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A Restorative Approach to Student Discipline: Examining a Small School's Changed Response to Student Behavior

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A Restorative Approach to Student Discipline:
Examining a Small School's Changed Response to Student Behavior

Regina Marie Hopkins, Ed.D.

University of Connecticut, 2016

Abstract

This study examines how restorative practice takes shape in a single, racially diverse interdistrict school in the Northeast. It focuses on two fundamental questions: what does restorative practice look like at this school; and to whom is restorative practice applied at this school?

Using critical race theory as a contextual and analytical framework, I explore the relationship between P-12 public schools' race neutral policies, system-wide racially disparate student discipline outcomes, and the efficacy of restorative practice as a more equitable, socially just student discipline model. My study investigates the effect of restorative practice on one school's student discipline outcomes; and explores the potential for racially disparate treatment within restorative practice. Interviews in a small school with a sample of students and administrators, informal observations of administrators, teachers and students, and document analysis were conducted to examine how school administrators conceptualize, implement, and assess restorative practice in their school; and capture the perspectives of 11th and 12th grade students about school rules, student discipline, and restorative practice. As public school administrators throughout P-12 education examine responses to actual or perceived student misbehavior, my research probes the usefulness of restorative practice as a student discipline response in one school.

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A Restorative Approach to Student Discipline:
Examining a Small School's Changed Response to Student Behavior

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B. A., University of Pennsylvania, 1980

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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at the

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Education Dissertation

A Restorative Approach to Student Discipline:
Examining a Small School's Changed Response to Student Behavior

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A RESTORATIVE APPROACH TO STUDENT DISCIPLINE

A Restorative Justice Approach to Student Discipline:
Examining A Small School's Changed Response to Student Behavior

Regina M. Hopkins

University of Connecticut

Problem of Practice

Katz (1976) argued that public education systems were established by rich and powerful people to “shape behavior and attitudes” (p. 383) necessary for the maintenance and promotion of a particular social and economic order. Parsons (1959) maintained that the socialization of children and the selection process for their future roles begins in elementary school classrooms. If the knowledge and skills that children learn in elementary school position them for academic and social success (Villegas, 2007), the overwhelming evidence is that Black children in the United States (U.S.) are not afforded the same uninterrupted opportunities as their White peers to receive instruction and peer learning (Duncan, 2011; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Skiba et al., 2011).

The crisis of racial disproportionality in U.S. public schools’ disciplinary practice is not new (Children’s Defense Fund, 1975; Skiba, Arredondo, & Rausch, 2014). Since 1968 the U. S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has collected data from public schools, including school discipline data (OCR, 2014). In 1975 the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) published a report of its analyses of national school discipline data collected by OCR for school year 1972-1973. The CDF’s examination of OCR’s data uncovered an excessive use of suspensions for students in almost every state in the country, and significant racial disparities in public schools’ discipline practices (Children Defense Fund, 1975). The report used the number and percentage of students suspended to rank the 47 states reporting data. Connecticut was ranked third (after Rhode Island and Louisiana) based on the percentage of students suspended (CDF, 1975). Additionally, the CDF’s examination of suspension data by race revealed,

Black youngsters were suspended more than any other group of children. According to our analysis of OCR data for the 1972-1973 school year, 29 states suspended over 5 percent of their total black enrollment. Only 4 states suspended 5 percent of their white students. Six states suspended 10 percent or more of their black students; no state suspended white students at this rate. At the secondary level, the disproportion is truly striking: one in every eight black children

compared to one in every sixteen white children was suspended at least once during the 1972-1973 school year (p. 63).

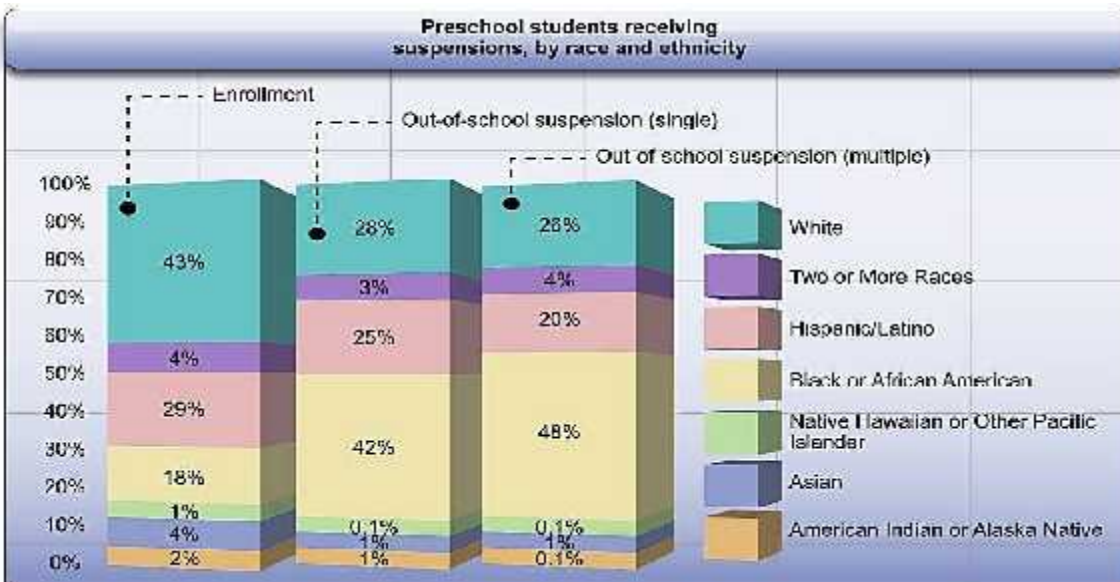
Racial disparities in both the frequency and duration of suspensions from school were evident in OCR's school discipline data collection (CDF, 1975). Black students were much more likely than White students to be suspended multiple times, and for a longer period of time. The CDF urged OCR to investigate and disrupt system-wide overuse of suspensions and widespread racially discriminatory school discipline practices. But OCR rarely conducted school discipline compliance reviews to examine schools' discipline practices. Furthermore, when OCR performed such reviews it failed to use its enforcement power since "[n]o school district has been denied federal funds because of discrimination in school discipline even after a finding of discrimination has been made (CDF, 1975, p. 72). In part, the CDF (1975) concluded, "OCR has shirked its responsibility to investigate and correct racial discrimination in school discipline" (p. 72).

