RESTORATIVE CIRCLES AND GENDER EXPRESSION IN THREE NORTH AMERICAN
MIDDLE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

BY

MARK BECKER

THESIS

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Master's Committee:

      Associate Professor Yoon Pak, Committee Chair
      Dr. Mikhail Lyubansky, Director of Research
      Professor Adrienne Dixson

ABSTRACT

This project is a secondary analysis of existing data collected within two Midwestern urban school districts. The objective of this investigation was two-fold. One was to assist two Midwestern school districts in better understanding how their recently implemented restorative programs were affecting quality of life and education for both students and staff/teachers. The goal was to allow them the opportunity to shift attention and resources toward areas that need to be developed further while simultaneously highlighting the aspects of their programs that were functioning well. While the field is certainly expanding, there exists a lack of models for schools in terms of restorative approaches to conflict and school culture. This investigation contributes to a growing body of data & evidence supporting the importance of alternatives to solely punitive measures of handling discipline and conflict in learning communities. A secondary objective was to further an understanding of how gendered power dynamics interact with, and are affected by, restorative approaches. I propose this lens through which to view the development of restorative programs to account for possible intersections of power dynamics with gender (as well as race, class and other identities which impact gender expressions) in order to open up further possibilities for educational reform. This approach seeks to better our understanding of how attempts at 'reforming' educational settings often fail, through no lack of effort, as a result of the social reproduction of power and inequality. Additionally, this study points to specific restorative methods which can act as possible interventions. This research seeks to engage with a growing body of research aimed at improving educational experiences for all people while preparing young people to engage with the complexities of the world with tools that affirm a wide variety of democratic approaches to learning.

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Lastly, I want to recognize Dominic Barter, whose work in the world of restorative justice inspired me to pursue deeper educational reforms. It is also appropriate here to recognize that much of the wisdom and learning in the field of restorative justice upon which this study is built is the product of countless hours of struggle, conflict and courage of indigenous communities in the United States and abroad. These traditions owe their existence to the generosity of many leaders from these communities as well as those who are adapting this work to their local communities in the hope of a more livable and just world for all people.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the product of academic research and inquiry as much as my own educational experiences, both as a student and a teacher. Being educated in a small, predominantly white, working class town in the northwest of Iowa for all my childhood and teenage years, I was painfully aware at an early age the impacts which conflict, as it relates to gender and racial identities, can have on the learning process. Thanks to my own curious nature, I was a fast friend, especially to those who happened to be new to our town, which (starting in the 1990's with the concerted efforts of corporations like International Beef Producers (IBP) to supply their factories with a labor force that was easier to underpay due to their immigrant status) happened to be the children of Mexican families who had immigrated to Iowa on the hope of finding a stable life for themselves. As I aged, I began to realize that these friends came over to my house less and less, and before I knew it, we never saw each other outside of school.

This unspoken distance which crept between myself and my friends whose racial backgrounds differed from mine extended into school life eventually. No one could ever explain to me why the Mexican American students would always sit with each other at the lunch table, and why they were so frequently reprimanded for speaking Spanish. It's no coincidence that at this same time when I was beginning to feel this separation that I also, through a process of socialization that I can now recognize as racism, began to feel less safe around my peers who did not share my same racial background. As a result of the negative attention which I saw teachers giving to students who were different from me, or perhaps the lack of conversations in my home environment about racial differences, this period in life is the beginning of my own racial biases. I mention this only to illustrate how bias can come into a person's mind in ways that are not even the product of their own conscious effort, but through a process of observation of the social

environment in which we are put into. Given the current arrangement of our society, these social environments are dominated by the types of school cultures which young people encounter on a day to day basis. Any bias which teaching, or administration staff, may have, and the resulting inequity in how conflict and misunderstanding are handled, can have huge impacts not only on the development of young people, but on the local culture as a whole. Schools have an enormous amount of power, though it is often not recognized except when they are being blamed for social inequalities.

This process of observation extends into other areas of identity as well, most certainly including that of gender. If it is indeed true that gender is "an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct," and, additionally, that "our attention [should] shift from matters internal to the individual and focus on interactional, and ultimately, institutional arenas" (West & Zimmerman, 1987), then it makes sense why the experiences I had observing the behavior, the regulation on behavior, and the reaction to regulation which I observed so frequently from my male classmates becomes the ground upon which my understandings of gender are based. It's no accident that my first memories of being a 'boy' were being critiqued by other boys for doing something that 'boys' "don't do".

The performative aspect of this socialization process is only clear to me now, and as I look back on the formative experiences which school has provided me, I see that I received my gender training through the observation of, and ultimately the re-enacting of, gender being done around me. Combined with the role which education has historically played in the formation of 'moral values', these my school experiences set into my mind a very clear power dynamic which was to be respected and followed at risk of social, and often, physical punishment. Without a doubt, these dynamics relied on a willingness, however implicit, on our behalf to avoid dialogue

around these issues; indeed, attempts at dialogue were, and often still are, handled with punitive responses because the nature of dialogue (a discussion without any goal in mind except to understand) is too threatening to this status quo. It was my constant pushing against these power dynamics, and the growing frustration at my sense of futility, that led me to pursue the line of study and work that I have undertaken. It is the frustrations which I have encountered in my community building and education work of my adult life that has led me to this research topic specifically.

Power Dynamics

My initial investigations into what interventions could be effective in affecting positive shifts in how young people are developed, encouraged and educated led me specifically to the work of Dominic Barter and the Restorative Circles movement. Through my experience in various attempts at social change and reform, I came to see that due to the "abstract structural dynamics" (R. Connell, 2005) of power, work which is geared at addressing changes in how power is exercised and experienced must necessarily include dialogue. Without some structure in which to speak candidly about one's lived experience, power is more readily enacted in ways that are often harmful to those parties who are not being heard in the process of that power's construction. As Lyubansky & Shpungin (2005) state, "power dynamics within society are created when individuals with structural power hold (and therefore act upon) explicit and/or implicit biases based on group-level characteristics," and are simultaneously "ubiquitous and covert." Through my own various frustrations, both private and professional, I came to realize that social change must contend with these power dynamics, or risk perpetuating them. Thus Restorative Circles emerged as what appeared to be a viable option for my social and academic

focus due to its insistence on naming and addressing the ways in which power dynamics often contribute to social harms which have deep historical roots.

After some short yet meaningful experiences in the field of Restorative Justice, one dynamic emerged which confirmed the "ubiquitous yet covert" nature of power referred to above; that of patriarchy, or, hegemonic masculinity. "Patriarchy," as defined by bell hooks, "is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence" (hooks, 2002). Asserting its sociopolitical nature, however, is an act that at once transgresses the social contract which keeps patriarchy in place, i.e. silence, yet at the same time, recognizes that it is a power dynamic which must be contended with in all spaces in our society; not the least of which being the progressive political environments in which I have operated for most of my adult life as an educational reform activist (Tickell, A., 1995).

Although day-to-day experiences of power dynamics are intensely real and, due to their covert nature, often perennially frustrating of other more cooperative possibilities, in order to understand how this sociopolitical system operates, the local, regional and global patterns of behavior and distributions of power must be analyzed (R. Connell, 2005). In this way, the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" emerges as a useful concept when attempting to situate the specific ways which patriarchy is maintained and even reshaped. On a local level, this reshaping might look like a mandated sensitivity training in a local school district in response to accusations of sexual harassment while maintaining a pay-gap along the lines of gender. On a global level, this may appear in the mass-globalization of advertising which disproportionately represents versions of masculinity which privilege more 'masculine' versions of gender

expression over the myriad expressions of humanity. In all, to understand hegemonic masculinity is to understand that "a given pattern of hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic to the extent that it provides a solution to [gendered] tensions, tending to stabilize patriarchal power or reconstitute it in new conditions," however, it is important to remember that "a pattern of practice (i.e., a version of masculinity) that provided such a solution in past conditions but not in new conditions is open to challenge—is in fact certain to be challenged" (R. Connell, 2005). It is the process of contestation that draws my attention, particularly to the extent that specific forms of handling conflict and misunderstanding in learning environments reinforce, or at least fail to challenge, patriarchy.

Restorative Justice

Conflict, particularly in the lens of Restorative Justice, is an ideal form of contestation in that it is a moment where the roles and power dynamics are laid bare and there are possibilities for new arrangements to emerge. Typically, conflict is seen as a moment to determine who is 'right', who is 'wrong', and who will be receiving the punishment (Barter & Lyubansky, 2011). Despite its apparent strengths, this model often breaks down and is limited in effectiveness in that those are entrusted to determine who is deserving of punishment are often heavily invested in imbalanced power dynamics (such as the more obvious cases of judges, police, school administration, politicians, etc.), and by design are kept insulated from any negative or harmful effects of their decisions. Thus, in this conventional model, there is little motivation for change in the instances where the needs of the community and / or individuals are not being served. Restorative Justice attempts to reform this process by providing more interpersonal opportunities for feedback, sharing and cooperation. According to Davis et. al (2005), a Restorative approach to justice requires the "presence of at least the person(s) causing harm, the person(s) harmed (or

5

their representative[s]) and a facilitator. Though especially sensitive to the needs of those

harmed, restorative agreements address the needs of all, including offender and community.

They aim to build the capacity of the responsible person who makes positive contributions to and

improves relations with the community." In theory and in practice, Restorative Justice

approaches provide opportunities to address the "covert and ubiquitous" nature of power

dynamics. They are made overt by allowing those who have been impacted by a conflict to

openly discuss every element of the situation. At the same time, they are made specific by

providing a sense of agency to participants in so far as they are actively involved in the

resolution of the conflict.

While Restorative Justice in the western world has emerged more fully in the past three

decades, it contains of system of values that are globally present, often in indigenous models of

conflict resolution (Lyubansky et. al, 2016). These models have been adopted in many different

contexts, from education communities to court rooms. It's theoretical foundations asserts that

anyone who has been impacted by a conflict should play a role in its resolution through a focus

on the needs and feelings of the participants, accountability for those who have done harm, and

restitution for those who have been harmed (Zehr, 2003). Its proponents are free to apply

principles of Restorative Justice in their own specific situations, thus placing a high emphasis on

personal agency and local effectiveness rather than an adherence to hierarchy.

This possibility within conflict is more acutely present in the Restorative Circle model of

conflict resolution, which emerged in the work of Dominic Barter in the favelas of Rio De

Janeiro, Brazil in the 1990's. This model, which is one feature of the current research, places a

particular emphasis on the empowerment of the community to own the conflict resolution

process as their own (Shpungin, et. al., 2015). This is particularly salient to this discussion given

the psychological and social benefits of claiming the power to tell your own story and advocate for your own needs rather than petitioning someone in a position of power to do it for you (Bandura, 2006). In this research, I endeavor to investigate to what extent these benefits are experienced by participants, and how, if at all, they are compromised by the emergence, or reproduction, of pre-existing power dynamics.

The second Restorative Justice model which is highlighted here is known as Virtue Based Restorative Discipline (VBRD). The process is based on the work of Lynne Lang (2013), and is geared toward putting Restorative Justice principles into place in a Catholic environment. While VBRD shares the core principles of RJ, developing capacity for individuals to express and listen to feelings and needs, accountability and responsibility through personal reflection, etc., it places a special emphasis on reflecting and acting upon virtues. According to Lang (2013), "A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions." Often in the form of Prayer Circles (PC), participants are encouraged to address conflict through reflection upon specific virtues which may have been lacking in the situation which precipitated the conflict. They are then encouraged to brainstorm how putting those virtues into practice can play a role in the resolution of the conflict. While the basic format is very similar to Restorative Justice, VBRD provides a process particularly relevant within environments that place a high value on personal virtue and morality.

Educational Environments

My focus on how RJ interacts with power dynamics focuses on educational environments for a variety of reasons, the primary of which is my career in education and my own personal

experiences with how transformational education can be. In some ways, schools represent the best possibilities for the communication and practice of democratic ideals of equality, responsibility and opportunity. That this is a commonly held hope and belief is easily witnessed both in historical and contemporary movements which have fought for educational rights to be expanded to include progressively more and more of our society. Indeed, schools are grounds of contestation where critical thinking should be encouraged and cultivated in order that, in the words of bell hooks (1994), we can allow our society "the possibility of chance," through the emergence and critiquing of new ideas. That education contains within it the possibility of greater freedom is most painfully demonstrated in the history of the United States' enslavement of people of African descent. Documents from the 18th and 19th century made explicit statements about the importance of intentionally denying education to enslaved people in order to maintain the "authority" of the institution of slavery (Span, 2007). The connection between education and the reproduction of power is explicitly demonstrated in this history and in its ongoing legacy.

That said, my focus on the possibilities of implementing Restorative Justice programs in educational environments is also rooted in the understanding that this possibility of freedom through the challenging of power dynamics has been, and is, greatly frustrated by the policies and design of many of our school systems. An analysis of the legacy of racialized oppression in the United States yields plentiful evidence that not only are many of our school districts more segregated then they every have been, but that for many students, particularly those who are marginalized due to their racial / religious /gender identity or sexual orientation, schools are places where societal inequalities are reinforced and reproduced in ways that greatly limit their life opportunities (Ladson-Billings, 2012). This history is testament to the fact that power dynamics tend to be reproduced by individuals becoming invested in systems which provide

8

them with a certain amount of privilege while also insulating them from the potentially harmful effects of their decisions. Restorative Justice contains within it a unique possibility to serve as an effective intervention in this context to the extent that educators can implement dialogue based practices which allow for a shift from vertical power structures (power over) to horizontal power structures (power with) where those who have been insulated from the effects of their decisions can hear from those they have impacted and have the accountability necessary to create shifts in future directions.

Interdisciplinary Methods

The current study is intended to build upon a field of growing Restorative Justice research which, by nature of its involvement with human capacity and behaviors as well as structural power and policy, is naturally an interdisciplinary endeavor. Evidence of this can be found in any brief search into the field of Restorative Justice literature. Articles documenting the impacts and implications of restorative justice have appeared in journals of law, education, sociology, criminology, psychology, and religion. This is to say that any method of social change that necessitates dialogue and listening, such as restorative justice, must necessarily deal with the psychology involved with the listening process and must necessarily deal with the internal barriers, occurring on an individual level, to one's ability to participate fully in a restorative circle process. Simultaneously, because this study is aimed at engaging structural power as it is represented and recreated in hegemonic forms of masculinity, it must situate itself in the field of sociological literature as well. These barriers to full participation in a restorative process, occurring on a systemic or social level, must also be engaged if a broader understanding of the real dynamics at play in any attempt at educational reform is to be achieved. This study belongs

and contributes to this interdisciplinary field to the extent that it presents data both on the personal and social barriers to the success of educational reform efforts.

Research Questions

It is these personal and academic concerns regarding the history and future of education which has led me to two essential points of inquiry. First, I inquired into how power dynamics are operating in the context of hegemonic masculinity to influence the distribution of benefits from Restorative Justice in Middle School environments. We know from the research that Restorative Justice practices have had beneficial consequences for communities worldwide in terms of decreased instances of violence, crime, recidivism and even school suspensions and expulsions (Barnes, 2007). What is less clear is to what extent are these benefits experienced equitable across the intersections of identities which adolescents are navigating during their educations careers. Specifically, there is not yet a robust set of data documenting how expressions of masculinity interact with the Restorative Justice process. In theory, it would seem that RJ practices (with their emphasis on cooperation, communication of feelings and needs, and accountability to those who have been harmed) would stand in opposition to the practices of hegemonic masculinity (with its emphasis on emotional restriction and the resulting defensiveness, competition and aggression). However, given the contested nature of power dynamics, and the ways in which they are constantly being challenged, updated, reformed and recreated (Bourdieu, 1977), there exist significant possibilities for these two practices to exert simultaneous influences on one another. It is this tension, and its consequences, that are being investigated here.

The second focus of this project is to investigate how expressions of hegemonic masculinity affect student's experiences and perceptions of Restorative Justice programs in

Middle School environments. As mentioned above, the practices of RJ and hegemonic masculinity, in theory, contain some key contradictions. In the literature as well, we see that one element of hegemonic masculinity is to resist and dis-identify from school environments in general (Stoudt, 2006; Morris, 2005), and distance one's self from the values and goals that are easily identifiable with the school power structure, potentially excepting those which align with "masculine' values, i.e. sports. In the cases in which students cannot distance themselves from school associated activities, counter narratives are often employed in order to maintain a sense of self while also ensuring continuing access to the cultural capital necessary to continue belonging to the hegemonic group, in this case, the 'masculine' group. Of particular interest to this study, is to what extent counter narratives regarding Restorative Justice exist among the student body, to what extent these narratives are influenced by the values of hegemonic masculinity, and to what extent these narratives influence the overall perception and experience which participants have with Restorative Programs. Data on this barrier to effectiveness would be useful in determining any future directions for the allocation of resources when trying to design RJ programs.

Chapter Details

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I will begin evaluating the existing literature, and offer a brief review of the significant work that has already been done in the field of Restorative Justice in Education. I will discuss the existence of power dynamics in school environments and how they are rooted in history behind the foundation of schools in the United States. Additionally, the psychological literature which addresses the development of agency will be addressed in order to offer a fuller understanding of how power dynamics and agency interact in the development of adolescents and young people. Next, I will look at how gender socialization takes place in

middle school environments. This literature will help to explain the social and psychological processes which young people are being influenced by, and are, in turn, influencing, during their middle school careers. With this evidence as a backdrop, it will be easier to give further attention to the concept of hegemonic masculinity and how different identities intersect with the process of gender identity development. In this same line of thought, the term "traditional masculinity' will be developed further and attention will be given to how it affects students and their ability to adjust to changes in their social and academic lives. This section in particular will further support the investigation into the significant role which gender roles play during the middle school years.

Lastly, the connection between gender socialization and conflict will be discussed, and brief discussion will be given on the messages which are contained within the hegemonic form of masculinity for the 'appropriate' way to deal with conflict. Without taking this connection into account, programs aimed at addressing conflict in schools are more likely to be ineffective at countering the prescribed, however anti-social, methods for handling and conceptualizing conflict among adherents of hegemonic masculinity. To finish the chapter, further discussion will be given to restorative justice in schools in order to situate this project within a history of educational reform aimed at reducing violence, bullying, discipline issues and interrupting the school to prison pipeline.

In Chapter 3 I will discuss the methods of this study, which will include information on the school sites and the participants in this study as well as the means by which they were selected. The demographic make-up of each school included in the study will be introduced, focusing predominantly on the gender, Socio-economic Status (SES), and race of the participants. Specific details will be provided in this chapter regarding the style of Restorative Practices which each school in the study was engaged in at the time of the interviews, as well as

the procedure by the interview protocol was developed, implemented, and analyzed. The key information regarding the Restrictive Emotionality scale will be provided, which was a key influence in the development of this study. To finish this chapter, the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) of analysis will be highlighted, which serves as the theoretical framework for how the data was analyzed, organized and processed.

