledgment. Make any necessary corrections.

8. Closing the Conference

"Before I formally close this conference, I would like to provide everyone with a final opportunity to speak. Is there anything anyone wants to say?"

Allow for participants to respond and when they are done, say: "Thank you for your contributions in dealing with this difficult matter. Congratulations on the way you have worked through the issues. Please help yourselves to some refreshments while I prepare the agreement."

Allow participants ample time to have refreshments and interact. The informal period after the formal conference is very important.

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF MY FIELDNOTES

Below is an example of my fieldnotes. My original notes are handwritten, but I typed

them out for this appendix for the sake of readability.

5/3/10 – Green
Bell rings. Class starts and a girl asks a question.
G: I have Traffic school and I don't know why.
T3: You had too many traffic tickets.
G: But I didn't get any tickets.
T3: We don't tell you when you get tickets.
Another girl gets involved in the conversation and asks, "How are we supposed to know then?" T3 explains, "It's like when you go to some states and you run a red light. You don't get stopped. They take a picture of your license plate as you go through and they send the ticket in the mail." (FOUCAULT – Panopticon)
The student having to go to traffic school asks, "What if I don't go to traffic school?"
T3: You'll be suspended.

5/25/10 – Green
*Be sure to write about students in hallways. Girl called another girl a b**** and pushed her. Slow walkers! Students take their time to get to class.
Remember enjoying the time between classes to catch up on gossip. To catch up on "my world," which at the time was the most important to me – my social life. Did I want my social life to rule my world? Not necessarily, but middle school is where you get placed into the hierarchy. This is the time when students are more aware of the group they belong to and when that group starts to stick. Groups in elementary seem to change week after week; sometimes day after day. My social life caused me anxiety. I had to be careful not to become the butt of a joke. That's social suicide. So is sitting at the wrong table at lunch time. This is probably why students at this age find it difficult to stick up for peers who are picked on. It's all about survival of the fittest. They tend to side with the teaser rather than the teasee. The teaser gains power if they are successful; if not, they likely become the teasee. It's the **shift of power** that occurs in middle school.

5/27/10 – Blue
TEACHER FRUSTRATION
T1 is talking to a boy who often doesn't have his I.D.
T1: Where's your I.D.? You don't know? You guys are falling apart these last few weeks of school. It's not a good thing. It's a very bad thing
T1 sounds like she's joking, but I can also hear her frustration.

6/2/10 – Green

PERMISSION TO SPEAK PROTOCOL
T3: Why are we looking and talking to each other?
He continues with the lesson.
Students are working on calculators.
T3: Don't look at others calculators. This is the biggest thing with high school students. They don't want to ask a question because they're afraid of looking stupid. But it doesn't make you look stupid, it actually makes you look smart. So don't be afraid to ask if you don't understand something.
I'm not sure why T3 comments on high school students when these are middle school students. He used to teach in the high school, so perhaps this is a mistake? Or maybe he's just incorporating his experience with high school students to show how asking questions is okay?

6/3/10 - Purple
VOICE OR SILENCING
One of the girls asks if she can dye her hair for crazy hair day.
T2: If you're trying to make a statement with purple or green hair, you'll be sent home.
Another girl chimes in: Yeah, _____ was sent home when he dyed his hair.
T2: Oh yeah?
G who wants to dye her hair: Well that's not fair, Mrs._____ hair is purple.
T2: Well, we're teachers. We have different rules.

APPENDIX C

TENTATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR CONSULTANT AND

ADMINISTRATORS

Before we begin, please do not use names in response to the questions.

1) What position do you hold in the RPPSD?

2) What is your role in the RP program that is being implemented into the RPPSD? If unsure, what do you think your role is?

3) What are your thoughts on the program?

    a) How do you think the school has benefited or not benefited from the program?

    b) How do you think things will change in your school(s) as this program is being implemented?

    c) Are there any specific stories you would like to share that illustrate your feelings on the implementation of this program?

4) Now that you've been introduced to the program and have had training sessions, what do you think the objectives are for this program?

5) How would you define the following terms:

    a) Democracy? How would you define democracy in regards to how this should look in your school?

    b) Voice?

        i) How would you define student voice?

        ii) Can you give me an example of what this may or may not look like?

        iii) Have you witnessed this yet?

c) Empowerment?

  i) How would you define student empowerment?

  ii) Can you give me an example of what this may or may not look like?

  iii) Have you witnessed this yet?