More than forty years later, nonviolent behaviors of Black children remain consistently more likely to be viewed as disruptive, threatening, insubordinate and punishable by exclusion from school throughout the K-12 continuum (Howard, 2015; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Milner, 2013; Monroe, 2006). In fact, documentation of racially disparate school discipline practice is evident as early as preschool. A 2005 study examining expulsion in state-funded preschool programs found that Black preschoolers were expelled almost twice as often as White preschoolers, and Black boys "accounted for 91.4% of the expulsions," (Gilliam, 2005, p. 11). In 2011-12 the U. S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) added preschool suspension and expulsion data to its Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) for school discipline. In its first CRDC Issue Brief released in March 2014, OCR reported that "Black children represent 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschool children receiving more than one out-of- school suspension; in comparison, White students represent 43% of preschool enrollment but 26% of preschool children receiving more than one out of school suspension" (OCR, 2014, p. 1). Figure 1

presents these data graphically, exhibiting the racial disproportionality of suspensions at the preschool level.

Figure 1

2011-12 Preschool Suspensions Nationwide by Race and Ethnicity (OCR, 2014)



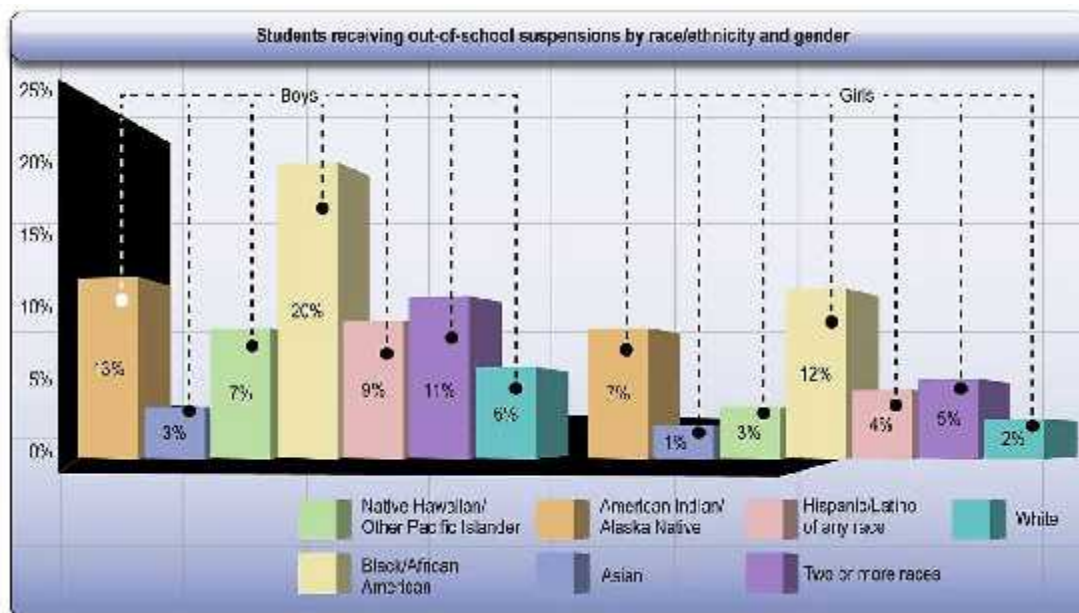
Note: Detail may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Figure reflects 99% of schools offering preschool.
Source: U. S. Department of Education OCR CRDC Report, 2014, p. 7.

Why does this matter? After conducting a detailed analysis of 2009-10 student discipline data for almost 7,000 school districts in the U. S., Losen and Gillespie (2012) argue, “suspensions matter because they are among the leading indicators of whether a child will drop out of school, and because out-of-school suspension increases a child’s risk for future incarceration” (p. 6). In their analysis of national and state-level K-12 suspension data for 2009-10, Losen and Gillespie (2012) found that “17%, or 1 out of every 6 Black school-children [sic] enrolled in K-12 were suspended at least once” (p. 6). In comparison, suspension rates for White students were “1 in 20 [or] 5%” (Losen & Gillespie, p. 6). OCR’s analysis of K-12 CRDC school discipline data for school year 2011-2012 produced similar findings (see Figure 2). Analysis of out-of-school suspensions for 2011-12 by race, ethnicity, and gender revealed,

Black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students. On average, 4.6% of white students are suspended, compared to 16.4% of black students. Through CRDC data, we can also explore suspensions by race and gender. Black boys and girls have higher suspension rates than any of their peers. Twenty percent (20%) of black boys and more than 12% of black girls receive an out- of-school suspension (OCR, 2014, p. 3).