Chapter 4 of this thesis deals with the results of the study, and will provide direct data from participant responses to the interview protocols. Responses will be organized and presented in a few key categories that are designed to highlight the four main categories which emerged in the evaluation of the interview data. The category of Self-Awareness contains data which demonstrates issues related to how well the participant understands themselves and their feelings, and how well they can make sense of their own experiences. Responses that fell into the Equity category will deal specifically with responses that highlighted issues race and fairness. The category of responses that dealt with participant reflections on how conflict was handled by different groups of students was labeled as Handling Conflict. Lastly, data which reflected to what extent the Restorative or Prayer Circles were impacting student experiences fell under the Impact of Circles category.

In Chapter 5 I will offer the discussion regarding the data which was collected, paying particular attention to any patterns which emerged between categories and what significance those patterns may hold for the overall study. This chapter is organized to reflect the categories and sub-categories which emerged from the analysis of the student interviews. Lastly, Chapter 6 will deal with the conclusion, where the main points of the thesis will be summarized and where the implications which the study has for both practice and policy will be discussed. All accompanying charts, protocols, and IRB forms will be found in the appendices.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Power Dynamics and Agency in Schools

Schools are many things to many people. They can be sites of empowerment, growth, community and self-improvement, but they can also be places of protracted and difficult struggle, often on the part of communities of color (Kaestle, 2011). At their conception, the social construction of race, and other privileges which were structured into the institution of schooling, were a tool for dividing and impoverishing people designated as non-white for the benefit of white men (particularly of the elite classes). As such, communities of color are especially situated to appreciate the value, and advocate for the development of, high-quality, highly accessible education services. It is not only this tradition upon which our modern school system is built, but a systemic reaction against democratic schooling movements (i.e. common schools movement, school desegregation, multiculturalism, funding and transportation reform movements, etc.). In many ways, the schooling system which predominates in the United States has its roots in a history of political reaction by those most invested in the status quo against integrated and equitable educational policies.

With all this rich history, schools often operate as microcosms of larger socio-political contexts, perpetuating the unequal distribution of resources and the stratification of life opportunities along lines of gender, race, class, and other socially constructed identities. Indeed, schools are uniquely situated to reproduce, and grant legitimacy to, social practices and policies. Of particular interest to this study, in the words of R.W. Connell, is how schools operate as "masculinity making devices" (Connell, 1986, p.291). The functioning of these societal dynamics of power can be understood, and primarily experienced, in one-way relationships which are inherently conflictual. Understanding conflict as the social phenomenon wherein

power is decided and enacted provides us with an appropriate and necessary lens through which to view socialized power dynamics.

To understand school climate and how it interacts with student behavior and experiences of conflict, it is essential to understand the power structure within which young people negotiate their agency. Adolescents exist in a particularly unstable and exciting place in terms of this negotiation process, as they are experiencing an intensification of both the drive for agency as well as the consequences of environmental controls over their actions. Understanding this tension is a first step to appreciating the significance of the academic and developmental space which restorative circles can assist students in navigating.

In his work on human development and agency, Albert Bandura (2001) argues that the human development and behavior are not automatic responses to the environment, but rather are a dialectical process where individuals are constantly engaging with their environment and seeking ways to best demonstrate control or mastery over life. In the context of this research, Bandura makes a strong link between this experience of agency and behavioral, social, emotional, and even cognitive development. He argues that agency plays an essential role both on brain development, but also the kinds of life opportunities and environments in which we place ourselves.

Learning environments which nurture student agency are more effective for several reasons, the most significant of which being that, according to Bandura, the human mind is not just reactive, but creative and seeking agency over its own development. However, the predominant educational approach to structuring learning environments still owes much of its functioning to views of people and development which reflect a heavy emphasis placed on social and self-control, individual behavior or character, and productivity.

The work of Paulo Friere (1970) and bell hooks (1994) also challenge educators to situate the work we do within certain, critical questions that reveal the nature of power and how it is distributed amidst a school community. Friere's 'banking model' describes a system where students are treated as un-knowing and teachers as 'expert' and places the responsibility of inserting information into student's minds in the hands of the teacher. This leaves students in a passive role, as opposed to his 'dialectic model', where students and teachers engage one another in thoughtful, critical discussion about the topic at hand in a way that recognizes the wisdom, experience and knowledge of everyone in the room. Hooks (1994) also emphasizes this in her 'critical pedagogy', where teaching is a practice that encourages freedom of thought and reflective action based on new learning and understandings. These themes and their connection to Restorative Justice will be revisited later.

In a historical analysis of the development of schooling in a U.S. context, we find these themes of control and freedom are interconnected with the political struggle waged at the formation of the nation we now call the United States. This was a time of high morals and a strong emphasis, by the newly formed republic's political elites on 'virtue' and an obsession with 'vice'. In his piece, "Iron Cages", Ronald Takaki (2000) argues that this was a time where, in pursuit of a newfound 'liberty', 'men' were expected to restrict themselves through adherence to strict, and publicly recognized 'virtues'.

In an attempt to steer the populace from "effeminate and luxurious appetites" (Takaki, pg. 6), we see the creation of several influential institutions through which "the lovely White race" (Takaki, pg. 8), as Thomas Jefferson called it, and all of the high virtues ascribed to it, could be preserved and its superiority ensured. The creation of 'asylums', the theft of native territory, the founding of 'boarding schools', and the investing of resources in a growing, though

16

exclusive, schooling network all worked in tandem to further this burgeoning goal of instilling 'virtue' in a young nation.

Almost nowhere do we see this more apparent than in the schooling systems. The effort to "destroy primitive aggressions" (Takaki, p.12) was most apparent in boarding schools, but this tendency was found in the structure, curriculum and operation of popular schools as well. I highlight this connection to emphasize that schooling as we know it today owes much of its character to the practices, structures and values that were formational during this time period. Then, and now, schools are utilized as training grounds where children and young people must learn 'character' or 'virtue' as defined by administrators, teachers and other influential adults, in order to be good 'citizens' and play a prosocial role in the economy. It is part of my argument that this essential nature of schooling has not changed fundamentally from the time of the American Revolution, and it is with this continuing emphasis on policing behavior and character as an essential piece of our future as a 'nation' that restorative practice must grapple.

Gender Socialization in Middle Schools

There are many narratives and elements of social capital which are available to young people when attempting to navigate their lives in educational settings. Of particular importance to this study is an understanding of the practices, processes and organizational relationships which, though not necessarily on paper, in reality define many educational opportunities along the lines of gender socialization. R.W. Connell (1982; & 2005a) has argued that gendered relationships have tended to reflect an evolving and yet cohesive social practice which they have labeled as 'hegemonic masculinity.' For Connell, hegemonic masculinity is a description of the "practices which allow men's collective domination of women to continue" (Connell, 2005a). Of particular interest to this study is how practical relationships to images or models of gender

expression are the key to understanding the consequences and outcomes for boys and men. (Connell, 2005b).

It is also important to understand that "hegemonic masculinity" is not predetermined, but always "contestable" through the network of social relationships and social capital (Connell, 2005b). Thus, it is essential, in order to understand how hegemonic masculinity operates, to understand how other factors, such as race and SES effect the power relations in a social or educational setting. Due to racism and the history of white supremacy in the U.S., race and masculinity are often loci for the criminalization of non-white, or non-dominant expressions of gender. It is within this process that this study attempts to locate restorative practices in an educational setting to demonstrate how, and to what extent, they operate in that contestable environment which is gender relations.

The contestation of what expression of gender will be 'accepted' takes place along certain what are often already well-established routes along which power is experienced, distributed and understood. It happens through expressions of violence, perhaps the most extreme, and through the methods through which young people experience discipline and conflict. Importantly, it can be argued that the means of enforcing gender expression, particularly amidst those wishing to be identified as 'boys' or 'men', are often the very same that students encounter in a punitive environment. Stoudt (2006) argues that understanding the ways in which peer groups internalize punitive approaches is essential to perceiving how gender expressions are policed. With Stoudt's perspective in mind, we see that peer to peer disciplining is one strategy among many for signaling and maintaining social status and privileges which a society heavily influenced and geared towards domination-based gender expressions grant on certain kinds of masculinity (Stoudt, 2006).

The intersection between the punitive nature of gender expression enforcement and privilege is acutely felt for those who are racialized. Morris (2005) argues that despite staff intentions of teaching skills they view as pro-social, much of these reinforcements of gender boundaries result in a further enforcement of race, gender and other social inequalities, the result of which is a further sense of alienation from the schooling process. Further, Morris (2005) argues that discipline as it is conceptualized and practiced in many U.S. institutions, including those comprising its educational system, serves to enforce 'desired behaviors' in order to prepare young people for lives of fulfilling the function of the particular economic class into which education plays a part in funneling them. Referencing Collins (1990) concept of a 'matrix of domination', Morris highlights how multiple identities (i.e. race, gender, class, SES) intersect to create a frame through which educators view the degree to which students 'deserve' discipline. It is in this context that restorative practices is emerging, and it is with these power dynamics that educators invested in reform must struggle in order to avoid reproducing them in our 'alternative' forms of handling conflict.

'Traditional' Masculinity, Mental Health and Adjustment

As we see, the boundaries of gender expression and other 'norms' are enforced through peer to peer networks, but also through hierarchical structures. Focusing on gender specifically, it is important to understand the effects which adherence to hegemonic models of gender expression have if our interventions and restorative approaches are to have the desired impact of creating more possibilities for young people and creating a more positive, sustainable school climate.

Pointing to the well-documented need which develops during the period of adolescence for social belonging (Tarrant et al. 2001) and the effects which that has on well-being, Rogers et.

al. (2017) argued that models and boundaries which young people encounter in school environments for gender expression take on a heightened level of significance due to their role as 'gatekeeper' into a world of increased social capital. Going further, they demonstrated how these boundaries on expression play a role in defining social power, and that allying one's self with dominant models of gender expression specifically is a method to obtain a higher social position through projecting invulnerability, toughness and emotional restriction / stoicism.

Two studies examined this dynamic and the effects which it has on well-being and social adjustment, both of which are factors which contribute to conflicts and their resolution. Adding to existing research regarding the negative effects which hegemonic masculine narratives have on mental health (Iwamoto et al. 2010), and academic engagement (Rogers et al. 2015; Santos et al. 2013), Rogers et. al. (2017) documented a significant increase in adherence to dominance related masculine themes for those identifying their biological sex as male, while those identifying as female remained constant during the middle school years. The study also found that increased adherence to these themes of dominance resulted in an increased level of depressive symptoms for all genders, as well as decreased academic engagement.

The second study, Santos et. al. (2015) looked more specifically at the impact which adherence to hegemonic masculine narratives has on a student's ability to adjust to, and enjoy, their academic environment. Similar to Rogers et. al. (2017), Santos et. al. (2015) found boys endorsing dominance related gender expressions more frequently than girls, and that this had a significantly higher levels of school avoidance and lower levels of school enjoyment and participation in academic activities. This, too, was interpreted to be a function of the desire to maintain social status as they come into the understanding of the positive social value assigned to enacting a gender expression that matches with your biological sex.

This study also builds of off a rich network of thinking and research already demonstrating the connections between traditional or hegemonic masculinity and issues of mental / physical health and wellbeing, adjustment to school demands, academic success, and health of relationships (Rogers et. al., 2017, Updegraff et. al., 2015, Blazina et. al., 2007). This study focuses particularly on developing upon the work of Blazina, Pisecco & O'Neil (2005) who undertook to evaluate the effectiveness of the Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents (GRCS-A) which was adopted from the work on GRCS measure for adults (O'Neil et. al., 1986). A significant piece of the GRCS-A scale was the measure of Restricted Emotionality (RE), which has been demonstrated as a significant indicator of social dysfunction and coinciding with other elements of hegemonic masculinity to decrease school outcomes and social well-being (Rogers et. al., 2017, Wadei, 1996). The RE measure from the above study was quantitatively administered, and so was adopted here for qualitative measures.

Gender Socialization and Conflict

To better understand the potential for restorative practices to have positive impacts on how conflict is handled in middle school settings, it is essential to understand how increased exposure to hegemonic, dominance related themes of gender expression is connected to how conflict is handled throughout the social hierarchy of school environments. Due to the nature of hegemonic models of masculinity, and their insistence on dominance and social status, and the ensuing emotional and academic issues which ensue, we are likely to see an increased emphasis on certain modes of handling conflict. Blazina et. al. (2007) introduced an adaptation of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986), the authors of which have argued that restrictive boundaries around gender expression have negative personal

and social consequences for young people due to increased levels of stress, tension and the anti-social modes of handling conflict that ensue.

Blazina et. al. (2007) adopted this scale in at Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents (GRCS-A) with which they documented its relevance to other scales of measuring masculine gender dynamics (Male Role Attitudes Scale (MRAS; Pleck et al., 1993; Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale (AMIRS; Chu et al., 2005). Their results suggest that adherence to hegemonic masculinity norms is an inherently conflicted state, in which the adherent is constantly struggling against norms which are not attainable. While they argue for a diversity of approaches to gender expression to be included into curriculum and educational policy, it is this increased level of tension within individuals that restorative models of conflict must reckon due to their anti-social nature.

This level of tension becomes even more problematic and exacerbated for those who have been targeted with forms of economic, racial or societal oppression. This is an important understanding because, as we've seen, students with identities that are less socially privileged are often perceived by authority figures as more 'deserving' of 'discipline' and all that comes along with it. In Wadei (1996), we see an argument for situating an understanding of Black masculinity outside of a monolithic, white-centric view of gender expression. This complex understanding serves an important backdrop for this study on many levels, not the least of which is providing a space to recognize the increased levels of psychological strain which are likely to be visited upon young Black people, both because of a dual racial consciousness (DuBois, 1903), but a dual gender consciousness (Wadei, 1996) which places increased demands on young people who are responding to the normalized and dominant forms of white masculinity, but also the myriad expectations and demands of their specific communities and cultural practices.

Another important aspect to situating the conflicts which young people come to experience in a school setting is the degree to which gender messaging, and the pressure to enact it (which we've seen can come from both peer groups and institutions) is the social capital which results from an opposition to the school structure which certain expressions of masculinity emphasize for young people. R.W. Connell (1989) developed this line of thinking through analysis of elements of working class culture in New South Wales in the mind 1980's. He focused on the political and class tensions inherent between schools, which often function as, or at least represent, the state, and young people coming from less economically or socially advantaged classes. The more authoritarian the school structure, the more these enactments of masculinity will oppose it as a means to demonstrate itself as 'tougher'. These contests are the ground upon which many student's life opportunities are founded and the (non)resolution of these class / gendered conflicts can determine what kind of academic track young people are placed upon, and what kind of credential they will be able to base their later life opportunities upon (Irvine, J. J.,1990; Houtte, M.V., 2006; Lucas, S. R., & Berends, M., 2002). These tensions, in part, inform the backdrop against which effective, restorative approaches to conflict in schools find their significance.

Indeed, programs and approaches to handling conflict can be a significant part of "doing gender" (Connell, 1996), given that gender is a product of action, behavior and policy, and not a static function of biology (Kimmel, M. S., 2004; Connell, R.W., 1987, Connell R.W., 2005a). Underneath, on a psychological level, these conflicts with school authority can be a means of establishing an understanding of yourself as belonging somewhere within the confines of gender (Martino, 2000). So again, how we approach conflict has vast import for young people's social /

emotional development and understandings of themselves as people and as agents within the politicized conflict which is gender.

Without an awareness of these issues, our responses to conflict can embody and re-constitute some of the very dysfunctional elements of gender expression and political power for which we are designing our interventions. Hamber (2016) documented how, in the transition from active, violent political conflict to periods of 'peacemaking', discussion and shifts around masculinity are often viewed as 'nonessential' due to the ways in which those gendered realities implicate the men who are often active in those political arenas. The same can be said for school environments, whose positions of power tend to be dominated by men (Hoff, D. L., & Mitchell, S. N., 2008). Thus, we must take care in the design and enacting of our conflict programs to ensure that restorative justice is equitable and truly just, and not another means to re-entrench harmful power dynamics that are at the source of much conflict and distrust.

Lastly, it bears recollection that we enter into these dynamics of justice and conflict having inherited a long legacy of thinking on the issue which has tended to essentialize and dichotomize the ethics of 'care' and 'justice' into gendered worlds (Daly, 2001). We must keep our attention to these histories if we are to critically engage with the multitude of ways in which our socialized, gendered expectations of conflict impact how our responses unfold. These histories can, similarly to those of race and racism, factor into the assumptions behind who 'deserves' a restorative approach and who 'doesn't', or who can 'benefit' from it and who 'can't'.

Conflict and Restorative Justice in Schools

Given what we know about the effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies (APA, 2008), it's becoming more and more clear that across the United States that many school communities and institutions are finding restorative approaches as appropriate and meaningful reforms (Anfara et. al., 2015). But restorative justice itself is a broad and often difficult term to define in that it can encompass, in practice, everything from indigenous responses to harm and conflict rooted in ancient community traditions to court mandated alternatives to sending young people to prison. Here, we will briefly define Restorative Justice and define more explicitly the restorative processes being investigated here in this study.

Restorative justice the modern term given to an old and multivalent set of beliefs (Braithwaite, 1999) and practices which regard conflict as a harm done to a community and which requires the community's involvement to heal. While many stake claims as to the extent of its rootedness in indigenous cultures (Daly, 2001), what is clear is that there has been a variety of methods of handling justice and harm over the history of humanity. I find it significant to distinguish what I refer to as 'Restorative Justice' (RJ) as aware and akin to, though not necessarily reflective of, indigenous practices. Much of what we know as RJ is the result of advocacy and reform from the past few decades that has resulted in alternative ways for handling punishment while maintaining the primacy of the state and of western centric values.

These practices range from conferencing to restitution programs (Morrison, 2002), and though they vary widely, they all attempt to address the weaknesses of a solely punitive approach to conflict and justice. Much evidence has demonstrated the benefits of approaching conflict through restorative processes (Strang, et. al., 2007; Anfarra, et. al, 2015), yet the theoretical foundation of this study highlights the emergence of restorative processes which build on this

tradition and body of evidence, while also maintaining a criticism of the methods which RJ has employed which have tended to center the interests and systems of state-based power. The processes highlighted here emphasize the centrality of community participation in the response to conflict and harm (Zehr, 2002), without which, the likelihood of resolution and buy-in into a set of policies and practices decreases.

In all these practices, though, we see a central theme of justice being developed through which the person who has caused harm is engaged in a process whereby they recognize the impacts of their actions, and take appropriate action to rectify those harms and thereby signal their willingness to rejoin the community which they harmed (Van Ness, et. al., 2010). This stands in clear contrast to other understandings of justice which are enshrined both in the US court system, but also in US schooling system, whereby justice is done through the decision of a person or persons whom have been granted legitimate power through access to institutional status. In such punitively structure systems, it is the role of these persons to decide, based on certain evidence, what was done, what rule was violated, who was in the wrong, and what punishment is appropriate.

In the case of school deans and administrators, whom we can hopefully assume have the best interest of children at heart, these punishments are often viewed as necessary steps, or 'lessons', that children need to learn in order to be a successful member of a school community, workplace, or society. Such positions of power are designed as a sort of stand-in for the community, and operating with the trust and goodwill (though not always) of the people they are supposed to serve or represent (including the people harmed by an event), we hope that their decisions are fair and such matters are left in the hands of the 'experts' whose 'job' it is to determine justice.