6) Have you found your definitions of these terms to conflict with or complement other teachers' or administrators' definition of these terms? Can you give me an example?

7) Have there or have there not been clear definitions given to you for these terms either by administrators or the contracted RP consultant? If not, have you found this to prevent you from being able to carry out RP successfully? If so, have you found this to be helpful in carrying out RP?

8) Could you share any thoughts about what you think may be the effects of this program in future?

9) Is there anything else you would like to share about the RP program?

APPENDIX D

TENTATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR COORDINATORS

Before we begin, please do not use names in response to the questions.

General Questions About the Coordinator:

1) How long have you been a coordinator?

2) How many years have you been at this school?

3) What subject do you teach?

Implementation:

4) In general, what are your thoughts on the restorative practices program?

    a) Do you think the school has benefited or not benefited from the program?

    b) Do you think things will change in your school(s) as this program is being implemented?

    c) Are there any specific stories you would like to share that illustrate your feelings on the implementation of this program?

5) Are there any responsibilities that you believe might make it challenging for you to implement restorative practices in the school?

6) Could you share any thoughts about what you think may be the effects of this program in future?

7) Has this school implemented other programs in the past? If so, how long ago was this program implemented? How did the teachers, administrators, and students react to it? Do you think it was successful?

a) How do you think the restorative practices program compares to this other program(s)?

8) Have the students been informed about restorative practices?

9) How do you think teachers, administrators, and students are reacting to restorative practices?

10) Have you noticed any changes in student or teacher behavior around the school?

Training:

11) What kind of training did you receive to become a coordinator for restorative practices?

12) Do you think the training sessions gave you enough information on how to implement restorative practices?

13) Has there or has there not been a clear definition of restorative practices and its objectives provided for you either by the administrators or the restorative practices consultant?

a) What do you believe is the definition of restorative practices?

b) What do you think are the objectives of restorative practices? Do you feel the school/district is meeting these objectives?

14) Do you think that teachers and/or other coordinators interpret restorative practices differently?

a) If so, do you think the differences in interpretations preventing you and others in the school from being able to carry out restorative practices successfully?

Restorative Practices' Language

15) Some restorative practices literature discusses the importance of using restorative practices to teach students about democracy, student empowerment, and student voice. If you had to guess, how would you define democracy (in regards to how it should look in your school)? Student empowerment? Student voice?

    a) Do you think that your school's restorative practices program also recognize these as important?

16) Could you explain to me the difference between a conference and a peacemaking circle?

17) Do you think students know the difference between a conference and a peacemaking circle?

Conclusion:

18) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience or the restorative practices program in general?

APPENDIX E

TENTATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

Before we begin, please do not use names in response to the questions.

General Questions about the Teacher:

1) How many years have you been teaching?

2) How many years have you been at this school?

3) What subject do you teach?

Implementation:

4) In general, what are your thoughts on the restorative practices program?

   a) Do you think the school has benefited or not benefited from the program?

   b) Do you think things will change in your school(s) as this program is being implemented?

   c) Are there any specific stories you would like to share that illustrate your feelings on the implementation of this program?

5) Are there any responsibilities that you believe might make it challenging for you to implement restorative practices in the classroom?

6) Have you used restorative practices inside the classroom?

7) Have you used restorative practices outside of the classroom?

8) Will you use restorative practices inside/outside of the classroom in the future? Why or why not?

9) Could you share any thoughts about what you think may be the effects of this program in future?

10) Has this school implemented other programs in the past? If so, how long ago was this program implemented? How did the teachers, administrators, and students react to it? Do you think it was successful?

   a) How do you think the restorative practices program compares to this other program(s)?

11) How do you think teachers, administrators, and students are reacting to restorative practices?

12) Have you noticed any changes in student behavior either in your classes or around the school?

Training:

13) Do you think the training sessions gave you enough information on how to implement restorative practices?

14) Has your teaching been influenced by the restorative practices training? If so, how?

15) Has there or has there not been a clear definition of restorative practices and its objectives provided for you either by the administrators or the restorative practices consultant?

   a) What do you believe is the definition of restorative practices?

   b) What do you think are the objectives of restorative practices? Do you feel the school/district is meeting these objectives?

16) Do you think that other teachers interpret restorative practices differently?

   a) If so, do you think the differences in interpretations preventing you and others in the school from being able to carry out restorative practices successfully?