Figure 2

2011-12 Out-of-School Suspensions Nationally by Race, Ethnicity and Gender (OCR, 2014)



Source: U. S. Department of Education OCR CRDC Report, 2014, p. 3.

What does this mean? Public schools' unequal selection of Black children for excessively punitive responses to actual or perceived misconduct deprives them of opportunities for learning and skill development crucial for future success (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Villegas, 2007). Skiba, Arredondo and Rausch (2014) argue the "[o]pportunity to learn is one of the strongest predictors of academic success" (p. 2). When educators remove Black children from classrooms and schools it increases their vulnerability to disconnection from school, and risk of adverse educational outcomes like nonattendance, failing grades, and grade retention (Leone et al., 2003; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Skiba,

Arredondo & Rausch, 2014; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Villegas (2007) argues “[s]tudents who do well in schools are granted access to the higher-paying and more prestigious positions in the economic order. By contrast, those who do least well are generally confined to positions at the bottom of the economic hierarchy, and destined to a life of poverty” (p. 371) due to unemployment or under-employment. However, the costs resulting from disparate overuse of exclusionary student discipline is not only borne by Black children. Former Secretary of Education Duncan maintains, “[s]chools and taxpayers also bear the steep direct and indirect costs from the associated grade retention and elevated school dropout rates” (USDOE, 2014, p. ii).

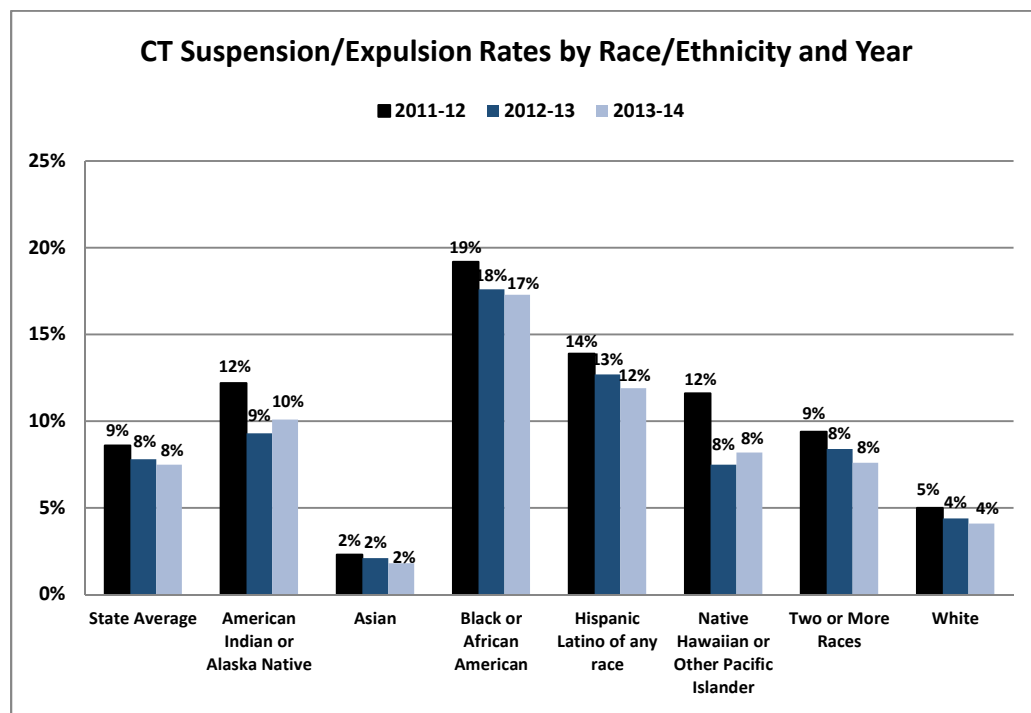
In addition, it is well-documented that racially disparate school discipline practices make Black children much more likely to be the victims of school arrests resulting in disproportionately high contact with, and confinement in, juvenile detention and prison facilities for the same or lesser behaviors than their White peers (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Skiba et al., 2014). In 2014 OCR reported 2011-12 CRDC data for students referred to law enforcement and for school arrest. OCR’s (2014) data revealed racial disproportionality in schools’ referrals to law enforcement and school arrests. Black children were 16% of all student enrollments in 2011-12 and they accounted for 27% of schools’ referrals to law enforcement and 31% of all school arrests. In contrast, total White enrollment was 51%, but 41% of schools’ law enforcement referrals and 39% of school arrests. According to Skiba et al. (2014) incarcerated youth “run a high risk for sexual victimization and suicide” (p. 3). Kalief Browder is a chilling reminder of the life altering devastation caused by incarcerating youth. Banished to New York’s Rikers Island jail complex in 2010 at age sixteen for allegedly stealing a backpack—which he vehemently denied—Kalief was imprisoned for three years without a trial or conviction (Gonnerman, 2014; Schwirtz & Winerip, 2015). His case was dismissed in May 2013. Haunted by his ordeal at Rikers, in June 2015 at the age of 22, he killed himself (Schwirtz & Winerip, 2015).