Restorative approaches to justice differ greatly from the process described here, primarily because of its foundational practices of involving the community, as much as is possible and so as to not create further harm or trauma, in the conflict process. Indeed, the voices and experiences of those who have been involved in, and impacted by, a conflict are prioritized given the privileged nature of their understanding of the event, its impacts, and its potential resolutions. This is of significance because the extent to which schools replicate existing models, through empowering a small group of adult individuals to administer and determine justice, they run the risk of replicating the same harms and inequities of the existing system. In the instances where these individuals represent identities which are privileged in the context of the justice system (white, male, straight, middle-class, etc.) (Lyubansky, M., Shpungin, E., 2015), dangers exist for personal bias and 'blindspots' to contribute to unequal outcomes for students.

Given the developments in policy and practice which have situated the US education system as a sort of testing grounds for a variety of social, educational and political tensions, it is little wonder that RJ has made its way into the world of education. The conflictual nature of the imbalance of power present in the traditional forms of teacher-student, or adult-child, relationships (Friere, 1970), are expressed most obviously in the form of zero-tolerance policies. RJ entered onto the scene as a tool to address the harm caused by these policies, and schools the world over have implemented RJ programs (Evans, et. al., 2010) in order to create a stronger, more resilient climate for learning and growth. Unfortunately, RJ must contend with the same policies and same pre-existing power dynamics which zero-tolerance operated within and reinforced, particularly in the United States context where zero-tolerance policies have their root and are the most culturally prevalent. The question remains, though; how to design RJ programs in ways that address harms, build accountability, and offer opportunities for growth and change

in relationships, especially, in the case of gender and race, when pre-existing power dynamics exist which have long histories of creating harm and mistrust? (Davis et. al., 2015).

Criticism has surfaced regarding the extent to which it is consistent with RJ principles to simply 'repair' relationships, when the harm that was caused is supported by a context of inequity and marginalization (Zehr, 2011). This challenge requires that we recognize the historical roots of much of the conflict which we encounter in our communities and our schools (Barter, 2012; Davis et. al., 2015) and utilize that understanding as a guide for how we examine and respond to conflicts. As Gonzales (2012) showed in their examination of RJ practices in schools and the effects which they had on keeping kids in schools and interrupting the School to Prison Pipeline (STPP), despite youth crime having been consistently decreasing for the past two decades, the trend in zero-tolerance policies towards everything from minor disruptions to major infractions has grown (Verdugo, 2002). It is possible that this is connected to the tendency of certain educational policies to reflect the political and social tensions of society rather than prioritizing what children actually need to learn (Shuford, 2008).

As will be discussed more in depth, these histories of unbalanced uses and distributions of power, and the ways in which those arrangements are reflected in how schools as institutions are structured, can also be seen in the degree to which gatekeeping (Lyubansky et. al., 2015) plays a role in the development of restorative program. Namely, who has the power to determine who has legitimate access to the restorative options available at the school. This phenomenon, alongside what many scholars refer to as "school pushout" (Gonzalez, 2012), in which those most vulnerable to discipline and policing systems (i.e. students of low SES, students of color, students outside the gender binary, students of uncertain immigration status, etc.) result in students being 'pushed out' of learning spaces through spoken and unspoken rules and

regulations which disadvantage certain forms of dress, speech, self-expression, and intelligence (Morris, 2005) along predominantly racial lines. It is with this dynamic, and the ways in which it makes real the power arrangements which are at the heart of much of dominant forms of masculinity, that restorative programs must engage in order to affect shifts in the quality of education made available to young people today.

Table 1

School Demographics

	PS-A	CS-B	CS-C
Race	36.7% White 36.3% Black 13.4% Hispanic 7.9% Multi-Racial 4.6% Asian American .1% American Indian .1% Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	41% White 52% Black .5% Asian American 1% Native American 5.4% Multiracial	64.3% White 23.4% Black .4% Hispanic 8.1% Asian American 3.7% Multi-Racial
Gender	52% Male 42% Female	48.6% Male 51.4% Female	52.8% Male 47.2% Female
SES	71% Low Income 6.4% Limited English 19% IEP 2.1% Homeless	42% Free or Reduced Lunch	50% Free or Reduced Lunch
Student Population	n=956	n=183	n=269

School Information

Data collection took place in three different school settings, one of which (Public School A, or PS-A) is located in a medium-sized city in the Midwest. The other two, Catholic Schools B & C (or CS-B. and CS-C., respectively), are in a larger, metropolitan city in the Midwest. PS-A.'s 21 student participants came from a student body of 956 students, which consist of, according to data provided by the school's website, 36.7% white, 36.3% Black, 13.4% Hispanic, 4.6% Asian, .1% Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander, .1% American Indian, and 7.9% Multi-racial students. In

terms of measures of SES, PS-A has documented; 71% low income, 6.4% limited English proficiency, 19% IEP, and 2.1% homeless. PS-A was also in its second year of a Restorative Circles program development in which, along with other schools in the district, concerted effort was being made to address instances of school violence and to reduce instances of suspension and expulsion.

Similarly, CS-B. (*n=183*) and CS-C. (*n=269*) consisted of 452 students total. CS-B.'s student body was comprised of 52% (*n=95*) Black, .5% (n=1) Asian, 1% (*n=2*) Native American, 41% (*n=75*) White, and 5.4% (*n=10*) Multiracial; with 48.6% (*n=89*) of students identifying as Male and 51.3% (*n=94*) identifying as Female. The number of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch was 42% (*n=77*) of the student body. In the case of CS-C, students identified as .37% (*n=1*) Hispanic, 23.4% (*n=63*) Black, 8.1% (*n=22*) Asian, 64.3% (*n=173*) White, and 3.7% (*n=10*) Multi Racial. Gender ratios of CS-C consisted of 52.8% (*n=142*) identifying as Male, 47.2% (*n=127*) as Female, with the whole district qualifying for 50% free or reduced lunch. Both Catholic Schools were part of a school district which recently prioritized the expansion of a Prayer Circle program geared towards creating a school climate of conflict resolution that centered restorative approaches based in faith. CS-B had received a year of training and program assistance from the district, whereas CS-C had yet to be included in such resources. In both CS-A & CS-B, participants were coming from a Kindergarten through 8th grade learning environment.

PS-A is located in a medium-sized, Midwestern urban area and is the only public middle school option available in the city. This contributes to the diverse demographics of students at the school in that it is the only option for public middle school for city residents. The campus is connected with the High School as well, and both are centrally located and accessible to all city families. PS-A was selected primarily because of its administration's commitment to restorative

practices, it's diverse racial and socioeconomic demographics, and its convenient location for the researchers involve with this study.

CS-B & CS-C are both private, Catholic schools located in a large, metropolitan city in the Midwest. Both schools were made accessible to us by administrators interested in evaluating prospects for Virtue Based Restorative Discipline (VBRD) programs in their school district. Both schools demonstrated an interest in these restorative programs, but only CS-B had begun implementing VBRD practices at the time this study was conducted. CS-C served as a control in that it had not yet implemented VBRD practices, though its administration intended to, while also sharing with its counterpart very similar dynamics in terms of handling discipline and punishment. Despite being located in geographically dissimilar parts of the metropolitan area; the schools were selected additionally for their similarities in terms of the demographics of their student body.

Participants

Participants for this study included middle school aged students (n=46), all of which were members of the 6th, 7th or 8th grade class. Staff (n=9) members were all instructors of the middle school grades. Students at PS-A (n=21) were all involved in a "Leadership Advisory" team which met once a week over the period of a semester as a pilot program designed to increase student participation in, and knowledge of, Restorative Circles (RC). Students and staff from CS-B (n=16) were being introduced to VBRD through school wide implementation under the guidance of a regional, school climate coordinator. Lastly, students and staff from CS-C (n=12) were only being recently introduced to VBRD as an alternative to punitive practices due to a change in school administrative leadership, and were not part of the district-wide treatment group at the time of this study. Both Catholic schools were the only schools in which staff participated in interviews.

The selection of participants for the study was primarily done with the assistance of teachers, administrators and staff of the respective school districts. In the case of PS-A, students were selected based on their participation in the Student Leadership team, which was the group given the most hands on training and exposure to Restorative Circles. Students became active with the Leadership team through a process of nomination by teachers or staff and the subsequent completion of an application. Students were nominated either because of their high academic scores or their high rates of disciplinary infractions. In the case of CS-B and CS-C, local administration and teachers assisted in the selection of four student participants from each grade represented in the schools. The process of selection of these students followed guidelines established by the school administrator, and included two students who were selected randomly as well as two students who had frequent instances of disciplinary infractions as determined by teaching staff. The selection of teaching staff from CS-B and CS-C was also done by the local administrator through an email which was sent to the whole school district asking for volunteer staff members to participate in the interviews in order to help improve their respective schools' disciplinary programs.

Table 2: Participant Demographics	PS-A Students	CS-B & CS-C Students	CS-B & CS-C Staff
Participants	N=21	N=19	N=9
Gender	19% Male 81% Female	37% Male 63% Female	11% Male 88% Female
Race	47.6% African American / Black 38.1% Caucasian / White 4.8% Indian American 9.5% Multi-Racial	37% African American 63% White	100% White

The gender break-down of student participants from PS-A included 19% (n=4) of students identifying as male / boy, while 81% (n=17) of students identified as female / girl. In both Catholic schools, 37% (n=7) of student participants identified as male / boy, and 63% (n=12) of participants identified as female / girl. Staff from both Catholic schools identified as 88% (n=8) female and 11% (*n*=1) male, all of whom identified as white. In the case of PS-A, with several students identifying outside the gender binary, no such students participated in this study, and/or, felt comfortable sharing such information in the setting in which they were asked to identify their gender. It must be said that this is an estimation based on anecdotal evidence from participants, and that no such data regarding gender fluidity was available from any of the schools for either students or staff.

Participants from PS-A identified their race as; 47.7% (*n*=10) African-American / Black, White / Caucasian, 38.1% (*n*=8) Asian-American, 4.8% (*n*=1) Indian-American, and 9.5% (*n*=2) Multi-racial. Students from both Catholic Schools identified themselves as the following; 37% (*n*=7) African-American / Black, and 63% (*n*=12) White / Caucasian. All school staff participants, being entirely from Catholic Schools B and C (*n*=9), identified as white.

Program Information

In response to disproportionately high levels of student suspensions, expulsions, and other instances of punitive contact with the school system, especially for marginalize youth, PS-A with the help of a local non-profit, began implementing a restorative circle program in which all staff and administrators would be trained. In its second year of implementation, the school has the support of district administrators, as well as a hired staff person whose role it is to serve as a point of contact for student concerns and requests / referrals for conflict circles. All staff have received multiple professional development opportunities led by local volunteer facilitators whose role it

34

was to lead staff into deeper understanding and mastery of conflict resolution and communication skills.

In instances of conflict, students or staff can request a circle process, which often begins with school staff implementing a 'pre-circle' in which those involved in a conflict or rule violation are contacted given an opportunity to discuss the event and their feelings about it, while also being given an opportunity to consent to participate. From there, a circle will take place in which participants take turns speaking and receiving the reflective listening of other participants until they feel heard. This process is influenced and guided by a three step process of inquiry; 1) a circle participant is given the chance to respond to a version of the question "What do you want known, and by whom, about how you are now in relation to the event?", 2) the participant identifies someone in the circle to whom the facilitator will ask a version of the question "what did you hear them say?", 3) the participant has an opportunity to confirm or to clarify in response to a version of "is that right?" until they feel heard, at which point another participant begins the same process. This process continues until participants begin to identify action steps, or as long as time allows. It is important to note that a circle is not considered complete until action steps are achieved successfully. Due to conflicts with school structures, however, circles frequently are ended by necessity of time rather than a resolution in conflict. A follow up circle is often involved in which participants are invited to reflect on their actions steps and how effective they have been in addressing the conflict. The process takes place in the office of the lead facilitator on staff, and if necessary, can be assisted by implementing community resources at the request of staff and / or students.

Coinciding with this approach has been the implementation of a leadership team focused on practicing and learning more about conflict resolution skills. The goal of this program was to

increase student involvement and ownership of the restorative circle process through hands-on experience with facilitation and circle processes. This team of students met for a semester in the spring of the 2016-17 school year, during which time they developed their own skills for handling conflicts and received support for any conflicts in which they may be involved. Many staff have also implemented a variety of circle processes into their morning advisory period as a team-building exercises to create familiarity with the circle processes among the student body. This has developed into a year-long course on restorative circles which will be offered to students with disproportionally high rates of contact with discipline systems during the 2017-18 school year.

Because the restorative justice movement is still relatively young (especially in the United States), it is important to recognize that PS-A's Restorative Circle program (and the practice of Restorative Circles as a community-based approach to justice coming out of the work of Dominic Barter in Brazil in the 1990's) is not a fixed model that can be taken from one context to another but rather "a series of system and practice-developing questions" that have to be engaged by the local system (D. Barter, personal communication, April 16th, 2018). More specifically, to produce the most restorative outcomes possible, communities using this type of approach are encouraged to address five fundamental preconditions: 1) Identify and engage sources of power within the community, both formal and informal, 2) Identify a space where the practice will be held, considering both participant comfort and any symbolic significance the space may have for participants, 3) Develop human resources necessary to implement the practice, 4) Ensure basic information on the system is widely available to the community, and 5) Develop a means to initiate the restorative practice that is available to all, specifically to those experiencing the conflict (Barter, 2011).

Thus, the Restorative Circle process recommends that a) the ways to address harm are organized by, and for, the community in which the harm took place (Lyubansky, 2017), b) be decentralized in its implementation and free of any elements of 'gate-keeping,' (Shpungin & Lyubansky, 2015), and c) be democratically organized to the extent that community members involved represent themselves, and not the roles which they play in society. Because of the distinct way in which RC (and some other restorative practices) challenges hierarchical power dynamics, there are few examples of a fully realized Restorative Circle system but an increasing number of schools, including PS-A, are in an active process of exploring the five preconditions and developing an alternative justice system inside the building.

CS-B & C's prayer circle program is supported on a district wide level through the work of a full-time staff member whose role it is to manage and support the sustainable development of restorative programs in the district. In the case of CS-B., the 2016-17 school year is a year of transition from a mostly punitive approach to discipline, a process being supported in large part by the hiring of a new principal who had been trained in the specific restorative practices developed on a district level. In CS-B., students can request a circle, which most often takes place in the office of the principal. The circle typically involves prayer, reflection on the event, dialogue about virtues which could help resolve the conflict, and opportunities for those involved to hear each other's perspective. This process is supported by the implementation of 'prayer circles' which take place in individual classrooms at the teacher's discretion and are designed to build familiarity with the circle process.

CS-C was included in the study as a comparison school that has yet to implement the VBRD process on a school wide level. However, with the support of some staff who have been familiarized with the VBRD process, students can request a circle in which a process similar to

the one described for CS-B takes place. Again, CS-C has yet to receive the level of training that CS-B has had, and thus has seen much less implementation from staff and much less familiarity among students at the time of these interviews.

Procedure

Interviews were obtained from students of PS-A in the format of student focus groups (range 2-9 in size) at the end of the 2016-17 school year. Interviews were conducted over the period of an entire day as the conclusion to a semester long leadership program for which both researchers conducting survey groups had been volunteers. The groups were structured with two interviewers tracking student responses to prompts which had been prepared beforehand. In the instances where facilitation was not necessary to elicit meaningful responses from participants, students were permitted cross-talk with one another to build off each other's responses. Interviews were conducted in an area of the school made available for academic coaching activities.

Interviews from CS-B & C were obtained over a two-week period in the spring of the 2016-17 school year. Students and staff from both schools had varying levels of knowledge of Restorative Practices, though all had some form of contact either through classroom circles or conflict resolution processes. Interviews took place in available classroom space provided by the schools.

The authors of this study were contacted by both school districts and contracted to assist in the implementation of evaluative procedures to better understand the impact and effectiveness of each school's restorative practices. Survey data and qualitative interview data were obtained, though this study focuses exclusively on student and staff feedback through interviews. Students who participated in focus groups from PS-A were provided with a verbal consent process at the

beginning of the interviews. The rationale for this being: 1) The evaluations were initiated by PS-A administrators, 2) evaluations were a familiar part of PS-A's approach to school climate, this being the second year of PS-A's Restorative Circles program, 3) there were no foreseeable dangers or harms in participation, students were interviewed as a conclusion to their semester long involvement in a school sponsored leadership program, and 4) school officials and district administrators approved and sponsored the evaluations.

Similarly, the authors of this study were contacted by the school district in which Catholic School's B & C were located to evaluate its Restorative Program's effectiveness in shifting and improving school climate and student / staff experiences. In this case, four students were selected from each class, with an average class size of 16 for CS-B and 18 for CS-C. Two of the four participants were selected randomly, and two were selected based on high contact with the school's discipline system. Upon return of their parental consent forms to the school, students were permitted to participate in interviews. Students were provided a second opportunity to read and sign the assent form prior to the interview, with all students choosing to continue participation. This process was replicated for staff, though not all staff were able to complete the full interview due to time constraints.

The voluntary and confidential nature of the interview process was made clear to all participants, and, as such, non-participation of any kind (either skipping questions or leaving the interview entirely at any time) would not incur any negative consequences, nor would be reported to any school staff or administrators. It was also made clear at the outset of every interview that these structures were in place to encourage honesty in student and staff feedback so the programs could be improved where necessary. Students in all schools received a small gift (i.e. pencils, wrist

bands, chips) for their participation, whereas staff received no form of remuneration or gift for their time.

All interviews were conducted by one graduate and two undergraduate students from the Psychology department, and one graduate student from the Education Policy department of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Focus group interviews taking place at PS-A. lasted an average of 33.32 minutes (range of 20-48 minutes) and took place in a coaching area provided by the school. One on one staff and student interviews which took place at Catholic schools B & C lasted and average of 24.07 minutes (range of 7-56 minutes), taking place in a classroom space provided by the school. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the interviewer at a later date. Interviews were conducted until all students and staff who indicated willingness to participate had been included. Two staff and four students did not assent to having their interviews recorded, and in those cases, hand notes were taken. No identifying information was recorded at the outset of the interviews, and any names were omitted in the transcription process in the instances in which they arose during interviews.

Interview Protocols

Data for this study was sourced from interviews conducted with both students and staff from the three participating schools. Participants were asked questions from a protocol developed to ascertain their understanding of, experience with, and feedback about their school's restorative programs (see appendix for full protocol). In the instances where participant comments touched on topics not included in the protocol, prompts like "Tell me more about that…" or "Can you speak more about that?" were offered.

The interview process consisted of questions geared towards measuring three predominant themes: 1) understanding and perspective on the schools approach to handling / solving conflict (e.g. "What would you tell someone who doesn't go to / work at this school about how your school handles conflict?"), 2) responses to the specific restorative program being utilized at their respective school as it relates to their relationships with students and staff (e.g. "Can you think of a recent conflict between a student and teacher? What happened? How did it work out?), 3) participant perspectives on dynamics of power which may have been affecting the quality of the restorative program in question (e.g. "Are there groups of people who are not participating in your school's restorative program that you think should be?"), and lastly, 4) Restrictive emotionality and gendered dynamics which may be impacting participation in restorative programs (e.g. "Are there different ways of handling conflict for boys and girls?"). For the sake of conciseness, and to meet the needs of participants operating in the constraints of a busy school schedule, our protocol focused on questioning which highlights restrictive emotionality, power dynamics, and the role they might play in students' experiences of restorative programs.