Restorative Practices' Language

17) Some restorative practices literature discusses the importance of using restorative practices to teach students about democracy, student empowerment, and student voice. If you had to guess, how would you define democracy (in regards to how it should look in your school)? Student empowerment? Student voice?

      a) Do you think that your school's restorative practices program also recognize these as important?

18) Could you explain to me the difference between a conference and a peacemaking circle?

19) Do you think students know the difference between a conference and a peacemaking circle?

Conclusion:

20) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience or the restorative practices program in general?

APPENDIX F

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire asks that you describe your experience with restorative conferences. Since you had the opportunity to discuss your problem with (name of RP coordinator) and the person(s) involved in the conference, you now have the chance to write about the experience! You do **not** have to answer any of the questions if you do not want to. When you are finished, please drop the questionnaire into the box labeled "Conference Q's." **None** of your teachers, including (name of RP coordinator), will read your answers. Please do not use any names in response to the questions.

1) Describe for me whether or not you felt you had a chance to tell your side of the problem that occurred between you and the other person(s).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2) Explain to me whether or not you felt like you were listened to when you explained your side of the story.

_____
_____
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3) Tell me why you think meeting with (name of RP coordinator) and the other person(s) involved with the problem was good or bad for you.

_____
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4) Explain to me whether or not this experience made you feel like what you had to say was important.

_____
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5) Explain to me whether or not this experience made you feel like your opinion matters to your friends, classmates, and/or teachers.

_____
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_____

6) After talking about the problem with the other person(s) and (name of RP coordinator), describe to me whether or not you feel like you will be able to tell people how you feel when future problems occur between you and others.

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7) Explain to me whether or not you think this experience will make you settle your problems with friends, classmates and/or teachers differently.

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8) Explain to me whether or not this experience made you feel like you have the power or ability to influence problems for the better in the future.

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Thank you! Remember to put this in the box labeled "Conference Q's."

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ABSTRACT

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN AN URBAN
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

by

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December 2011

Advisor: Dr. Sandra Pensoneau-Conway

Major: Communication

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Traditionally, schools have turned to zero tolerance policies when dealing with student discipline and punishment. However, it is argued that zero tolerance policies are not only ineffective, but also harmful to students because the policies hinder schools' ability to be democratic spaces. Nonetheless, schools are turning to alternatives to these policies, such as restorative practices, which are thought to resolve conflicts in schools and teach students how to be responsible, democratic citizens. Although advocates of restorative practices claim they teach students democratic values by encouraging student voice and empowerment in schools, it is unclear whether schools implementing the practices consider student voice and empowerment as vital components and outcomes of the practices, or whether students perceive the practices as promoting their voice and empowerment. Moreover, empirical research suggests that restorative practices programs have positive effects on schools, but unfortunately the amount of research is relatively small; thus, there is still a lot to be known about their effects. Therefore, this study is guided by the following questions: (a) how do the teachers, coordinators, and

administrators differ on how they interpret and speak about restorative practices? (b) How does this affect the implementation of the practices? (c) Do the practices have the potential to promote student voice and empowerment? This study employs ethnography to answer these questions, and to understand the implementation of a restorative practices program in an urban middle school. Additionally, the researcher aims to illustrate how communicative acts within the school may shape students' identity, which may affect their voice and empowerment, by performing autoethnography. Results from the study indicate that restorative practices have the potential to promote student voice and empowerment; yet, their ability to do so may be affected by administrators', coordinators', and teachers' assumption that students' voice is acknowledged when they simply speak about the conflict, the school's underlying *permission to speak* protocol, students' reliance on adults to facilitate restorative practices, and adults' unfavorable labeling of students. Furthermore, findings indicate unresolved challenges to implementing restorative practices into schools, which include the time needed to perform the practices in classrooms and train teachers on how to appropriately use the practices. While restorative practices literature highlight these challenges, the findings from this study illustrate that there are other significant issues for restorative practices and communication scholars to consider for future research, which include a lack of dialogue between adults in schools, unacknowledged voice and disempowerment among teachers and administrators, an interpretation of resistance as deviance in schools, the need to conceptualize voice and empowerment, and the co-existence of restorative practices and suspension and expulsion in schools. Finally, the researcher notes

restorative practices' potential as praxis for critical pedagogy, and encourages the use of autoethnography in future communication research as it can further scholars' understanding of identity as a social construction.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Katie Rasmussen attended Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana where she received her B.A. in Communication in 2003 and her M.A. in Organizational Communication in 2005. Her research interests include critical pedagogy, communication education, and restorative practices. Katie has taught communication courses at the college level since 2003.