In Connecticut, public schoolchildren do not bear the risk of exclusionary discipline equally.

Connecticut Voices for Children (CVC) issued a report in February 2015 containing an analysis of Connecticut public schools’ student discipline data from 2008-2013. CVC found that in 2013 Black students were 13% of total student enrollment but almost 35% of all expulsions, while White students were almost 60% of total enrollment and 33% of all expulsions (CVC, 2015). Similarly, a March 2015 Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Suspension and Expulsion Report confirmed sustained, systemic racial disproportionality in school disciplinary practices for largely nonviolent school policy offenses. The CSDE report identified racial disparities within and across districts, statewide. Connecticut’s suspension and expulsion data by race and ethnicity for school years 2011 through 2014 revealed that Black students are suspended and expelled at rates almost four times greater than their White peers, and more than twice the state average (Figure 3) (CSDE, 2015).

Figure 3

Connecticut Suspension/Expulsion Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Year (CSDE, 2015)



Source: CSDE, *Suspensions and Expulsions in Connecticut* (March 2015)

For school year 2013-14 examination of suspensions and expulsions by race, ethnicity, and gender revealed rates for Black males that were two to three times higher than those for White males, and rates for Black females four to six times greater than those for White females for mostly nonviolent, school policy infractions (CSDE, 2015). Nationally and in Connecticut, racially disparate student discipline practices unfairly deprive Black children of equitable access to public education (CSDE, 2015; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; OCR, 2014; Skiba et al., 2011) throughout the P-12 education continuum. Upon entry, public schools “sort students into social winners and losers” (Villegas, 2007, p. 371) pushing Black children out of classrooms and schools, and off the pathway to academic and socioeconomic success. For the alarming numbers of Black schoolchildren in Connecticut and across the U.S. disproportionately removed from public schools for subjective, nonviolent school policy violations (CSDE, 2015; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2002), what messages do oppressively unequal student discipline practices convey about their expendability, their place in public schools, or their future roles in American society? Inequitable, exclusionary school discipline practices affect the lives and the futures of Black children in profoundly negative ways (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Skiba et al., 2014; Villegas, 2007).

As public schools continue to exercise their discretionary disciplinary authority in ways that deny Black children equitable opportunities for academic and social success, why should we care? We should care because despite their over-representation in exclusionary student discipline data there is no evidence that Black children misbehave more than White children (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Milner, 2013; Skiba et al., 2014). To examine whether Black students were disciplined more than other students because they misbehaved more often, Skiba et al. (2002) reviewed more than 11,000 discipline records of middle school students in 19 schools in an urban school district in the Midwest for school year 1994-1995. Their analyses of study data by race revealed “no evidence that racial disparities in school punishment could be explained by higher rates of African American misbehavior” (Skiba et al.,

2002, p. 334). However, Skiba et al., (2002) did find distinct differences in the reasons Black and White students received a discipline referral. According to Skiba et al. (2002), Black students received discipline referrals for subjectively determined offenses like “disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering” (p. 332), while White students received referrals for objectively discernible offenses like “smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language” (p. 332). Skiba et al. 2011 argue “[i]nvestigations of student behavior, race, and discipline have consistently failed . . . to find evidence of differences in either the frequency or intensity of African American students’ school behavior sufficient to account for differences in rates of school discipline” (pp. 86-87). Losen and Gillespie (2012) maintain disparities in schools’ disciplinary practices “raise civil rights issues and questions about fundamental fairness” (p. 6). We should care because disparate removal of Black children from classrooms and schools advances racial inequities and race-based hierarchies, which widen America’s persistent racial and class divide (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2014).

Public schools’ harsh student discipline practices have been studied and questioned. Nevertheless, Suvall (2009) points out “punitive discipline is the dominant model in schools today” (p. 547). However, educators who realize punitive and exclusionary responses to student behavior can generate more problems than they solve (Suvall, 2009) have begun to rely less on strategies that punish. Improved knowledge and growing awareness of alternative student discipline approaches (Carter et al., 2014), and heightened governmental focus on schools’ disciplinary practice and outcomes (Holder, 2014; OCR, 2014; USDOE, 2014), have caused increasing numbers of educators to reconsider their responses to student behavior. Public schools are shifting away from punitive and exclusionary tactics as their sole responses to student conduct (Gregory, Bell, & Pollock, 2014). Rising numbers of U.S. schools have adopted a restorative approach to student discipline (Anderson, 2015). However, while a body of research documents racial disparities in public schools’ disciplinary practice, further research is needed to investigate the usefulness of alternative approaches like restorative practice touted as a more promising and fair response to student discipline (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Because there are gaps in the research

regarding the effectiveness of restorative practice (Morris, 2002; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006), particularly its utility in reducing or halting racially disparate student discipline practices, this study will add to the existing scholarship and also inform policymakers and practitioners on the issue of equitable access to public education and socially just student discipline practice. The purpose of my study is to examine the efficacy of a single public school's adoption of restorative practice as a more just approach to student discipline, generally, and for Black children, specifically.