Restrictive Emotionality

This study's RE protocol questions (see full protocol referenced in the appendix) focus on a participant's level of comfort sharing emotion with others (e.g. "How is it for you to share your feelings with others?"), their ability to understand their own emotional experience (e.g. "How is it for you to understand what you're feeling?"), and their capability to identify an appropriate cause for their feelings (e.g. "What causes your feelings?"). This measure was highlighted both due to its applicability to all gender expressions (Rogers et. al., 2017), as well as for its inherent connection to restorative practices, rooted partially in indigenous (Mbambo & Skelton, 2003; Strang, 2001) modalities of expressing difficult feelings as a central tenant to resolving conflict

and restoring balance to relationships, which inform and inspire significantly the work of Non-violent Communication (NVC) (Rosenberg, 2003). The RE measure is significant to the extent that it allows this study to make claims regarding the effectiveness of restorative practices to effect gender development, or how narratives and practices of gender interact with students experiences, at the cross-roads between restricted emotionality and hegemonic masculinity / patriarchy, in ways that create more possibility for understanding, resolution and fulfillment of human needs.

Power Dynamics

Another measure significant to the current study is to what extent are restorative practices being impacted by existing power dynamics (gender, race, SES, hierarchy, etc.) within school communities. As Lyubansky & Shpungin (2015) demonstrated, pre-existing power dynamics can impact the effectiveness of restorative justice programs, and inadvertently re-create hurtful inequalities which are often at the root of the events and conflicts which restorative approaches are trying to address. As such, we developed protocol questions to identify participants' experiences of power dynamics to better understand the limitations being placed on restorative outcomes. For example, we gauged how frequently instances of 'gatekeeping' (e.g. "Have requests for circles ever been denied? Do you know why?") were occurring, which Lyubansky and Shpungin (2015) identify as a central way in which restorative programs come into conflict with pre-existing punitive responses, which are more dependent on staff determining what rule or policy was violated and who was deserving of punishment.

Analysis

Grounded theory methodology (GTM) (Charmaz, 2006) was the main analytical tool utilized to process and make sense of participant interviews. In GTM, the questions which structure the code, and are used in the sorting of interview data, are generated from the interviews themselves, rather than from a pre-conceived notion being placed upon the data. As such, a theory emerges which reflects the specific contexts being analyzed here. This method was chosen because of its connections to restorative justice practices and their emphasis on deep listening as a foundation of understanding and change (Ortega, 2104).

All interviews were coded after transcription, with each participant being assigned a number. All interviews were checked against their original recordings for accuracy, with any identifying information that may have been offered by participants being omitted. Students from PS-A (n=21) who participated in focus group interviews were separated into similar demographic constituents (e.g. race, gender, grade) for the purposes of evaluation, which ended in a total of 46 separate word documents for analysis.

The beginning step for the thematic analysis was the initial coding phase in which recurrent themes were developed through analysis and observation of the interviews. This was accomplished first by searching the interview data for common words and phrases (e.g. conflict, fight, teacher, etc.), and then utilizing what emerges as a foundation for a secondary step consisted of a interviews for the purposes of establishing a codebook of predominant themes which had so far emerged. This codebook consisted of 28 codes focused specifically on demographic information in order to link each interview to the appropriate identity categories (e.g., race, grade, gender, role at school, frequency of exposure to circles, method of interview and type of circle process used at your school). It also included 9 (e.g. Experience of race, Are circles working at your school? When there is conflict, are students treated equally? etc.) over-arching categories which emerged from

the GTM approach, which were then narrowed into 57 sub-categories to more accurately organize participant responses. In the instance where a participant response did not fit accurately into an existing category, a new category was created in the codebook to better represent the meaning and the voice of the interviewee.

Participant responses were then organized into these 63 coded responses in a third, more in-depth re-reading of each interview. Interview data were copied into the categories which most accurately accounted for their meaning and which summarized their message. All data was coded by a single researcher, and thus, was not consensually processed. This output was then the foundation for defining the data and provided the starting point for the following discussion and conclusions.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study is a part of a larger evaluation examining the effects of restorative programs on school climate and on student / staff experiences. In this study, generalizations regarding the effectiveness of these programs are foregone (though this study contributes to a potentially broader understanding of the evaluation process) in order to focus on the relationship between gender expression, it's development, and participant's experiences of restorative programs. From this focus on gender emerged four overarching themes (Self Awareness, Equity, Gendered Experiences, and Outcomes) which emerged during the selective coding process. Within these overarching categories, there is a continuing focus on nine subcategories (listed in Table 2) which emerged in the secondary, axial coding phase.

Table 3

Categories and Sub-categories

Self-Awareness	Equity	Handling Conflict	Impact of Circles
Understanding Feelings	Experiences of Race	Gendered Differences	Differential Impact
Communicating Feelings	Fair Treatment in Conflict	Individual Differences	Treatment by Staff/Teachers
Perspective Taking			

Each category of results, and the following sub categories, are supported with quotes from participants to better illustrate the narrative and to help illuminate potential, however itinerant, conclusions that could be drawn. Some highlight a necessity for further action, reforms, and shifts in resources, while others reflect appraisals of the restorative programs as students / staff experienced them. Some quotes accurately summarize more than one category or theme, and in those cases, the nature of their inter-relatedness is discussed. Each quote is de-identified, but

attributed to basic demographic information consisting of gender, grade, race, school, and role at school.

Self-Awareness

The first category which emerged was the relationship between student's / staff levels of self-awareness, and ability to take others' perspective, in the context of their willingness to, and comfort level with, understanding and expressing their feelings to others. Secondly, the ability to accurately identify, and attribute meaning to, the causes of their feelings, emerged as a meaningful category. All of these categories point back to the adaptation of the Restrictive Emotionality (Blazina, et. al, 2005) scale and its role in maintaining and reinforcing gendered power dynamics through a normalization of aggression, achieved through a breaking down of familiarity with, and the acceptability of, sharing and receiving emotional experiences. Three sub themes emerged in the analysis of participant responses regarding self-awareness; understanding feelings, communicating feelings, and perspective taking.

Understanding feelings. In response to prompts, participants discussed and evaluated their own ability to accurately label and attribute the cause of their own emotional experiences. For some, this understanding came relatively easily. Those who reported difficulty in understanding feelings were significantly more likely to also report not having a choice about whether to do circles (r=.56, p=.000) as well as a preference of avoiding an awareness of their feelings (r=.37, p=.02).

> *I would say I'm a very well-rounded individual. I know my history. I know myself. My mom always instilled that in me, so I can always understand what I'm feeling. I can verbally express it to you. I don't have a problem with it. When I'm trying to understand what I'm feeling, I can do that. I don't have a problem with that*. -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

*It's actually not that difficult because… I know a lot of people in the school and they know me as well as I know them. Since they know me, I don't have to be someone different, or be someone else. So, to me, to understand myself is to be this girl who doesn't want to talk to nobody. It's not like I get in trouble or anything, but I'm just more okay with myself. If people make fun of me, it's just a comment and I don't let it affect me. -6*th *Grade student, African American, Female, CS-C*

School staff reported similar experiences when speaking about the importance of understanding feelings in the prayer circle process.

Oh my gosh, it's critical because if I don't have an understanding of when I'm sad angry or happy or why then I can't share that solution with the kids. Before this [prayer circle], I didn't feel I had the emotional maturity to give away something I didn't have. –Teacher, White, Female, CS-B

Participants at all schools spoke to the experience they have had, both in circles and out, with attributing causes to their emotional state. While adults tended to reflect more comfort with this identification process, student perspectives have much to add to a clearer understanding of the kinds of impacts restorative programs are having on creating a school climate where emotional intelligence is being developed as one element of addressing conflict. Responses fell into four categories; feelings being caused by others' actions, past experiences, personal / health issues, or social comparison / competition.

Reflecting on the nature of their emotional life, participants revealed several levels of nuanced understanding as to how past experiences contribute to emotional state, everything from understandings of historical harms to personal frustrations and let downs. This category is of particular interest because it represents a significant barrier for the effectiveness of restorative practices; namely, when not addressing past harms, they may be viewed with skepticism or hostility by those who have been harmed by the institution attempting to use them.

I think it's me overthinking things, or something that happened that I automatically know. Or, from past experiences seeing other people go through the same thing or by other things that have happened to me in the past. 8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

I think the fact that I know a lot is what causes my feelings. I know my history. That really sparks my feelings. It there's kids in class who don't get it, you're black you see, but you don't get it because you don't know yourself you know what I mean? I don't know if they don't know their self, but they don't know their history. So, they're not understanding what I'm trying to say. If I didn't know anything, I just be like, "oh it's my fault." -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

I've been frustrated in the past, and I thought if I can speak up and be heard…It's frustrating sometimes when you want things to go your way and you push for it... For me if I'm going to get emotionally frustrated it's about fairness. And being heard. -Teacher, White, Female, CS-B

This theme of attributing the cause of feelings to past experiences held true with many students from the public school setting as well.

I don't mean it in a mean way, but one of the main reasons I don't tell people is that I see people as creatures that hurt other people. Because I've been backstabbed before, not to get into that. So, I don't really like people. Because, people hurt people, in general. So, I trust myself more than anyone, because of past experiences. -8th Grade Student, Indian American, Female, PS-A

Some participants shared that the cause of their emotional ups and downs was an intensely personal and internal experience. Though there is a demonstrable connection between a willingness to be self-reflective and experiencing higher levels of benefit from restorative approaches to conflict, some responses also indicated students' experiences with emotional dysregulation, allowing them to affect their levels of self-efficacy and esteem.

Also, something to add for me was like, my emotions come up from like built up stress and problems. It's very rare I would share what I'm feeling, even with my best friend. If I actually say something around you, I'm being pushed to my limit and there something that's really going on. It might go bad. -6th Grade Student, Multiracial, Female, PS-A

Well, there are definite reasons. I do have some mental illnesses… So, I'm not always the same as others. I try to do my best and I'm on medication. I also have insomnia, so I don't sleep very much. My feelings are really, really affected from those things. I wish I wasn't this way. I wish I could have it trouble-free and I could have more control of things. Usually I fight with my brothers when they're not doing what I say or not listening

to me. Sometimes I'll accidentally end up hurting them. It doesn't happen too often nowadays because we've tried to stop. -6th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-C

A particularly popular response category located the cause of feelings in the choices that others make, perhaps indicating a tendency to externalize the cause of feelings. Obvious references to actual, or threat of, physical harm or contact were indicated as causes of negative emotions, but also too were comments and rumors spread among the student population. Witnessing how students treat other students was also mentioned as a common cause.

> *Teachers, they say the same thing, all of them. "Talk it out. If talking doesn't work, walk away. If walking away doesn't work, leave it alone." But some people don't want to leave it alone. Like me, I will leave it alone and they'll come at me in the wrong way. Because if you offend me in the wrong way I'm going to get really angry and really bad.* – 6th Grade, Multiracial, Female, PS-A

> *Some people don't think about my needs or how I feel when we do the conflict circles. I used to get in a lot of fights, and I didn't think about other people's needs a lot. But they don't think about my needs very much. People in our family in our past have not thought about our needs. People are trying to fight me and they don't think about my needs, and they always just think about what you did. But, maybe you did it because you are under a lot of pressure, or even peer pressure.* – 7th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

> *Well, what causes them is the people at school when they say something to someone or to me. Most the time I hear people making fun of other people. Like, they smell bad, or they sing better [than you], or you dance bad. And I feel like well, you guys are really rude. Sometimes, friends take their anger out with other people on me.* -6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-C

> *I think people's past cause their feelings, like the way they've been treated. That's true for me too.* -8th Grade Student, White, Male, Catholic School B

This theme of fear of being judged represents an important insight into a central tenet of conflict and tension in middle school environments. Participants identified themes of the anxiety produced by fear of what peers may think or judge about a situation, a behavior, or a mistake.

> *I think some of it can be little stuff, like if you're upset over a math grade and somebody says, "don't worry I got a 70 as well." That might upset you because, even if somebody*

*doesn't know, they might hurt your feelings if you got a lower grade. So, it could be the things people think or do. You could be the person who got the higher grade or the lower grade and you could feel good or bad about yourself. -7*th *Grade Student, White, Female, CS-B*

And while many respondents reflected on the social pressure that often drives conflict, only students from the public-school system explicitly named issues of 'social dominance' or power over peers.

*Usually, when it comes to conflicts that I have, they're like five seconds long. They're not really even conflicts, they're just stupid arguments that are for fun. They're not even really conflicts, they're just fighting because it's fun and we're bored. I feel like sometimes people are arguing because they want social dominance and they think it'll give them a higher status because they won the argument. -6*th *Grade Student, White, Male, PS-A*

Communicating feelings. Students and teachers also discussed the dynamics involved with speaking to others about their emotional experiences, including evaluating whether those skills of self-reflection and honest sharing felt comfortable or uncomfortable to them. Interviews suggested a general level of discomfort with honest sharing of emotion, particularly among student respondents. For students in particular, the dynamic of not being sure if they can trust their peers emerged frequently. In the context of circles as a part of a restorative system, this trust is essential and was clearly identified as a barrier for repairing the harms caused by conflict.

Those who indicated that sharing their feelings was comfortable for them did so in three main ways. It was comfortable because they understood their own feelings well, because they trusted their peers and adults, or because the extremes in their emotional state was easily recognizable and familiar.

It's easy for me because I know most of my feelings. I trust myself. So, I don't go straight to the principal anymore. I'd take the person and step aside with the teacher, or me and

50

them alone, and talk about my problems. I know my friends do that too. They just step aside with the person and share their feelings, and talk with them, and get over it or work through it. And then we get along again. I think it's easier for some people because some people are sure about their feelings. If they don't know what they think, then they don't really say anything. – 7th Grade Student, White, Female, CS-B

Interestingly, language around communication shifts frequently along gender lines, with students identifying as male often speaking about feelings with more active language, such as "extremely mad", "extremely okay", or "battle." Indeed, being male was significantly associated with respondents reporting a preference of avoiding communicating about feelings altogether ($r=.35$, $p=.031$).

I understand my feelings pretty well. I know if I'm mad, I feel like yelling, but I know I won't. But, I know when I get mad, I know I'm about to get extremely mad at this person because they're not doing this a certain way, or they're breaking rules and stuff. I know when I'm happy with something, because I'm extremely okay with it. My friends say that "you are the world's angriest person and the world's chillest person." When I get mad, I try to really get out of being mad as soon as possible. I know the battle I have if I stay in that mode. – 7th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

Participants indicate a range of experiences with trusting peers and adults with information regarding their emotional experiences. While most feedback that was categorized here points towards a positive sense of trust, some responses demonstrate a movement away from trusting others and the effects that has on their emotional experience. Respondents who reported a higher likelihood to trust adults were also significantly more likely to believe that gender differences depended more on the individual than on their gender ($r=.40$, $p=.01$). The relationship between being White / Caucasian and trusting school staff approached statistical significance ($r=.31$, $p=.053$).

I talk to my mom and dad a lot about stuff that goes on at school. We have a school counselor here, and I see her, and we talk about stuff that goes on. -7th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-C

My mom usually tells me the best thing is to talk it out. We usually do a circle type thing and get into an understanding about the situation with them like get it from both points of view. Sometimes, you only get it from one point of view and you don't understand the other person. -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

Well, I don't usually do it. I feel like I don't do it because the only people I do talk about my feelings with is my dad or mom. I don't feel comfortable talking to my friends about my feelings, unless it's in a joking way, or like "dang it why did it happen that way?" That's the only reason I'll talk with my feelings, if it's brief things like, "dang it I'm really mad, please stop doing that." I don't want to go on and on and on. I just talk to my friends like briefly like, "oh, this happened, I'm sad, it's done. Let's not talk about it anymore." -7th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

It's really pretty easy. Sometimes, I trust the teachers I've known for a long time. I've got to know the principal, and I feel like I can trust [them] a lot more than other teachers, so sometimes I go straight to [them], which can be good or bad. But usually I try to talk to [them] because they use Prayer Circles all the time to solve a problem. If I talk to [them], we can get things figured out, but with teachers sometimes they just give you an infraction. Sometimes [the principal will] talk it out with you instead of giving you an infraction and let you talk it out with the person about how you're feeling and how you want them to feel. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

Participants also reflected on the specific experience of trust among friends and peers in contrast to adults. Participants from CS-B & C were significantly less likely to mention trusting their friends as an important strategy for handling conflict ($r=-.45$, $p=.004$). In terms of racial identification, White / Caucasian participants were the least likely to report trusting their friends as a strategy for handling conflict, being significantly negatively correlated ($r=-.34$, $p=.03$).

I can talk with my friends, because they know. My friends that are boys I just have to say, "oh I'm not doing this, you go handle it because they're more tougher than me. If you want handle it, you can handle it, because I don't want to." They can see my feelings in my face, because I get hyper really easily. When I'm sad, they're like "what's wrong?" I put my head down and I just don't talk at all. I just have complete silence. – 6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-C

It's not that hard with my friends, it's kind of the same way. I can talk to a few of my friends, because I trust them and I can talk to them about anything. I can't talk to all them, because I don't trust them based on past fallouts of stuff like that. But there are some people I could talk to pretty much about anything. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

Some teachers tell you to open up to someone like a teacher or open up to your parents. Just because you and your best friends are arguing and you open up to a teacher, they probably won't fully understand the problem, because they're not in the problem. Sometimes, it's best if we solve it by yourself with the other people. -6th Grade Student, Multiracial, Female, PS-A

Friends will get you into things that are good and not try to pump your head up and make you think you're big and bad. You need friends who can help you stay out of it and not do something stupid. That happened to me yesterday. I almost did something stupid and my friends talked me out of it. And that helped me a lot. Because if I had did it, I would most likely be suspended. Those friends that are cool, you can always count on them. -7th Grade Student, African American, Male, PS-A

Responses in the next theme fell into several categories, all of which could be understood as avoiding situations or people where they might have to talk about what they feel and discomfort sharing what they are going through. Within that avoidance are several justifications; being worried about looking bad, not wanting to hurt others' feelings, not sure what people will do in response, not sure how to share, and "playing it off."

For several participants, a strong theme of avoidance of conflict emerged in response to interview prompts, typically stemming from an apparent desire to avoid the negative or uncomfortable consequences associated with past experiences of conflict or disagreement.

Usually from having a conflict or a problem with someone else, I don't really go to teachers. -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

I don't really like to express my feelings to other people. I don't really like opening up. My dad kinda forced me to open up, so I don't really like to anymore because of that experience. And because I don't like making a big deal about how I feel. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

I don't like to because it can be scary because it is not something that feels good for me. – 6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

I don't tell teachers how I'm feeling really. But if I'm mad or sad I'll always tell my friends and they'll be by my side and give me advice of how to handle it. If they ask me, I'll talk to them, but I won't tell them. Sometimes, if it's a small thing, I'll keep it to myself because I can handle small things, but if I need backup support, I'll ask them for a second opinion. Sometimes, I get opinions from like 4 or 5 different people and try to find in my head which one is the best. -7th Grade Student, African American, Male, PS-A

If I'm mad, I'm sitting there with my head down just thinking about how I can handle it. So, I just keep thinking it over in my head. When I'm sad, I don't show it, but I'm just thinking. Most of the time when I don't show emotion, I'm just thinking and I don't talk about it. -7th Grade Student, African American, Male, PS-A

One of the most popular student justifications for avoiding talking about feelings was the high level of discomfort that arose from imagining sharing, or having shared emotions with others in the past. Typically, participants indicated this strategy in the context of avoiding consequences from their peers that they predicted, perhaps accurately, to be negative. Of particular interest is the pattern of male respondents indicating strategies of 'playing it off' or 'brushing it off' in situations where strong feelings arise. Of note here is that being male was significantly associated with respondents reporting a preference of "playing it off" in response to emotion and conflict ($r=.61$, $p=.00$). Also, participants who responded in the "playing it off" category were significantly more likely to not trust that circles would be confidential or that participants would be truthful ($r=.76$, $p=.00$) as well as to attribute differences in handling conflict to "boys being tougher / not caring" ($r=35$, $p=.03$).

I don't like making a big deal about how I feel. I don't think it's that big of a deal. I don't really think my feelings are that big of a deal. I don't like them sometimes, so I kinda brush it off. I'm feeling really bad I'll just say "hey, do whatever." And I'll act normal again. - 8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

I tried to not let people see what I'm feeling. I try to play it off, because I don't want anybody to see that. I don't want anyone to see that I'm sad or mad, because that would look bad on my part. Like, I can't handle it or stay in control. To me, I'm like the fun energetic always socializing one. Like, to see me sad I bet people would come over and be, "what's wrong? what's wrong?", and I don't like all that attention around me. But I'm fine with it when I'm happy and stuff. I don't like all that attention or questions. -7th Grade Student, African American, Male, PS-A

I don't like to talk about my feelings at all. I just don't. But I don't really think that's bad. I'm happy not talking about my feelings with other people. I mean, maybe for some people it's healthy to talk about what they're feeling. So, for some people it's fine, it's not that big a deal. Sometimes in the past, I've like told people a lot of what I'm feeling and I

don't really feel good about that. I don't really want people to know my deepest feelings. I feel better if you don't really know my feelings so much. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, PS-A

It depends on if I'm at school or at home. Because I've had some stuff happen in my family that I feel like I can't talk to people at school about. Because they'll say, "you should've done this and should've done that," like I'm doing something wrong, and that makes me feel very insecure about myself, like I can't talk about my feelings with anyone. When I do talk with some people, they are supportive, but some people say, "you should've done this and should've done that you did it all wrong." Those the people I can't really hang out with. -6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-C

Students also referenced fear of negative social impacts that might possibly result from sharing about an emotion or a vulnerable experience. This is another factor closely linked to the success of restorative programs and circles, because they require a relaxation of this fear in order for participants to share honestly and meaningfully. Note that all responses in this category are from PS-A students.

It's hard to talk about your feelings at school because there is a chance that something could get out and it could get really big. Out of school, it could be easier because if you tell someone you trust they'll just talk to you. It might help you feel better. But at school, I feel like it's harder because there's the risk of other people finding out. -7th Grade Student, White, Female, PS-A

I normally don't like to tell the people my feelings, but at the same time, I do want to because, I mean, I don't like to bottle stuff up. I like to talk my friends about things, but sometimes it's harder because, what are they gonna think about me if they know that? – 8th Grade Student, White, Female, PS-A

It's a little hard for me. I sometimes think they're judging me or I'm a crybaby or something, and it makes people not want to talk about anything. And I don't really want to talk at school because I get really emotional and I don't want other people to know what's going on, especially when other people are watching. -8th Grade Student, Asian American, Female, PS-A

Perspective taking. Several participants commented on their understanding of others' emotional experiences, labelled here as perspective taking. The connection was made by many participants between this and RC and VBRD, given their emphasis on meeting face to face with

55

others to hear their experiences and decide together how to move forward. All responses here are in reference to students' experiences with the circle processes at their school.

> *Usually, I just try to trust my instinct. If I think something is out of the way, and I think about what I don't think is right, I talk about it to somebody to see what their opinion is, and then I go from there.* -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

> *I do think sometimes it helps me look through my feelings in a situation. Sometimes, like if we have a circle between different conflicts, I think sometimes, if I was in their situation, how would I feel? So, I do think it helps sometimes. It helps to become more aware of myself and how my actions might affect someone else, even if they don't think they could. Just to become more socially aware.* -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

> *I think it's easy because I read their body language and their facial expression and stuff. In advisory circle, this kid hasn't seen his mom in a while and he was worried about what she'll say and do. He wasn't saying anything in advisory to anyone or doing any of the classwork, he was super quiet. I asked him, "what's wrong", but he try to say nothing was wrong, and I asked him, "what he was doing this weekend" and he said that he was going to see his mom and he was worried about it.* -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

Equity

The list of scholars, advocates and reformers in the last few decades whom have detailed the necessity for educational equity is beyond the scope of this project. However, Bourdieu P. (1977) provides one of the fundamental theories by which this study is informed, namely, that of Social Reproduction. Of significance for the application of restorative programs is the knowledge that social inequalities and inequities are produced and reproduced through the social arena and are always being contested on the stage of behavior, belief, and policy. Though histories of injustice have great weight and reality, they are continually reproduced through decisions, particularly of those with the most legitimate access to authority and power. RC and VBRD can serve as tools to correct for unequal distributions of social capital (Tzanikis, 2011) in a school environment, and it is to this tension that many participants spoke when touching on their experiences of fair treatment in conflict, gatekeeping and race.

Fair treatment in conflict. While many participants focused on an increased level of fairness and thoughtful treatment of conflict resulting from the programs at their schools, those responses will be highlighted in another section. Here, we focus specifically on participant feedback on the experiences of being treated differently in conflict along the lines of race, gender, role in the school, and popularity. First, it is worth noting that several responses, while indicating that students were treated differently, highlighted individual student behavior as the cause.

> *Usually kids are treated the same, but the same people usually try to get on other people's nerves, people react differently, and some might try to stop it. Some might try to start it and don't act good or nice.* -6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

> *It depends on their personality. If someone has a very defensive personality, they probably get treated a little bit better because they are so sensitive. So, people might not say things to them in a circle meeting.* -7th Grade Student, White, Female, CS-B

By far one of the most common responses from students was treatment in the conflict and in circles depended heavily on teacher preference or predetermination. Being more likely to attribute failure of circle process to apathy in students approached significance in relation to indication of the circle process being dependent on teacher preference ($r=.31$, $p=.051$).

> *Sometimes with certain teachers, I think they pinpoint certain kids. If two girls who never get in trouble are talking, and if two boys start talking that get in trouble sometimes, then she'll [the teacher] pinpoint them and give them a warning. Just certain teachers, I don't think they try to do it, but I think they're paying attention to everyone around them. I know that I should be in trouble more often than I am.* -7th Grade Student, White, Female, CS-C

> *There are some students that teachers just tend not to like and are biased against. There's one kid I won't name, but he gets really good grades and is nice to most people, and teachers just hate him, like all teachers. Sometimes, I think teachers just dislike certain students.* -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

A small number of teaching staff also spoke to this issue, framing it in a more psychological language of feeling their 'authority' being questioned rather than in terms of 'not liking' certain students.

So, when a kid disobeys or has a question, it feels to some teachers like they're disrespecting your authority. And so, their backs get ramrod straight and they don't want to have this discussion. But that doesn't really breed mutual respect and understanding. There something in the rigidity that seems to make it harder. I don't know if that's just a personality trait, or fear thing people have, or if it's an approach to life, or systemic psychological issue. I don't know how to phrase that. –Teacher, White, Female, CS-B

In terms of the many factors which effected the distribution of benefits from restorative programs, students identified the role which they played at the school in relation to those with more institutional power, (i.e. teachers), as well as their relationship to other, more popular, peers with more access to social capital. The relationship between participants identifying circles as not working well due to participants being defensive was significantly correlated to participants expressing concern around popularity granting students preferential treatment ($r=.47$, $p=.002$).

I feel like sometimes, with popularity and everything, people want the person who's more popular to think of them in a good way, so they'll side with the person who's more popular and not of the person who's truly the one who needs the support. – 7th Grade Student, White, Female, CS-B

There some kids are more respected by teachers than in others. Most of the bullies are respected by the teachers because they get away with a lot of stuff. Bullies are on the side of teachers, but teachers don't know that. I feel like there is a favorite, and if I asked the teacher if there's a favorite they say, "no, that's not true", always. I feel like I get punished more than other people even though I'm not doing very much. -6th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-C

There is one time where I got yelled at by the teacher, and the teacher assistant in the class said I didn't cuss to the teacher. If the person said that, you should take my word over the teachers'. Because another adult said it, but they still can't go against the teacher. You have to give respect to get it. Some teachers do not give me respect. – 8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

I think sometimes teachers use their power against us because they know we can't really do anything. The only thing we really can do is go home and tell our parents. Sometimes, it feels like our opinion doesn't matter. Like, what we say doesn't matter because we're the young ones, and we don't know what we're talking about. -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

In general, it's like the teachers and adults and staff don't listen to the children. I just feel like, you all aren't listening to us. You aren't listening, you just talking over us. Just talking, talking, talking. But some of the things the teachers do is to try to help us and bring us up mentally. Some of the stuff the teachers do is kind of smart. – 8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

Given the nature of power which is invested in the relationship between teacher and student, and the often-hierarchical expectations placed on institutionalized relationships, the degree to which teachers / staff enact their agency in ways that limit student access to a restorative ways of handling conflict, while perhaps born at times out of necessity, signals a problematic trend in the distribution of the benefits of those systems (Lyubansky, et al., 2015). Participants spoke to this in the context of whether or not a request for a restorative circle had ever been denied by staff.

Being male was significantly associated with respondents reporting having not choice about participating in circles (r=.37, p=.03), while student participants identifying as African American / Black were significantly more likely than all other racial groups to report having circles refused (r=.37, p=.03). Respondents who had indicated perceptions or experiences of race were significantly more likely to also identify situations in which requests for circles were refused (r=.51, p=.001).

> *I feel like maybe they [other students] don't know stuff about the conflict circles, but if they knew more about them, like their problems could be fixed, and their life would be much better, they would probably want to do it more. If you know more about it, you want to do it more probably. Students request them, and they won't be refused. Sometimes the teacher will say "if it's important, go write it on paper and bring it to me." Then we have a conflict circle after you write down what happened. -7th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B*

> *If we have conflict circle, we go to [Staff person] and we ask her "can me and this person talk?" If she says yes, you have to ask the person if they want to talk, because a conflict circle isn't mandatory. You have an option to either do it or not do it. If you don't want to, you don't have to. If they're in a meeting, of course you can't do them, but any other time you can usually do them. -6th Grade Student, Multiracial, Female, PS-A*

Some participants indicated that requests for circle to handle conflict do indeed meet with resistance on the part of staff or teachers, some because of time limitations, others because of interpersonal tension between students and staff.

> *I've asked for conflict circles probably about five times, and I've only got one out of five and it took a very long time for them to get it. And when they did get the circle, there wasn't people there to get a chance to work the conflict out. I feel like they need to respond better*

to requests. Some teachers do that if you talk at all. Even if you say, "I didn't do that", Mr. X will say "yup, that's a referral." I had that this morning, he was like "nope stop talking" and I said, "can you really talk to me like this though?" – 8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

I got asked, "can we have a circle?", and I looked and said, "not today. I don't have time to do this today." My feeling was she just wanted to connect, I guessed because she's new to our class. But I said "you're not here very much, and I don't want to stop. I want you to get caught up…" Maybe not my best choice, but I told her no. It wasn't the right time. It wasn't, "I have a conflict", it was, "let's just talk about it because it's fun." And I was like, "no." – Teacher, White, Female, CS-B

Teaching staff at times offered insight into this dynamic as well, speaking to the restraints which existed on their availability to engage with student's needs / feelings. These might include a lack of emotional awareness, lack of time, or lack of understanding of the process.

I always look at everything logically, so if something happens I think, "okay, what questions can we talk about? How can I get them to talk about what I want to? So it's all from a logical standpoint. –Teacher, White, Female, CS-B

I tell kids to write things down [reasons for requesting circles] and approach any teacher respectfully, and at the right time, and they will listen to them. But it has to be at the right time, not trying to shout them out in front of the class, because they will cut you off at the ankles, and you deserve to be. You have to approach teachers respectfully. –Teacher, White, Female, CS-B

Student participants highlighted the sometimes-mandatory nature of circles in their schools, a development which deserves attention if restorative approaches are intended to be recognized by students as a preferable alternative to punishment. A significant relationship existed between circles being mandatory and participants who identified as being male ($r=.03$, $p=.36$).

When people don't want to do them [circles], the teacher says you have to. Even when they don't want to they still have to. Students are like "okay, let's get this over with." -7th Grade Student, White, Female, CS-B

My circle wasn't like that, I had to go. It wasn't something about talking, it was a fight. A teacher called me to the office and I had to. They called on me in front of the class. – 8th Grade Student, African American, Female, PS-A

Perceptions and experiences of race. Under the category of being treated fairly during and after conflict, a pattern of responses emerged that contained explicit references to racialized

experiences or perceptions of racial issues in the school setting. Overall, 46% of responses (*n*=18) fell into this category. Few staff addressed the issue, while among student participants, particularly students of color, this was a frequently mentioned dynamic. Respondents who indicated being female (r=.65, p=.000) as well as African American / Black (r=.76, p=.000) were significantly associated with reporting perceptions and experiences of race. What's more, participants who reported perceptions and experiences of race were also significantly more likely to report that circles had not yet changed how teachers treated them (r=.37, p=.03), that requests for circles were refused (r=.51, p=.001), and report that during conflict people were treated differently along the lines of gender (r=.48, p=.002), race (r=.95, p=.000), and their role in the school (r=.87, p=.000).

> *Yeah. African-American kids [get treated worse]. It makes me feel really bad. Happens all the time. Why do they keep doing this? It makes me lose trust in teachers. I've been here since preschool. And it's been happening a lot more than we realize. I think it's as I've grown up, I realize what teachers are doing. It probably happened when I was younger too, but I was too young to actually know. When we had our [prayer] circle, basically all the African-American kids were crying and stuff, you know. We were very hurt about the things happening you know. So…it sucked.* -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

> *The black girls get put out of everything and everything's always my fault even if I wasn't in it or didn't even start it. Half the time, I'm not even in it, and people come to me and say, "what's going on?" I might not even have been doing anything, but people will just look at you in a circle you know, like you did something, but I didn't even do anything. And sometimes the white kids in her class get singled out as the good kids, and sometimes the black girls get singled out as the bad kids. There's no equality in our circles, sometimes. If you have the right people, like the right teacher handling the circle, then it's better. The white kids get to be the good kids. The good white kids don't do anything. The great kids don't do anything. But the black kids are all you're always 'doing something.'* -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

White students also commented on race, though much less frequently. Their reflections varied from openly irritated at the question to perspective taking.

> *I know there's a couple kids in class who get treated differently. And I'm not trying to be rude or anything, but they always pull the race card. They always say the teachers are being racist against them because they're black or something. I think it's mostly the fact that they can be really disruptive in class and really rude in class. It's totally garbage. It's*

really because they're really disruptive in class, and making noise, and laughing hard, and shouting out everything. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

I don't think people get treated the same. The black students get the not good end of the deal. If there's a debate whether there's an infraction or not with a black student, there's always an infraction. But if it's with a white person, there might not be an infraction. There might be still, but there might not be. I think it's good to see in color, even though teachers say, "I don't see in color." I think it's good, because you can see the struggles from that certain people and ethnic groups have to go through at a daily time. They say they don't see color, but that means she saying all the struggle you have to go through means nothing to me. Like they're missing out on tons of parts of your story and they're discounting everything like the civil rights movement in the abolishing slavery and all of that. I get she's trying to sound good and say, "I'm not racist" or anything. But I think everyone is racist, and you just have to be aware of it so you cannot be. But if you say you're not racist I think that's worse. I think everyone is a little bit. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

Not many staff mentioned issues of race explicitly, but when mentioned, they often occurred in uses of euphemism or slightly racialized references. It must be noted that, due to lack of data from PS-A teaching staff, we have only responses from CS-B & C staff who teach, according to students, "colorblindness" as an approach towards racial issues.

Lots of students need better communication and conflict skills to work out their problems and issues. Too many parents just intervene and don't teach their kids coping skills. Parents come in and try to solve everything instead of the student trying to solve it. This is what they need to learn to do! Stand up for themselves, talk directly to the teacher and say "hey I didn't like it when you spoke to me like that." They need to learn better coping skills, because so many of these kids will just pull a gun and shoot someone without them. – Teacher, White, Female, CS-B

Handling Conflict

Alongside responses focusing on racial dynamics, participants spoke frequently of the treatment and behavior differences which were attributed to gender. This dynamic, combined with the experiences and perceptions of race, form the foundational experiences of fairness and justice for many student participants. The participants were responding to the question, "Are there different ways of handling conflict for boys and girls?" Respondents fell into two larger categories, differently or the same, with multiple sub categories under each.

Gendered differences. For student participants, this category was especially prominent, while staff tended to minimize, or not perceive, any differential treatment as it pertained to conflicts. Of course, developmental differences in the age groups could be a factor. Simultaneously, the degree to which student and teacher experiences of gender dynamics differ due to demographics, (100% female teaching staff vs. more diverse student body) is likely a considerable part of this inconsistency. To be sure, differences in the ways in which rules and expectations are enforced, and the way in which resulting accountability structures are implemented, are noticed especially clearly by student participants.

> *The other thing that is a big deal right now, and just came up in a prayer circle yesterday, is that the boys' dress code is way shorter than the girls' dress code. It made us girls mad because our dress code is like three pages and the boys is a paragraph. It seems like we have more rules than the boys do and a lot of us aren't happy about it.* -7th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

Participant responses are further broken down into two emergent categories for the purposes of highlighting the impact which gendered perceptions and experiences have on the benefits of RC and VBRD programs. Of all the demographic groups, White / Caucasian's were significantly likely to attribute differences in handling conflict to gender (r=.36, p=.03).