Literature Review

Katz (1976) maintained public education systems “cannot be understood apart from their context” (p. 383). Carter et al. (2014) argue that inequalities in U. S. public schools—particularly racially disparate student discipline practices and outcomes—cannot be comprehended, deconstructed and disrupted “without considering the full range of racialized historical and current factors that shape school life in the [U. S.]” (p. 2). To contextualize the problem and understand the systemic phenomenon of public schools’ racially disparate student discipline practices, I consulted five bodies of literature.

First, I examined the literature chronicling schools’ responses to student behavior viewed as misconduct or noncompliance to get a historical overview of the evolution of student discipline in the U.S. Second, I reviewed the literature on critical race theory (CRT) because it is “race-conscious scholarship” (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 1358) and useful to contextualize the pervasive problem of racial disproportionality in student discipline. CRT recognizes the inescapability of race and racism in American society, and America’s systems, structures and institutions (Crenshaw, 2002; 2011). CRT offers a historical and contextual pedagogy and framework for identifying and dismantling racial oppression and inequality (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Third, to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of whiteness as a concept, generally, and in the CRT paradigm, specifically, I explored the literature reviewing whiteness studies and theories of whiteness. Regarding CRT and whiteness, Dixson and Rousseau (2005) point out “[t]here was a need for a vocabulary that could name the race-related

structures of oppression in the law and society that had not been adequately addressed in existing scholarship” (p. 9). Fourth, I reviewed the scholarship on the application of CRT to education because race is clearly implicated in racially disparate student discipline practices and outcomes throughout U.S. public schools. Fifth, I studied the literature on unequal student discipline to understand the evolution of the scholarship considering, explaining and questioning racial disproportionality in U. S. school discipline outcomes.

Student Discipline in U.S. Public Schools

There has been a sliding scale—and some might argue a slippery slope—of student discipline approaches, policies and practices in U.S. P-12 public schools. And while the current school discipline trend is towards discipline strategies that keep children in schools and classrooms learning to promote students’ academic and social success that has not always been the goal.

Corporal Punishment

In addition to educating and socializing children for their future roles, public schools in the U. S. were also expected to provide children with the guidance necessary to ensure that students were morally responsible and obeyed societal rules (Dupper & Dingus, 2008). Corporal punishment or discipline using physical force has been an accepted way that administrators and teachers in U. S. public schools controlled and corrected student behavior. Despite social science and medical research challenging the value of parents or schools hitting children, in 2008 corporal punishment—“hitting, spanking, punching, shaking, paddling” (Dupper & Dingus, 2008, p. 243) and otherwise inflicting physical pain on children—was banned in every industrialized country in the world except remote territories in Australia and twenty-one southern states in the U.S.” (Dupper & Dingus, 2008, p. 243). Strauss (2014) reports that as of 2014, a total of nineteen states in the south and southwest continue to use corporal punishment as a violent student discipline response. Dupper and Dingus (2008) suggest “strongly held religious and cultural beliefs reinforce this practice” (p. 247) in the South and Midwest. Consistent with systemic racial disproportionality in schools’ disciplinary practice, Black students disparately receive corporal

punishment (CDF, 2014; Dupper & Dingus, 2008; Strauss, 2014). Dupper and Dingus (2008) point out “African American students are hit at a rate more than twice their proportion to the population” (p. 243). In *The State of America’s Children 2014* based on a school year calendar of 180 days, the CDF (2014) reports that each day 838 children are physically punished in a U.S. public school; 336 of those students are Black, and 404 are White.

Zero Tolerance Policies

As some educators and policymakers were trying to distance themselves from the stigma of corporal punishment in public schools (Dupper & Dingus, 2008), school systems and politicians reacted to a perception that public schools are unsafe spaces. Undoubtedly the 1999 Columbine High School massacre fed fears about school violence. Public education systems responded by adopting zero-tolerance policies. Zero tolerance policies were supposed to make schools safer by deterring dangerous student behavior with quick, mandatory punishment for specified infractions (NASP, 2001; Welch & Payne, 2012). A report by the American Psychological Association (APA) Zero Tolerance Task Force (2006) indicates zero tolerance had its origins in federal drug policy. In education, zero tolerance policies brought police or school resource officers into schools with law enforcement devices (metal detectors, surveillance equipment) and tactics (profiling, surveillance, and school arrests) (APA Task Force Report, 2006). However, zero tolerance policies have not made schools safer learning spaces, or improved school climate (APA Task Force Report, 2006; Duncan, 2011). Sweeping zero tolerance policies allowed schools to profile and banish students viewed as difficult or undesirable (APA Task Force Report, 2006; APA Task Force, 2008; NASP, 2001). Kupchik and Monahan (2006) argue that the presence of security personnel and devices distorted school discipline and altered “the experiences of students in ways that reflect modern relationships of dependency, inequality, and instability” (p. 617)—found in jails and prisons. Zero tolerance policies significantly harmed Black students who continued to be disparately targeted for school discipline (APA Task Force Report, 2006; Owens, 2015). Under zero tolerance policies Black students were more likely to experience contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system