> *Most boys are tougher than girls. And that's not because girls are crybabies or boys are tough or masculine, is just because there is that mental difference. So the boys and girls have to be treated differently. Since girls are usually more sensitive, there's more conflict with the girls than the boys.* -7th Grade Student, White, Female, CS-B

> *With boys, they get enraged and they get mad longer than girls. With girls, they will ignore each other but the next day at school they will be fine. It is more short-lived for girls.* -6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

> *Boys don't handle it very well. Girls try to talk it out boys have cat fights but we girls, we don't hold grudges, but boys hold grudges. Girls do have arguments but they're small ones in a get resolved immediately and they never really have big arguments. But the boys will get in a fight over anything. Let's say the girls make a team that aren't fair, they'll say that's not fair and they'll try to fix it. The boys in our class will say "these aren't fair teams" and they'll argue and eventually will start fighting and they won't tell the teacher and it will get worse.* -6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-C

Boys will to try shake it off like, "oh, they're just boys", but the girls, we go we need to have a parent-teacher conference with the principle and we have to solve the problem right now. Their problem might be just like our problem, and half the time it is, but they like to brush it off. But the girls are like, "we all need to go to the principal and miss classes and have this conversation." – 8th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

For most boys I think, it's really hard for them. Most of them are raised in a way that if you talk about your feelings, people are going to see you weird. But they're raised like that. They don't like to talk about it. -8th Grade Student, Asian-American, Female, PS-A

Within an existing framework of hegemonic masculinity, those having access to male privileges are conditioned to be less 'emotional' and 'play it off'. Both programs share this backdrop of pre-existing gendered dynamics to contend with when developing methods for engaging students in meaningful conflict transformation processes. It is worth noting that those identifying as male were the most likely of any other group to identify aggressiveness from boys as normal ($r=.53$, $p=.001$).

Most of the time, boys are aggressive but playing around like it's nothing serious, like their friends, their close to hang out with each other outside of school. It's nothing new to them. They don't see it is trying to hurt someone or anything. Like you do with your brother when you're at home. Like your brother home, when you get into it you still love each other later and talk to each other later. -7th Grade Student, African American, Male, PS-A

Yeah I feel like girls are more emotional and more emotionally affected. I would say you have to talk a girl through it. Mostly in our class they tell people to stop doing this or that and the boys are like okay. They're just like cool with that I guess. -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

A lot of time the boys we don't really care, we just go, "whatever." We don't try and argue with the teacher or anything. But the girls they'll try to argue and explain the case more. The girls advocate for themselves a little more. I think the boys just don't care. We don't care about getting in trouble as much. It's kind of irrelevant at school, at least that's what I feel. I think boys don't really pay attention. Like one kid always has a mellow face on all the time. He doesn't even try, because he knows he won't win. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

Teaching staff corroborated this tendency to identify male, or boy, students as those who struggle the most frequently to speak about and show feelings.

The girls are more likely to want to talk about and request prayer circles. The boys I don't think have requested one. The boys will be more willing to pass on whatever the

question is. I don't mean to be sexist, but the girls think about the worrying part and the boys don't necessarily do that. Girls are quicker to share feelings. Boys don't show feelings. –Teacher, White, Female, CS-C

Individual differences. For respondents who indicated that there were no significant gender differences between the ways of handling conflict, the narratives tended to focus on the theme of 'it depends on the person'. What is most essential from these data is that while some students focused on individual differences in responses to conflict, most consistently recognized broader patterns in behavior and treatment along gender and racial lines. Students from PS-A were significantly more likely than their CS-B & C counterparts to indicate that differences in conflict strategies depended on the person, and not gender ($r=.39$, $p=.02$). In fact, participants from CS-B & C demonstrated a negative, yet statistically significant, correlation with pointing to gendered differences in handling conflict (r=-.35, p=.03).

> *It's not based on gender roles on how boys or girls would handle it it's based on the person. But, in eighth grade…yeah there are a lot of stereotypes…-8th Grade, African American, Female, PS-A*

> *It depends on the people some girls like to talk it out and some girls like to fight some guys like to fight and some guys like to talk it out. There are a ton of differences, but it's differences between each person. Conflict is resolved in different ways for each friend. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, PS-A*

> *We have conflict circles either way so I don't think so usually. Or we talk to the teachers. I don't see a difference with the way conflicts are resolved. It's just based on the person and their personality and how they want to handle it rather than their gender. 8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B*

It is also worth noting that only in the case of PS-A was the issue of sexuality and homophobia raised in the context of differences in the treatment along gender lines.

> *[At our school] they seem to stereotype a lot of things based on if you're a girl or boy. They stereotype girls if you're in an argument, like maybe they'll hold a grudge. Some people stereotype boys and say, "well, they'll just fight it out." But that's not always the case. Another example would be if a boy wore pink to school. Some people would*

assume, "oh that boy is gay." Just because a boy wore pink doesn't mean they're gay. Like if a girl wore blue or black they expect her to be emo, but that's not the case, they just stereotype it -6th Grade Student, White, Male, PS-A

Impacts of Circles

The final category which emerged in the analysis of interview data was which types of outcomes were respondents experiencing from the restorative programs at their institutions. In this context, participants were asked questions touching on whether or not there were certain 'groups' of people for whom circles were NOT working, as well as whether circles had impacted the way in which they were treated by others. Both questions were designed to collect stories and assess the degree to which restorative programs were creating positive shifts in school culture, and if those positive shifts were being distributed equitably across the school community.

Differential impact. Here, participants spoke as to whether they viewed circles as functioning well throughout the school. While 62% (n=24) of participants indicated concern in this area, some placed the responsibility on students' lack of interest and awareness, while other attributed it to teachers and staff. While many participants identified differences between groups, some leave the causes of those differences vague while others name them explicitly as connected to race, gender, or individuality. The most significant correlation in this category was between participants identifying as male and a distrust in the confidentiality of the circle process and in other students' ability to tell the truth (r=.53, p=.000).

There are certain groups of kids that seem like they need the circles more, like certain groups of friends. My crew hangs out with boys and girls and a lot of times we basically have a circle at recess without having to do it with the whole class. -7th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

[Some kids] maybe need an additional consequence to help you learn, because you're back in here and have a lot of conflict circles. That's not a lot of kids, just a few of the top of my head. I find that with even more formal consequences don't always resonate with them. In that way, you've got your troublemakers and your mischief makers. So, we've had to talk

about when we need to be compassionate and when do we need to lay down a more formal consequence. -Teacher, White, Male, CS-B

There's a few kids who don't talk about their problems, they just act like nothing's wrong. They think they don't need the circle but I'm pretty sure they do. Because they probably have problems at home but they don't talk about those either. I think it's best to get it out there. If you don't get it out, you'll fall into depression. You have to tell a teacher until somebody can help you. If you are getting bullied, you tell somebody about it, and they tell the teacher they say, "tell them to stop." But kids need a little more than that sometimes. Especially if kids tell a boy to stop, the bully will come 10 times worse and the teacher won't listen. That means they get bullied more. It's not enough for a teacher to say just stop. 6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-C

The introverted people who don't want to be a part of it, they will pass the talking piece. They will be really quiet about it. You can hardly hear them say nothing. The kids who liked it said it was peaceful, quiet, and relaxing. You can tell in their answers whether they are buying into it or not. -Teacher, White, Female, CS-B

Of note here is that, while teachers referred to differences such as "introverted and extroverted" or "troublemakers", students spoke more explicitly about racial, gender, or specific individual differences. In the instances where participants responded negatively, indicating that there weren't any groups for whom circles were not working, the most common thread was their belief that if circles were done right, they could work for everyone. In those situations, the onus for the functioning of the restorative programs was placed on the fidelity to the model, and not on individual behavior. For participants who reported circles working well for most in their school, there existed a significant relationship with identifying a positive shift in student / teacher relationships (r=.37, p=.02).

I think you have to try it on the students to see if it doesn't work for them. I think if it's done right, it should work for everyone. If I still wanted to punch them though, that might not change. But I don't think it isn't working for anyone. -8th Grade Student, White, Male, CS-B

Treatment by staff and teachers. In this final category, themes emerged in the context of whether participants regarded the circle process being used at their school as having had effected the way that staff / teachers treat students. As mentioned above, this measure was designed to gauge how impactful these processes were in student-teacher relationships, given that the primary

location for the experience of power and agency in a school setting lies between teacher and student.

For participants having experienced positive shifts in student-teacher relationships, common themes which emerged centered around increased levels of trust, respect and listening. For both CS-B & CS-C (r=.4, p=.01), participants indicated statistically significant shifts in student / teacher relationships. Also, participants who indicated an ease of understanding their own feelings were significantly more likely to experience positive shifts in their relationships with teachers (r=.4, p=.011).

> *That's the thing I find good about conflict circles is there's no bias, because you can see each side of the story and people instead of people jumping to conclusions and making assumptions. They can actually explain themselves and what they were doing.* -8th Grade Student, White, Male, PS-A

> *Yes; when you say something to others, they grow in understanding and want to work on making your friendship better.* -6th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

> *That [circle] changed my relationship with one of the teachers, cause she saw what I was talking about when is talking about the racism thing. Because she didn't get it and used to say my papers were full of pure hatred and stuff, even though I was just writing about African-American stuff or history. She didn't understand it. So, we had a circle with lots of breakdown crying stuff, and finally she understood what I was talking about and we've gotten closer. So now she knows to be careful.* -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

For participants who felt that the restorative process at their school had not impacted the relationships between students and teachers, some identified student unwillingness to participate in the process as the cause, others indicated teacher unwillingness to participate, and lastly, some referenced the extent to which restorative approaches have had the opportunity to impact entrenched dynamics which have been going on for a long time. Expressing concern about race was significantly associated with respondents reporting that circles have not changed their relationship with teachers (r=.37, p=.03). What's more, participants who reported circles as

not affecting their relationships were also significantly more likely to report requests for circles being refused (r=.5, p=.001), as being treated unequally because of their role as students (r=.35, p=.03), because of their race (r=.35, p=.03) and avoiding discussing their emotions with others (r=.37, p=.02).

> *Um, I think I only have prayer circles if there is a problem. Every time you have a problem, I feel like they treat you more like you are a troublemaker than a student. If you have a lot of problems with other people, they won't treat you as nicely. Not like mean, but like watch your every move and try to find problems that you're doing all the time. But if you don't have a lot, or usually fix the problems when you do circle, I think they'll treat you a tiny bit nicer because they know you can fix problems.* -7th Grade Student, While, Male, CS-C

> *No not the teachers. Just the students, not the teachers. The teacher said we would have a circle with the teachers about how they're singling us out. But people say they wanted to have it sooner. So I don't know what's going on. I think it was the other day when we had that basically we just talked about how the teachers saying rude things to African-Americans, like one teacher told her that she never would be anything in life. But you don't say things like that to the other kids. The circle didn't really change anything.* -8th Grade Student, African American, Female, CS-B

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As Lyubansky & Barter (2011) indicate, the social contexts in which conflict take place are as significant as any other piece of the event which caused harm to an individual or a community. As such, this study is an invitation for those involved with restorative justice and educational reform work to attend to the social contexts and meanings which may be being enacted in the relationships between staff, students and the wider community. Indeed, it is these social meanings which, when ignored, so greatly limit the effectiveness of our well-intentioned projects. In instances where the institutions and individuals exhibit a poverty of this awareness, we arrive at an opportunity to more deeply understand and creatively re-imagine how our learning environments are structured to achieve better outcomes for everyone involved.

Self-Awareness. One of the central tenets of this thesis has been the question of the relationship between how adolescents choose, or are coerced, into performing masculinity and the quality and quantity of their conflicts. This dynamic is revealed at several points in the results. For example, participants who reported difficulty expressing and understanding their own feelings were more likely to also report that they were forced to participate in circles. Perhaps not surprisingly, we found that these participants were entirely male. These results suggest a likelihood that adult experiences with dominant gender dynamics play a role in how they interact with and perceive student behavior. It's also likely that male participants were forced into Circle processes due to teacher and staff frustration with repeated demonstrations of young males' low social and emotional self-awareness. Further research would be required to provide data to support these assumptions, however.

These emotional awareness findings are consistent with previous research regarding the nature of socially constructed masculinity and the degree to which it affects how discipline and

conflict are handled in relation to men / boys. As Morris (2005) reminds us, there exists a strong connection between 'discipline' as it is traditionally imagined and practiced (exerting power over others) and an increased level of detachment from the school community. What's more, according to Morris's research, discipline in schools tends to reinforce predominant stereotypes along the lines of class, race, and gender. This dynamic (students' behavior that coincide with dominant class, race, and gender hierarchies) is problematic for educators interested in developing democratic sensibilities in young people to the extent that it engenders a decreased sense of agency when it comes to issues of identity and conflict.

Another strong connection exists between participant's gender identity, levels of self-awareness and the experience of conflict. Male participants indicated a much higher likelihood of avoiding feelings, or 'playing it off', while in conflict, and were more likely to attribute difficulty in their experiences of conflict to mental health issues or instability. This, as well as the results of the above paragraph, is consistent with what Blazina, Pisecco & O'Neil (2005) found in their analysis of adolescents; namely, the stronger the performance of hegemonic, or patriarchal, masculinity, the higher the likelihood of experiencing a sense of restriction in their level of emotionality with their peers as well as a significantly lowered sense of investment in their school community. We see in this study that conflict, which is an essential piece of healthy relationships (Barter, 2011), is highly impacted by the level of self-awareness available to its participants. Given the correlations between male participants avoiding feelings and difficulty understanding feelings, we see that those being socialized into dominant forms of masculinity are not being served well when it comes to their levels of preparedness for handling the demands which conflict place on relationships.

Importantly, male participants were significantly more likely than their counterparts to report having the privilege of voluntary participation in circle processes revoked from them (i.e., mandated participation in the Circle process). For educators and researchers, the issue of voluntariness is often challenging to navigate. On the one hand, boys may be more likely to refuse to participate in an unfamiliar conflict process, especially one that may bring forth both emotional vulnerability and performance anxiety (in regard to talking about feelings). To the degree that this may be true, mandated Circle participation has the potential to further encourage a cycle in which young males view dialogue and communication as concepts being forced upon them and thus respond with resistance. Alongside Morris, E. W. (2005), these findings remind us that there exists a tendency, even in situations where restorative practices are being implemented, to reaffirm dysfunctional gender roles (e.g., responding to conflict with violence). This possibility, however, must be weighed by educators with the benefits which Circle participation has on challenging traditional gender roles through an increased sense of competency in the realms of emotional and social self-expression for young males.

One way that dysfunctional gender roles are reaffirmed is by males being targeted with more 'tough', discipline options. This is often seen as 'natural', and yet, in the light of this study, conventional discipline rather than Circles may deprive young people, especially boys, of the emotional coping mechanisms necessary to produce the focused, academically competent, and ethically minded students we are hoping to nourish. On the other hand, forcing (some) students to participate in Circles often inadvertently communicates that restorative practices are just another way that adults in charge exert power over the students and, thus, undermine one of the core principles of restorative practices – the spirit of voluntary engagement that creates conditions for being psychologically open to understanding the way we impact others. Given the

disproportionately high rate of male students reporting a lack of choice (hence agency) in how they participate with restorative circles, there exists reason for concern that, despite the best efforts of education reformers, even so-called "restorative" approaches to conflict can deprive young men of opportunities to develop emotionally competent strategies for coping.

This is not to say that the only existing options are either 'forcing' young men into circles or letting them simply continue in behaviors which may indeed be harmful for a school community. Rather, the degree to which participants are informed and aware of the conflict processes that affect them allows for greater opportunity for the type of emotional and personal development from which, with the proper resource, those with the most problematic behaviors stand to benefit greatly. Indeed, one of the central tenants to the restorative process is that those who are impacted by the conflict are given the most power in determining how the conflict is handled. There also exists the danger of students assigning to restorative circles the same attributions which are made in response to more punitive responses, such as being "written up", or detention. In the instances where a circle is made mandatory for participants, efforts must be taken to assist them in differentiating between it and more punitive measures to ensure the greatest opportunity for all participants to benefit from the process.

Equity. A critical view of the impact that restorative programs have on school climate and healthy student development must evaluate student and adult behavior, as well as the policies and design of school communities. It is in these environments that young people navigate their personal boundaries, as well as the degree to which they will assent to, or resist, existing power relations (Bourdieu, 2003). Conflict, in this view, either weakness or reinforces these relationships through the methods of response utilized by the institutions in which the conflicts occur. Following this line of thought, how we handle conflict plays a large role in determining the development of power

73

in the participants (Connell 1987, 2005b; Shpungin et. al., 2015; Stoudt, 2006). In this context, conflict represents an opportunity for further social reproduction of power dynamics, or the creation of new and potentially different means of defining and experiencing power.

In our results, we saw the emergence of participants concerns regarding their access to the restorative program being implemented at their school (i.e. gatekeeping). The language which student participants often gave to this dynamic was that of teachers' "preference", or of a teacher having "favorites". Social and emotional development (in terms of personal maturity, self-awareness, and attribution and persistence in the face of frustration) undoubtedly plays a large role in this tendency to frame experiences of inequality in terms of an individual teacher "liking" someone, or not. Beyond that, however, both gender and race demonstrated themselves as significant themes in terms of how frequently students reported their requests for conflict circles being denied by staff. Indeed, both male, as well as Black / African American, participants were significantly more likely to report having their requests for conflict circles denied by those in the role of gatekeeper of the conflict systems.

A possibility of confirmation bias exists in this result, as we see that students reporting concerns around race and racialized experiences were also significantly likely to report circles being denied. In other words, students whose awareness or experience of racial inequality had contributed to a greater sense of skepticism and/or mistrust in their institutions may be more likely to notice or even over-emphasize, instances of inequality as they appear in teacher /student relationships. However, even in such cases of race-related heightened attention and distrust, other forms of distrust may result from firsthand experience of conflicts which have not been handled well or resolved fully. These dynamics speak also to the importance of effective and equitable methods or handling conflict. Resolving conflict without an emphasis on equity creates a greater

likelihood for mistrust, disengagement, and tension between students and staff (Rogers et al, 2017). Given the backdrop of frustrating and/or traumatic racialized experiences which young people of color navigate, instances in which conflict is handled poorly increase the possibility that those in positions of power will be perceived as prejudiced and racist, regardless of their intent.

This theme of race and racialized experiences was brought up by 46% of participants. responses. Moreover, many of these participants reported a low level of effectiveness for circle processes, as well as high occurrence of bias in how conflict policies are applied. Thus, students' experiences and perceptions of identity, race, gender and role in the school, all factor significantly into the bigger picture of how willingly they participate in efforts to improve school climate and how hopeful they feel about such efforts.

One of the foundational arguments of this work is that, even by adolescence, identities such as race and gender exist as well-formulated schemas of how power is distributed, experienced and expected to function. In other words, the intersection of race and gender factors largely into how young people experience their school environments. When these issues are sidelined, ignored, or not addressed by our justice and conflict systems, we will risk losing the buy-in needed to create culture shifts. Despite being social constructs, these identities are a primary factor in how social power is distributed and experienced (Davis, 2015; Collins, 1986; Lyubansky, 2015; Morris, 2005). As such, they deserve special attention when considering how best to implement, share and build learning communities where listening and respect are central in how problems are solved. Without this attention, we contribute to an increased sense of mistrust for learning institutions that we cannot afford if we are to build schools that work for everyone.

Under the category of being treated fairly during and after conflict, a pattern of responses emerged that contained explicit references to racialized experiences or perceptions of racial issues

in the school setting. Few staff addressed the issue directly, while among student participants, particularly students of color, this was a highly mentioned dynamic. Respondents who indicated being female as well as African American / Black were significantly associated with reporting perceptions and experiences of race. What's more, participants who reported perceptions and experiences of race were also significantly more likely to report that circles had not yet changed how teachers treated them, that requests for circles were refused, and to report that during conflict people were treated differently along the lines of gender, race, and their role in the school.

This connection between experiences and perception of race and the effectiveness of circle processes to actuate shifts in student's relationship with power is significant because it speaks to the way in which trust is both built and lost. Given that the intersection between race and gender development in adolescents is so rich with historical and contemporary meaning (Wadei, J., 1996), the design of conflict systems must be sensitive to gendered and racialized experiences. Given the phenomenon of gatekeeping and its tendency to reflect an overarching preference for conflict participants who display behaviors more in-line with the status quo, an awareness of how gender and race intersect is essential in order that restorative processes be situated to address inequalities rather than replicate them through an application where students with the behaviors which are interpreted through a socially constructed lens, or are the most challenging for school communities, often get pushed out of the restorative process, or in this case, are not allowed access as frequently as their peers.

Fair treatment in conflict. The effect which a teacher's choices in relationship to conflict can have on students' awareness of fairness and justice also demonstrated a significant impact on participant's experiences of restorative programs. Participants' attributions of ineffective circles to student 'apathy' (not caring) coincided with an identification of the circle process as being

76

dictated by 'teacher preference'. This reveals a pattern of attribution that must be addressed in how conflict is handled and processed in learning environments, namely, that of placing the locus of power outside of one's self. In this view, conflict circles are unlikely to thrive when individuals are not being educated about the power which they have to affect the process for the better. In the instances where we see this kind of attribution, it is likely our conflict systems are structured in such a way as to neglect to empower, or to actively discourage, student agency. For restorative approaches to function on a high level they require an emphasis on the dignity and power of the individual, and as such, these types of patterns warrant concern.

Gendered Differences. As highlighted above, the intersection between gender, race and other privileges is a factor in determining how participants experience the effectiveness of restorative processes. Among the data, one of the first tendencies to emerge is the relationship between male participants and mandatory participation in Circles. It is tempting to endorse mandatory participation, both because of the potential benefits of restorative practices and out of recognition that educational institutions often tend to read young men, particularly young men of color, as more dangerous and thus more in need of 'tough' interventions which often have the effect of pushing challenging students out of educational communities.

At the same time, educators must guard against the re-socialization of young men as 'threats' to be contained through the taking away of choice. While the most anti-social behaviors must be addressed effectively and promptly, taking away a young person's right to agency can also play a role in continuing the dysfunctional gender dynamics which are of concern through a process of, however subtle, dehumanization, which ultimately better prepares them for prison than for living in a democratic society where they will need to rely on themselves and their community to navigate the conflicts which will inevitably arise in life.

Other gendered patterns emerged in the data, including that of White / Caucasian identifying participants being more likely than any other group to identify gendered differences in how conflict is handled. Perhaps what is most at play here, apart from the vast majority of participants self-identifying as white, is the impact which race has on participants' understandings of their relationship to their institution. In the case of African Americans, the largest demographic representing people of color, it is likely that differences in how conflict is handled by the institution is more readily attributable to racial factors than to gender. This is in no way suggesting that POC participants did not notice gendered dynamics, but is, rather, a possibility stemming from the predominance of racially charged and traumatizing experiences that POC, including young-adults, endure daily and the on-going effect that such experiences have on their reality. For students in institutions in which the staff are predominantly white women, this dynamic is more concerning in the sense that white students, in instances of conflict or differential treatment by staff, can call upon their noticeable differences (i.e. gender, sexuality, popularity, etc.) while still being provided the privilege of relying on a racial identification with those in power.

The relationship between male participants and the normalization of verbal and physical aggressiveness in the behavior of boys / males is most definitely worthy of scrutiny from educators interested in the creation of more just and effective ways of handling conflict. In this relationship, we see the category which is perhaps most strongly counter-productive to restorative processes, which, as mentioned before, are reliant on cooperation, communication and empathy. In order for these processes to function, they require the social and emotional investment of those impacted by conflict in the community. In the case of the normalization of aggressiveness, we witness an alternative to restorative processes which has been functioning, most likely, in young people's lives since they day they were born.

"Acting tough", "playing it off" and other types of coping strategies also play into this 'alternative', where the emphasis is placed on emotional numbness and physical aggressiveness rather than honest communication and listening skills. It is for this reason that restorative programs must grapple with the dynamics of patriarchy through education around communication, feelings, and needs. Without this, we are likely to observe a continuing trend in which restorative practices demonstrate a limited effectiveness for addressing gendered power dynamics, as a significant portion of participants (males in particular) will be hampered in their ability to fully participate.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the type of education and language available to young people regarding gender plays a role in their perception, and ability to process, observable differences along gender lines. As we saw in the data, students from the public schools, which were markedly more open and welcoming in their dialogue around gender issues than their Catholic counterparts, were much more likely to attribute differences in handling conflict to individual personalities rather than social constructions of gender. While culturally dominant forms of masculinity have an effect in both school environments, students in an environment that is more welcoming of gender fluidity and a wider range of expressions of sexuality enjoy the benefit of a seemingly greater flexibility around issues of gender. Of course, each school must decide for itself what they deem best for their students, but it is important to note that providing more choice and a more open dialogue concerning gender seems to create more options for responding to conflict beyond the prescriptions of socially constructed gender categories.

Impact of Circles. The majority of this study's participants indicated concern that the implementation of circles was having a disproportionate effect which depended primarily on popularity, race and gender. Interestingly, male participants were highly unlikely to trust the confidentiality of the circle process and by extension, were likely much less willing to fully

participate. In any context which has been greatly affected by hegemonic masculinity, we will encounter the narrative that male individuals are much less needing of emotional support, self-expression and listening. In fact, it isn't uncommon that responding empathically to a young male is viewed as unnecessary, or indeed harmful, because they need to learn how to be "hard" and 'tough' to survive. In this way, this finding is noteworthy because it shows that the ways in which we make space for the feelings and needs of participants (both through ensuring they are being heard and that what they share remains confidential) could go a long way toward increasing engagement from participants who feel least comfortable with the type of self-expression most required in restorative practices.

On a more positive note, participants indicating that circle processes worked well generally were more likely to indicate positive shifts in student / teacher relationships. While participants from both schools indicated generally positive shifts, students who indicated an ease in understanding their own feelings were the most likely of any group to report a positive shift in teacher / student dynamics. What is important here for educators is that emotional literacy, self-awareness, and the quality of gender development education which supports them, are essential for the success of programs designed to create more justice and investment in conflict resolution.

These benefits are tempered, however, by the emergence of patterns in the data which suggest that participants expressing concerns about racial dynamics, requests for circles being refused, unequal treatment due to their student status, and the avoidance of discussing emotions, were all significantly likely to report no improvement in teacher / student relationships. Taken together, these data suggest that the types of experiences participants have in the circles heavily influence their view of the process. If power dynamics, such as race, gender, adult / child, are not given space to be processed and communicated about honestly, then the investment which we need

to see in order to enjoy a greater effectiveness from restorative approaches to conflict will continue to be limited. This is because participants need to feel welcome, safe, and able to express themselves in order to want to invest themselves in the repairing of harms. Being able to express the needs and feelings underneath our experiences of identity is an essential piece of this safety, and as such, educators must pay attention to the types of identities which are being privileged and those which are being neglected in how we handle conflicts.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Implications for Policy and Practice

Self-Awareness. As we see from participant data, the degree to which students are aware of their own feelings and are capable of attributing the causes of their feelings in ways that are beneficial to the socialization process, we witness increased positive experiences with Restorative Practices. In other words, success with Restorative Practices is connected to, and in some ways dependent on, the ability to express the feelings and needs which an individual is experiencing in relation to a conflict, and to express them in a way that others are capable of hearing. In practical terms, this signals the importance of dedicating resources in our educational environments towards emotional literacy. Specifically, this study points to the importance of curriculum which is influenced by an understanding of how gender roles develop, the importance they have for adolescent life, and their limitations. Curriculums like "The Masks We Live In", organized by the film maker and activist Byron Hurt, are widely available and deal specifically with engaging young men in dialogues around emotional literacy as it pertains to their view of themselves and how they fit into the larger world. While this study focuses on hegemonic masculinity, the data points to ways in which those who fall outside of the category of "masculine" are equally in need of healthy, mindful dialogue around personal development and emotional awareness. Restorative Programs are that much more likely to succeed when administration, school staff, teachers and students can share a common language and culture around the expressing of feelings and needs, as well as how to react to someone else when they are expressing themselves. In the realm of policy, this means making funds and time available for school staff and teachers to practice these skills with each other and with their students. To expect Restorative Programs to shift a school's culture without providing appropriate time for its implementation is a recipe for frustration, and will likely lead to Restorative

Programs being dismissed by teachers, along with so many other Professional Development programs, as the "flavor of the week."

Practically speaking, one safeguard to keep in place for those practitioners interested in putting Restorative Programs into place in educational settings in ways that offer opportunities for students to develop self-awareness is to utilize the full range of Restorative Practices in your classroom without relying solely on conflict circles. Often, conflicts are the product of built up stress, negativity and discouragement, all of which can be addressed through positive, life-affirming, community building approaches to classroom and school culture. When conflict circles are necessary, it is important to build up participants' familiarity with the process by selecting issues which would rank somewhere from 1-3 on a 10-point scale. Without the proper cultural capital, Restorative Circles can implode when issues that are too emotionally intense are addressed to soon.

Lastly, it is essential that Restorative Practices be developmentally and culturally appropriate to the age group and demographic of participants. A circle process between staff members will obviously have a higher standard of expectations in terms of emotional literacy. We do not want to set participants up for failure by expecting them to be perfectly able to express themselves emotionally, and thus scaffolded experiences must be provided in order to build confidence. A common frustration among staff attempting to implement Restorative Programs is something like "they just don't care" or "they aren't mature enough," concerns that, while absolutely valid, should be guarded against when implementing our programs because they can lead to feedback cycles where students are expected to perform at levels that are emotionally or culturally inappropriate, and then they are given up on, or worse, penalized when they fail to 'perform'.

Equity. Issues of equity appear in the data as one of the most salient issues with regards to the effectiveness of Restorative Programs in schools. In cases in which Restorative Programs did not function as intended, it was often because there were pre-existing hurts resulting from race, class, or gender based instances of inequity that went unaddressed. This meant that participants were coming to the Circles with emotional baggage or even trauma which limited their ability to trust, to listen, or to share honestly. As we saw in the introduction, power dynamics maintain themselves by being "ubiquitous and covert." When instances of perceived, or actual, inequity are left in silence, the likelihood of a Restorative experience decreases because trust is negatively impacted, and members of a community retreat from each other further into their own identities in ways that make cooperation difficult. To counter this, as educators we must welcome instances where the members of our communities feel free to speak about actual, or perceived, injustices. This can be accomplished by ensuring that appropriate support is available to educators in terms of peer to peer mentoring, mental health services, and regular, and relevant, anti-bias trainings. Too often, when instances of inequity are raised, young people are told "we will address that later," and when this does not take place, a great deal of effort must be undertaken to repair the trust that was lost.

Building trust can also be accomplished by ensuring that Restorative Programs are owned by the community which they are intended to serve; this means giving participants opportunities to build the program together, either through surveys or practice groups. It helps to build trust when participants see that the role they play in the construction of a Restorative Program is important and valued. This may look something like an "advisory board" which could be convened at regular intervals to offer feedback on Restorative Practices. This 'board' should be made up of people who are representative of the population you wish the programs to serve. Particularly for adolescents, to the extent that Restorative Programs are identified as "that thing that our teachers

make us do", they will be limited in their effectiveness. We must take efforts to ensure that our community owns the process, both in theory and in practice. Given the at times troubled nature of power dynamics which exists between teachers and students, and administrators and teachers, Restorative Practices should be implemented at regular intervals for every member of the community to get more opportunities for their voice to be heard and for them to play a role in shaping the future of their community. It is particularly essential that those who are most identified with a greater access to power, i.e. teachers in relation to students, administrators in relation to teachers, participate with regularity in order to intentionally receive the feedback which will help keep their work both culturally relevant and effective. The main barrier to this is obviously time, but the rewards in terms of team cohesiveness, reduced conflict, and increased communication are well worth the investment.

Handling Conflict. Perhaps the most significant take away from this body of data is that the types of attributions that people make often can determine, to a large extent, how they think and how they experience the world. In this instance, participants discussed whether the differences they witnessed in how conflict was handled was related to essentialized gender differences, or could be attributed to individual personality. Dealing with these attributions is significant because if a member of a community decides, for example, that an inequity that they observe is the result of an identity that they themselves have, or another community member has, then their personal agency to positively influence the world around them is limited (Bandura, 1999). To the extent that people attribute differences to aspects of life that they label as "unchangeable" or "permanent", the less likely they are to feel motivated to take action. On a fundamental level, the most effective way to address these types of attributions is to provide frequent opportunities for community members to see, hear, taste and know each other's culture and to appreciate the beauty and

importance of what each other brings to the table. Put another way, with frequent opportunities to see each other's' humanity, which is one product of an effective Restorative Circle process, community members are given the information necessary to make more effective attributions instead of relying on culturally hegemonic norms to fill in the blanks. This speaks to an essential element of the Restorative Circle process, which is the insistence on "No labels". In practice, this means that when a circle is taking place, only individuals are in attendance, there are no "teachers", "police", "principals", etc. Seeing each individual's humanity first is an essential piece of practice for us in a society where differences are quickly attributed to the most surface labels and as a strategy to excuse ourselves from having to think critically or engage with the discomfort of communicating with another person.

Impacts of Circles. The most significant elements of this category that apply to best practices are those of anonymity and accountability. Most significantly for male participants, trust in the circle process was highly impacted by the degree to which they identified the circle process as confidential. For participants with experiences in which their participation in Circles led to gossip or other negative social consequences, and understandable decrease in a willingness to participate in the process followed. It's likely that in these instances there existed a lack of accountability for circle participants, highlighting the importance of the 'post-circle' process. In a 'post-circle' participants are gathered to discuss how effective the actions steps which they developed had been at addressing the conflict and the extent to which relationships had been positively or negatively impacted by the circle of which they were a participant. Often, given the time constraints that most educators must contend with, this is the easiest step to omit, though, according to the data, this is perhaps at the peril of the overall effectiveness of the program. If participants have no opportunity to process what happened in the circle, to bring up lingering concerns, to address frustrations with

action steps, or to suggest new directions, then it is likely that they will experience what some of our studies participants experienced when they reflected on how their negative experience in a circle made them distrustful of the overall process. Following up with circle participants should be seen as an essential part of any Restorative Program in that it demonstrates a commitment to making the process work for the community, one person at a time. Without this accountability, Restorative Programs are situated to function in ways that decrease the likelihood of the community owning the process. In order to build the trust necessary for a Restorative approach to conflict to meet the needs of people in a way that ensure its viability, it must be clear that what works about the process will be built upon, and what doesn't work will be changed.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study addressed issues of equity by targeting two restorative justice based initiatives in three educational environments. While the range of Catholic to Public school provided for some useful comparisons, both schools in which research took place were still very much in the beginning stages of their conflict programs and, as such, warrant a close investigation at various points in their development to establish some stronger themes and to test how reliable and valid are the themes which emerged here. This study is perhaps best situated as a benchmark to measure further study against, rather than a comprehensive or exhaustive look at the gender and racial dynamics at play in the implementation of restorative programs.

Another potential limitation in this study is the relatively brief interview time. Due to the frequently hectic structuring of time in school environments, as researchers we were limited as to the amount of contact we could feasibly maintain with students / staff. Additionally, future studies would benefit from a wider variety of students and staff included in the data. Further investigation may also benefit from the inclusion of school staff and parents / community members in the data

collection, so as to paint a more holistic view of the impact and effects of the restorative justice programs being implemented.

It is worth highlighting, also, that this study was conducted in heterosexual, gender-conforming environments and thus is indicative of both the poverty of research and of school environments which are geared towards thoughtful integration of a diversity of gender expressions. For this reason, this study is limited in terms of its application due to the relative lack of information regarding non-binary, non-dominant forms of self-expression and gender identity. Future work addressing the connection between gender and restorative practices would be enriched by recruiting more diverse gender expressions into the interview pool so as to more comprehensively appreciate the impact which restorative approaches to conflict have on masculinity and gender development.

Lastly, the current research was limited by the lack of longitudinal data available for analysis. Due to logistical constraints, contact with participants was limited to 1-2 times in frequency. This placed a potential barrier on how comfortable researchers were in the environments they found themselves in and may have placed a potential strain on the level of trust between participant and researcher. It is worth investigating how contact throughout the school year with participants impacts the quantity and quality of the interview data.

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APPENDIX A: PS-A Student Protocol

[All throughout the interview, clarifying questions will be asked such as, "tell me more", "what else have you experienced", and "is there anything else you wanted to add". These more general follow up probes will be used, and are not discussed further in this protocol.]
[Other questions that follow the same spirit and purpose of this interview protocol may also be asked as the interview unfolds.]

Opening:

Introduce yourself and say what you'll be talking about. Talk about confidentiality and voluntariness and say that they can skip any questions or come back to them later. Make sure they can see what you are writing down to increase trust in the process.

1. What grade are you in?

2. What team are you on?

3. Who is your advisory teacher?

Advisory Questions:

1.   What would you tell a friend from another school about Advisory? What are examples of things you do in Advisory?

[looking for things like "circles" "watch program and discuss it" "play games" "do HW"; Will need to ask follow up questions to see which of the activities are meant to build community and social emotional skills - including the games]

2. [if they did not already say] **What do you like about those activities?**

3. [if they did not already say] **What do you wish was different? How can Advisory be better?**

4. [if they did not already say] **Have the Advisory games/ activities / circles helped students get along better? What about with your Advisory teacher?**

General Questions

1.   Tell me about a recent conflict with a friend / classmate…
A.   What did you do?
B.   What worked well?
C.   What didn't work well?

2.   Think of a recent conflict with a teacher...
A.   What did you do?

B.   What worked well?
C.   What didn't work well?

3.   Can you think of a recent situation where you had a conflict with a parent or adult at home?
A.   What did you do?
B.   What worked well?
C.   What didn't work well?

4.   How would you describe CONFLICT CIRCLES to a friend who doesn't know about them?

5.   What are the most common reasons for using CONFLICT CIRCLES?

6.   What do you think about your experience with CONFLICT CIRCLES so far?
A.   Is there something about it that you want to make sure doesn't change?
B.   If you could change anything about it, what would it be?
7.   Have CONFLICT CIRCLES affected your relationships with other students?
A.   (If yes) Can you give an example?
B.   (If no) Can you say more about that?
8.   Have CONFLICT CIRCLES affected how teachers and administrators treat you?
A.   (If yes) Can you give an example?
B.   (If no) Why not?
9.   What are other students saying about CONFLICT CIRCLES?