since schools could criminalize minor infractions, and school administrators ceded their authority to discipline to law enforcement who punished (APA Task Force, 2008; APA Task Force Report, 2006; Browne, 2003; Kupchik & Monahan, 2006). Schools became the gateways that disparately ushered Black students into juvenile and criminal justice systems (Kupchik & Monahan, 2006; Suvall 2009). Suvall (2009) argues this “‘school-to-prison pipeline’ is another characteristic of contemporary school discipline policy that highlights both its increasingly punitive nature and the infiltration of criminal justice policy into education policy” (p. 551). According to the APA Task Force Report (2006), in response to data demonstrating racial disparities in zero tolerance suspensions and expulsions the federal “Civil Rights Commission held hearings in February 2000 on the extent to which zero tolerance discipline policies were inherently discriminatory, and concluded that the evidence was sufficient to warrant further study” (p. 56). In 2012 the Department of Justice filed a federal lawsuit to stop the zero tolerance abuses against Black children in Meridian, Mississippi who were routinely subject to school arrest, jailed, then held without due process for alleged school policy violations. According to Owens (2015) students were arrested and jailed for school uniform infractions that included wearing “the wrong shade of blue” (p. 1). Owens (2015) described another case where a male student was jailed “for passing gas in the classroom” (p. 1). More than 85% of Meridian’s public school enrollment is Black (Owens, 2015). Kupchik and Monahan (2006) argue that while the stated intention of zero tolerance was school safety, the effect of policy implementation has been to acclimate mostly Black students to a reality of control, surveillance, and eventual mass incarceration “in order to establish and maintain a criminal class to legitimate systems of inequality in modern capitalist states” (p. 628).

In January 2014 Attorney General Holder and Secretary of Education Duncan jointly addressed an audience at Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore, Maryland to launch federal school discipline guidance. The guidance acknowledged the harmful effects of zero-tolerance policies, and the racial disparities caused by over-policing in schools. Attorney General Holder urged audience members to rethink school disciplinary policies and practices that remove children from schools and place them in

the juvenile or criminal justice system. Furthermore, he argued a routine school discipline infraction “should land a student in a principal’s office—not in a police precinct” (Holder, 2014).

School Interventions and Behavioral Supports

As federal, state and local education agencies, policy-makers, school systems began to reconsider student discipline practice, there was an increased call for reliance on scientifically based research to improve student outcomes (Sugai & Horner, 2009; USDOE, 2014). According to Sugai and Horner (2009), response to intervention (RtI) emerged as a framework to “improve alignment between [No Child Left Behind] and [the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act]” (p. 224). RtI modeled a framework for an array of evidence-based, data-driven, behavioral and instructional practices and supports with essential principles suitable for special education students and adaptable for general education students (Sugai & Horner, 2009). As schools became “providers of positive behavioral interventions” (Sugai & Horner, 2009, p. 228) different problem-solving approaches with targeted academic and behavioral interventions and supports for students and staff emerged. Options included: school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS), positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), scientific researched based interventions (SRBI), and a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). Each model offered evidenced-based strategies for improved instructional and behavioral environments to support students’ academic and behavioral success. Rooted in behaviorism, the commonality of these approaches is: an emphasis on differentiated instructional and behavioral practices to prevent or deescalate inappropriate behaviors; reinforcement of desired behaviors; and a positive school climate for better academic and social outcomes (Dupper & Dingus, 2008; Skiba et al., 2014; Sugai & Horner, 2009). SWPBS and PBIS include tiered and targeted strategies and supports to teach and reinforce positive student behavior (Horner, Sugai, & Lewis, 2015). Extrinsic rewards are used to entice desired conduct, and discourage problem behavior. In addition to being behavioral systems designed to prevent or reduce misbehavior, SWPBS and PBIS intend to change adult perceptions and attitudes toward student discipline to create learning environments that support positive behavior and academic success. (Horner et al.,

2015).

Restorative Practice

Although public education is generally viewed as a state and local function, the federal government has played a role since 1867. The U. S. Department of Education (USDOE) has assisted educators and education policymakers in efforts to establish effective schools (USDOE, 2012). With the passage of anti-discrimination legislation—Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973—civil rights oversight and enforcement to ensure equal access to public education became part of USDOE’s central mission (USDOE, 2012). As Suvall (2009) points out, “even though the goal of harsh punishment is the offender’s conformance with positive social norms, it is equally likely to lead to aggravated non-conformance with these norms” (p. 552). So the USDOE in 2014 urged states and P-12 educators to improve school climate and reimagine approaches to student discipline to decrease the excessive and racially disparate use of suspensions and expulsions. Education Secretary Duncan stressed,

[s]imply relying on suspensions and expulsions, however, is not the answer to creating a safe and productive school environment. Unfortunately, a significant number of students are removed from class each year — even for minor infractions of school rules — due to exclusionary discipline practices, which disproportionately impact students of color and students with disabilities (USDOE, 2014, p. 1).

As P-12 educators examine who, how, and why they punish, restorative practice has emerged as a promising, more just approach to student discipline.