10. What are staff and teachers saying about CONFLICT CIRCLES?

11. What are adults at home saying about CONFLICT CIRCLES?

12. Have CONFLICT CIRCLES changed the way you feel or act at school?

13. Have CONFLICT CIRCLES changed the way you feel or act when you're out of school?

14. Are there people who choose to do CONFLICT CIRCLES more or less often than others?
A.   Are there some types of kids for whom CONFLICT CIRCLES are not working? [Can you tell me more...what does it mean that they haven't worked?]
B.   Are there kids and adults who are choosing not to participating in CONFLICT CIRCLES who you think should be there? [What needs to happen to get them there? To make them interested in participating?]
C.   Are requests to do CONFLICT CIRCLES sometimes refused? Do you know why?

15. When there is conflict or someone is in trouble…
A.   How do students usually handle it?
B.   How does staff / administration usually handle it?
C.   Do people get treated the same?
D.   Do people get treated differently?
16. Are there different ways of handling conflict for boys and girls?
17. How is it for you to understand your own feelings?
18. What do you think causes your feelings?

19. How is it for you to talk about your feelings with others?

FOR KIDS WHO HAVE BEEN IN CIRCLES
    1. **How many conflict circles or restorative conversations have you been in this year?**

    2. **What is helpful about conflict circles and restorative conversations?**

    3. **What does NOT work well in the conflict circles and restorative conversations?**

    4. **What have you learned from the conflict circles and restorative conversations?**
            6a. [If they didn't already say] **What have you learned about feelings and needs from you experience so far?**

    5. **What else is important for us to know about circles and restorative practices at PS-A?**

6. **What is your gender?**

7. **What is your race?**

[All throughout the interview, clarifying questions will be asked such as, "tell me more", "what else have you experienced", and "is there anything else you wanted to add". These more general follow up probes will be used, and are not discussed further in this protocol.]

[Other questions that follow the same spirit and purpose of this interview protocol may also be asked as the interview unfolds.]

Opening: Introduce yourself and say what you'll be talking about. Talk about confidentiality and voluntariness and say that they can skip any questions or come back to them later. Make sure they can see what you are writing down to increase trust in the process.

Demographic Questions:

1. What grade are you in?

2. How old are you?

3. Who is your main teacher (if relevant)?

VBRD Questions [Replace VBRD with HOW YOUR SCHOOL HANDLES CONFLICT IF UNFAMILIAR]

1. How would you describe VBRD to a friend in another school who doesn't know about it?

a. What are some ways you learn about VBRD? How many times per week do you do that?
b. How do you feel about these activities?
   · [if they did not already say] What do you like about them?
   · [if they did not already say] What would you change if you could?

2. Do you think VBRD helps kids get along better with each other in school?

3. Do you think VBRD helps kids get along better with their teachers?

4. Do you think VBRD helps kids get along better with their families?

5. Has VBRD changed the way you feel or act in school? If so, how?

6. How do you think teachers feel about VBRD?

7. What do you hear other students or friends saying about VBRD?

8. What would happen if your school stopped doing VBRD?

General Questions

1.   Tell me about a recent conflict with a friend / classmate…
D.   What did you do?
E.   What worked well?
F.   What didn't work well?

2.   Think of a recent conflict with a teacher...
D.   What did you do?
E.   What worked well?
F.   What didn't work well?

3.   Can you think of a recent situation where you had a conflict with a parent or adult at home?
D.   What did you do?
E.   What worked well?
F.   What didn't work well?

4.   How would you describe CONFLICT CIRCLES to a friend who doesn't know about them?

5.   What are the most common reasons for using CONFLICT CIRCLES?

6.   What do you think about your experience with CONFLICT CIRCLES so far?
C.   Is there something about it that you want to make sure doesn't change?
D.   If you could change anything about it, what would it be?
7.   Have CONFLICT CIRCLES affected your relationships with other students?
C.   (If yes) Can you give an example?
D.   (If no) Can you say more about that?
8.   Have CONFLICT CIRCLES affected how teachers and administrators treat you?
C.   (If yes) Can you give an example?
D.   (If no) Why not?
9.   What are other students saying about CONFLICT CIRCLES?

10.   What are staff and teachers saying about CONFLICT CIRCLES?

11. What are adults at home saying about CONFLICT CIRCLES?

12. Have CONFLICT CIRCLES changed the way you feel or act at school?

13. Have CONFLICT CIRCLES changed the way you feel or act when you're out of school?

14. Are there people who choose to do CONFLICT CIRCLES more or less often than others?
D.   Are there some types of kids for whom CONFLICT CIRCLES are not working? [Can you tell me more...what does it mean that they haven't worked?]

E.   Are there kids and adults who are choosing not to participating in CONFLICT CIRCLES who you think should be there? [What needs to happen to get them there? To make them interested in participating?]

F.   Are requests to do CONFLICT CIRCLES sometimes refused? Do you know why?

15. When there is conflict or someone is in trouble…

E.   Do you take time to pray? To reflect on virtues?

F.   How do students usually handle it?

G.   How does staff / administration usually handle it?

H.   Do people get treated the same?

I.   Do people get treated differently?

16. Are there different ways of handling conflict for boys and girls?

17.   How is it for you to understand your own feelings?

18.   What do you think causes your feelings?

19.   How is it for you to talk about your feelings with others?

Ok, Just two more really quick questions:

20. What is your gender?

21. What is your race?

APPENDIX C: CS-B & CS-C Teacher Protocol

[All throughout the interview, clarifying questions will be asked such as, "tell me more", "what else have you experienced", and "is there anything else you wanted to add". These more general follow up probes will be used, and are not discussed further in this protocol.]

[Other questions that follow the same spirit and purpose of this interview protocol may also be asked as the interview unfolds.]

Opening: Introduce yourself and say what you'll be talking about. Talk about confidentiality and voluntariness and say that they can skip any questions or come back to them later. Make sure they can see what you are writing down to increase trust in the process.

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your role/job in the school?

2. How many years have you been working at the school?

3. Your gender?

4. Your race?

VBRD Questions [Replaced VBRD **with THE WAY YOUR SCHOOL HANDLES CONFLICT]**

1. How would you describe VBRD to a friend in another school who doesn't know about it?
2.   What are some ways you try to teach the students about VBRD? How many times per week do you do that?
    a. What do you think works well (about their response to #2)?
    b. [if they did not already say] What would you change if you could?

2. Do you think VBRD helps kids get along better with each other in school?

3. Do you think VBRD helps kids get along better with their teachers?

4. Do you think VBRD helps kids get along better with their families?

5. Has VBRD changed the way you feel or act in school? If so, how?

6. How do you think students feel about VBRD?

7. What do you hear students saying about VBRD?

8. What would happen if your school stopped doing VBRD?

General Questions

1. Tell me about a recent conflict you observed between two or more students?
    A. What did you do?
    B. What worked well?

    C. What didn't work well?

2. Think of a recent conflict you observed between a student and a teacher
    A. What did you do?
    B. What worked well?

    C. What didn't work well?

Questions 3-12, CONFLICT CIRCLES refer to a restorative process (usually a dialogue) that the school uses to work through conflict or a rule violation, as separate from a punitive process. They may use a different term for it. If the interviewee is unfamiliar with any such process, skip to question 13.

3. How would you describe CONFLICT CIRCLES (or whatever phrase they use to describe a restorative response to conflict) to a friend who doesn't know about them?

4. What are the most common reasons for using CONFLICT CIRCLES?

5. What do you think about your experience with CONFLICT CIRCLES so far?
    A. Is there something about it that you want to make sure doesn't change?
    B. If you could change anything about it, what would it be?

6. Have CONFLICT CIRCLES affected your relationships with students?
    A. (If yes) Can you give an example?
    B. (If no) Can you say more about that?

7. Have CONFLICT CIRCLES affected your relationship with colleagues and administrators?
    A. (If yes) Can you give an example?
    B. (If no) Why not?

8. What are students saying about CONFLICT CIRCLES?

9. What are staff and teachers saying about CONFLICT CIRCLES?

10. Have CONFLICT CIRCLES changed the way you feel or act at school?

11. Have CONFLICT CIRCLES changed the way you feel or act when you're out of school?

12. Are there people who choose to do CONFLICT CIRCLES more or less often than others?

> A.   Are there some types of kids for whom CONFLICT CIRCLES are not working? [Can you tell me more...what does it mean that they haven't worked?]
>
> B.   Are there kids and adults who are choosing not to participate in CONFLICT CIRCLES who you think should be there? [What needs to happen to get them there? To make them interested in participating?]
>
> C. Are requests to do CONFLICT CIRCLES sometimes refused? Do you know why?

13. When there is conflict or someone is in trouble…

> A.   Do you take time to pray? To reflect on virtues?
>
> B.   How do students usually handle it?
>
> C. How does staff / administration usually handle it?
>
> D. Do people get treated the same?
>
> E.   Do people get treated differently?

14. Are there different ways of handling conflict at the school for boys and girls?

15. How is it for you to understand your own feelings?

16. What do you think causes your feelings?

17. How is it for you to talk about your feelings with others?

18. What do you think should be the role of teachers/staff when

> a. students have conflict with each other?
>
> b. students have conflicts with teachers?
>
> c. teachers/staff have conflict with each other?
>
> For those who have participated in VBRD training:

1. Have you personally made any changes to how you respond to conflict or rule violations at the school since the VBRD training?

2. Have you personally made any changes to how you respond to conflict in your own personal life?

3. Have you noticed any changes in how school staff in general respond to conflict?

4. Are there changes to how you want to respond to conflict that you want to make but haven't yet had the opportunity or ability to implement?

EXEMPTION FORM

Application for Determination of IRB Regulation on Research

All forms must be completed, signed by the RPI, and submitted by email to irb@illinois.edu.

Note: Some research, such as quality improvement research, does not need to be reviewed by our office. Please see our website at www.oprs.research.illinois.edu for more information or contact our office at irb@illinois.edu with inquiries.

University of Illinois IRB Protocol Number_____17829_____

X - Initial Submission

☐ Revised exempt application, date of revised application _____

1. RESPONSIBLE PROJECT INVESTIGATOR (RPI) The RPI must be a non-visiting member of the Urbana-Champaign campus faculty or staff who will serve as project supervisor at Illinois.[1] **For other research team members [including those from other institutions], please complete the Research Team Attachment and provide with the completed application.** Include all persons who will be 1) directly responsible for the project's design or implementation, 2) recruitment, 3) obtain informed consent, 4) involved in data collection, data analysis, or follow-up.

Last Name: Lyubansky	First Name: Mikhail		Academic Degree(s): Ph.D
Dept. or Unit: Psychology	Office Address: 723 Psychology Bldg		Mail Code: 716
Street Address: **603 E. Daniel St.**	City: Urbana	State: IL	Zip Code: 61820
Phone: **217-333-7740**	Fax: N/A	E-mail: Lyubanskm@gmail.com	
Urbana-Champaign Campus Status: Nonvisiting member of (Mark One) X Faculty ☐ Academic Professional/Staff			

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[1] Please refer to the Campus Administrative Manual on who may serve as the RPI: http://cam.illinois.edu/xi/xi-4.htm.

Training
X CITI Training, Date of Completion, August, 2016
☐ Additional training, Date of Completion[2],

2. PROJECT TITLE

Restorative Circles and Gender Expression

3. Please review the six [6] categories of exemption listed below and indicate the category or categories that apply to your research. [Note: Exemption status cannot be granted for the following: a) research involving prisoners, b) research that specifically targets persons who are cognitively impaired, c) non-educational research involving minors d) experimental research (including educational), e) research including interventions or task-based activities, or f) research where deception is necessary.]

1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

2. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior[3], unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

☐ 3. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

☒ 4. Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. **[Note: to be eligible for this exemption, all data,**

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[2] Additional CITI modules may be required depending on subject populations or types of research. These include: (i) research enrolling children; (ii) research enrolling prisoners; (iii) FDA regulated research; (iv) data collected via the internet; (v) research conducted in public elementary/secondary schools; and, (vi) researchers conducted in international sites

documents, records or specimens must exist prior to IRB review and must have been collected for purposes other than the proposed research. To qualify for an exemption in this category, the proposed research must be strictly retrospective.]

☐ 5. Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads. The program must deliver a public benefit or service (e.g., Social Security Act or Older American Act). Such research or demonstration projects must be conducted pursuant to specific federal statutory authority; there must be no statutory requirement that the project be reviewed by an Institutional Review Board and the project must not involve significant physical invasions or intrusions upon the privacy of participants.

☐ 6. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

If the proposed research does not qualify in any of these categories, please complete the New Protocol application form found at: www.oprs.research.illinois.edu.

4. Research Summary: Please summarize, in lay language, the objectives and significance of the research.

The objective of this investigation will be two fold. One is to assist the St. Louis archdiocese in better understanding how the Virtue-Based Restorative Discipline (VBRD) program is affecting school climate and the lives of students and school staff/teachers. This will be significant in that it will allow them the opportunity to shift attention and resources to areas that need to be developed further as well as point to ways in which their programs are functioning well. There are not many models currently existing for schools to look at in terms of restorative approaches to conflict / school culture, and this investigation will be a significant contribution to a growing body of data & evidence supporting the importance of alternatives to punishment. A secondary objective is my own personal interest in understanding how gendered power dynamics interact with and are affected by restorative approaches. This is significant in that it will be a lens through which to view the development of restorative programs in an educational setting and to allow for an analysis which accounts for the intersection of power with gender (as well as race, class and other identities which impact gender expressions). This analysis will contribute to a better understanding of how attempts at 'reforming' educational settings often fail to consider the power dynamics which limit their effectiveness and point to specific restorative methods which can act as interventions. All of this will contribute to a growing body of research aimed at improving education and increasing its effectiveness at preparing young people to engage with the complexities of the world with tools that affirm a wide variety of democratic approaches to learning. This project is secondary analysis of existing data collected within the STL and Urbana school districts.

5. Participants:

5A. What is the estimated total number of participants?

83

5B. Briefly describe the population(s) from which participants will be recruited.

Middle school students from Urbana Middle School volunteered through their morning leadership program to participate in focus group interviews. This included a multi-racial group of students from 6th to 8th grade of all genders. In the St. Louis Archdiocese, four students per grade (grades 5-8) were chosen for participation by their school. A variety of staff from St. Louis participated voluntarily as well.

5C-1. Describe how participants will be recruited.

UMS students were made aware of the opportunity to participate in interviews through announcements and invitations made by teachers and staff during their advisory period. Half of the St. Louis students were selected at random while the other half were nominated by their teacher (due to history of discipline-related issues). There is no further recruitment for this project.

5C-2. Attach final copies of recruiting materials, including the final copy of printed advertisements and the final version of any audio/taped advertisements and check here: Attached ☐   Will Follow ☐

5D. Will subjects receive compensation or rewards before, during, or after participation? **X** Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide a brief description of compensation or rewards.

Students at UMS received free decorated pencils and a bag of chips for their participation. Students in St. Louis received a bracelet with an inspirational saying printed on it.

6. Research Procedure:

6A. What will participants do and where will research activities take place?

Participants were interviewed in a designated room in each school and recorded responding to a series of questions aimed at obtaining information about their thoughts on the effectiveness and details of the restorative discipline programs implemented at their school. This research will utilize the data collected during each school's program evaluation. Al data currently exists and there will be no further recruitment, consent, or contact with the research subjects for this study.

6B. What is the estimated length of time participants will spend on research activities and in how many visits/meetings?

Each participant was interviewed once. Each interview lasted an average of 30 minutes.

6C. When are the approximate study dates?

April 6th, April 12th, & May 15th – 17th

6D. If subjects will complete questionnaires, surveys, interviews, etc., the IRB must review and approve the measure. List all such measures here and attach complete, labeled copies (including translations, if applicable) to this application:

Measure 1:	UMS Student Interview Protocol	X Attached	☐ Will Follow
Measure 2:	St. Louis Student Interview Protocol	X Attached	☐ Will Follow
Measure 3:	St. Louis Staff Interview Protocol	X Attached	☐ Will Follow

List additional measures on an attachment and check here: ☐

7. Data Collection Please explain how confidentiality will be maintained during and after data collection. If applicable, address confidentiality of data collected via e-mail, web interfaces, computer servers and other networked information.

Participant interviews will have a number assigned to them in place of their name. Recorded interviews were transcribed from our recording devices to our secure office computers and organized by number, date and demographic information. No names or other identifying information was transcribed and the recordings were deleted once the transcription was complete.

All data will be presented without any personal identifying information.

8. Consent Process:

8A. Please indicate all that apply for the consent process and provide all consent documents (including translations, if applicable) to this application.

Written informed consent

☐ Waiver of Documentation (signature) of Informed Consent (include language justifying waiver in 8B)

☐ Online consent   Oral consent   ☐ Unsigned Information Sheet Provided

☒ Waiver of Informed Consent (include language justifying waiver in 8B)

8B. Describe when and where voluntary consent will be obtained, how often, by whom, and from whom.

For all selected St. Louis students, consent forms were sent to parents and interviews were conducted with students whose parents returned a signed informed consent form. Oral assent was acquired from students prior to the interview. St Louis teachers and staff signed a consent form prior the interview.

For UMS students, per administrative request, we obtained oral consent from students participating in the focus groups. Focus groups were recorded without any identifying information.

Because this is secondary data analysis, no further consent process is necessary. We request a Waiver of Informed Consent.

9. Dissemination of Results: What is (are) the proposed form(s) of dissemination (e.g., journal article, thesis, academic paper, conference presentation, sharing with the industry or profession, etc)?

Some initial reflections will be presented at a national restorative justice conference, while subsequent findings will be disseminated in the form of an academic master's thesis.

10. Individually identifiable information: Will any individually identifiable information, including images of subjects, be published, shared, or otherwise disseminated?

X No

☐ Yes

If yes, subjects must provide explicit consent or assent for such dissemination. Provide appropriate options on the relevant consent/assent documents.

11. Funding Information:

Is your research funded or is there a pending funding decision?

  No

X Yes

If yes, please indicate the funding agency: Urbana portion was not funded. St. Louis archdiocese provided modest funds for the St. Louis portion of the project.

Please provide a copy of the funding proposal. ☐ Attached   ☐ Will Follow

12. Expected Completion Date: May 17th, 2017

INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCES:

I certify that the project described above, to the best of my knowledge, qualifies as an exempt study. I agree that any changes to the project will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board for review prior to implementation. I realize that some changes may alter the exempt stat us of this project. **The original signature of the RPI is required before this application may be processed (electronic signature are acceptable).**
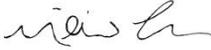
(signature)   5-31-2017

Responsible Project Investigator   Date

13. (OPTIONAL) DEPARTMENTAL ASSURANCE To be completed by the RPI's Departmental Executive Officer or their designee.

The activity described herein is in conformity with the standards set by our department and I assure that the principal investigator has met all departmental requirements for review and approval of this research.

Departmental Executive Officer (or designee)   Date

* For units that conduct **scientific merit review,** the signature above documents the following:

☐ 1. The research uses procedures consistent with sound research design.

☐ 2. The research design is sound enough to yield the expected knowledge.

This section is for OPRS Office Use Only

UIUC IRB Protocol No. _____

Exempt under 45 CFR §46.101(b) ☐ (1)   ☐ (2)   ☐ (3)   ☐ (4)   ☐ (5)   ☐ (6)

Reviewed by: _____