Restorative practice draws from the peacemaking habits of indigenous cultures all over the world, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the U. S. (Duncan, 2011; Lemley, 2001). Restorative practice is a mindset and value system change not a program or curriculum (Duncan, 2011; Karp & Breslin (2001); Suvall, 2009). Karp and Breslin (2001) argue that restorative practice represents a

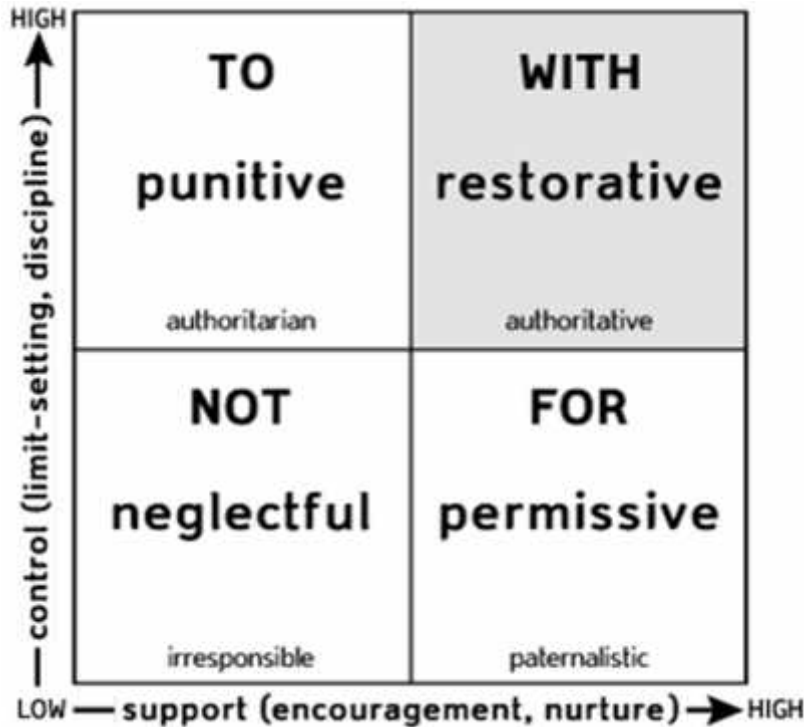
“radical shift in philosophy” (p. 253) to change schools from strict, punitive environments to relational, restorative communities. Restorative practice as a school strategy can be used proactively and/or reactively. The optimal use of restorative practice is proactively. Proactive use of restorative practice requires a mindset and action that invite and promote genuine, respectful relationships that support and foster peaceable coexistence. Restorative practice focuses on relationship and community building, and cultivation of the values, principles and skills needed to appropriately respond to behavior (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Karp & Breslin, 2001). School’s that adopt restorative practices have policies and practices that reflect care and respect for all people (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Proactive restorative practice recognizes that how people coexist or “live in community” (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005, p. 3) matters. Building supportive, trusting relationships with students and families inside and outside of the school context decreases conflict and bias (Gregory, Bell, & Pollock, 2014), and promotes a positive academic, social and emotional school climate. According to Gregory et al. (2014)

While race and class categories do not totally determine our lived experiences, they shape them. Given that America’s teaching force is predominantly White and middle-class, differences in lived experience can be (or are perceived to be) pronounced for low-income students and students of color. Educators’ connectedness to their individual students, as well as to ongoing events in students’ communities, can bridge any “identity gulf” and stop misjudgments, unintentionally hurtful comments (“microaggressions”), or overly harsh reactions to child and adolescent misbehavior. (p. 3).

McCold and Wachtel (2003) use the concept of a *social discipline window* adapted from Glaser (1969) (Figure 4) to identify four typical responses to conflict or problem behavior—permissive, neglectful, punitive and restorative. Wachtel (2012) maintains that restorative practice values “doing things *with* people, rather than *to* them or *for* them” (p. 3). In McCold and Wachtel’s (2003) *social discipline window* model the restorative “with” response provides high support, encouragement and nurturing, along with high control or limit-setting to provide strength and balance.

Figure 4

Social Discipline Window (McCold and Wachtel, 2003, adapted from Glaser, 1969).



Source: International Institute for Restorative Practices

The strength of restorative practice is its unique application to each school context and conflict. Amstutz and Mullet (2005) argue a “cookie-cutter approach” to restorative practice is not advised (p. 4).

Restorative Discipline or Restorative Justice

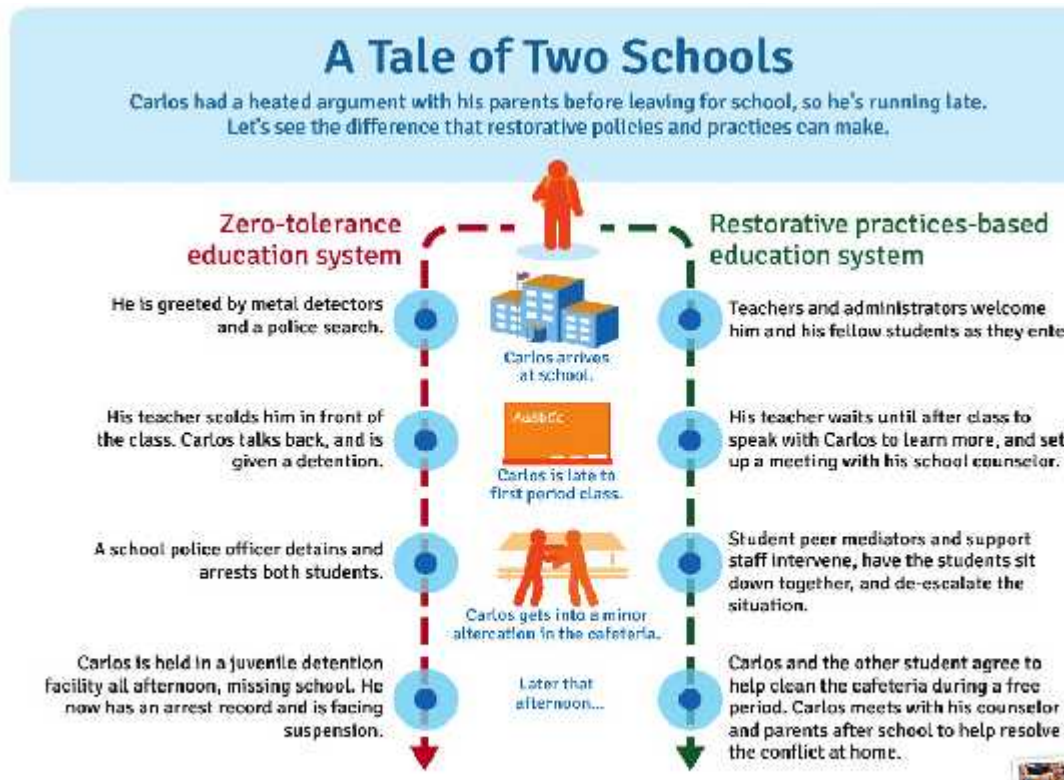
Restorative discipline or restorative justice is a reactive school discipline response. Borrowing from the criminal justice system’s restorative justice model, restorative discipline emphasizes responsibility for the harm done, not punishment for rule-breaking (Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Plato, 2008). Amstutz and Mullet (2005) argue restorative discipline as a school response to student misbehavior is not simply about new practices but “ [i]t is also about providing a new *framework* for the work that educators are doing” (p.17). Restorative discipline or restorative justice in the school context is best understood and operationalized as a way that schools perceive and respond to students’ behavior that

humanizes them, and separates the person from the deed (Cavanagh, 2009; Duncan, 2011). Karp and Breslin (2001) argue “school-based restorative justice is characterized by its focus on relational rehabilitation” (p. 252). The Alameda County School Health Services Coalition (ACSHSC) (2011) argues restorative justice is a philosophy that recognizes and respects students as resilient and capable problem-solvers because restorative justice does not view students as “the problems adults must fix” (p. 9). ACSHSC (2011) maintains the focus is “not on retribution but on reconnecting severed relationships and re-empowering individuals by holding them responsible” (p. 9). Karp and Breslin (2001) argue “restorative justice requires a philosophical shift from authoritarian controls because they effectively deny offenders and victims a meaningful role in the sanctioning process” (p. 253). Bringing parties in conflict together to face each other and discuss their issues provides an opportunity for them to speak their truth, and craft a solution to repair the harm done that validates concerns in a meaningful and instructive way (Ashley & Burke, 2011; Suvall, 2009; Ryan & Ruddy, 2015). Unlike school-based zero tolerance policies that cultivate fear antithetical to relationship building, restorative principles promote caring and responsible behavior (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Cavanagh, 2009; Flannery, 2014; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Ryan & Ruddy, 2015), so student misbehavior is treated as “harm to community members and relationships, not as an offense against the institution itself” (Suvall, 2009, p. 559).

In a restorative practice model, amends for wrongdoing is curative rather than punitive, and focused on accountability for wrongdoing in a way that creates empathy, repairs the harm done (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015), and also “support[s] students’ motivation to attend school” (Cavanagh, 2009, p. 55) and remain part of the school community. The Schott Foundation for Public Education’s *A Tale of Two Schools* (Figure 5) provides a compelling illustration of strikingly different outcomes for misbehavior in a zero tolerance school and a school using restorative practices.

Figure 5

A Tale of Two Schools, Schott Foundation Restorative Practice Infographic



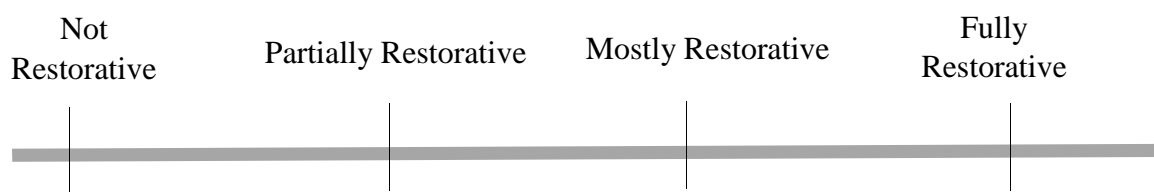
Source: Schott Foundation for Public Education, Restorative practices: A guide for educators.

Globally, restorative practices have been used in schools since the 1990s, including school districts in four U.S. states: Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, and New York (Ashley & Burke, 2012; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). However, efforts to actually evaluate restorative practice are recent (Morris, 2002; Stinchcomb et al., 2006). As school leaders reimagine student discipline and work to decrease their reliance on zero tolerance practices and exclusionary discipline, while increasing students' academic and social success, a growing number of districts and schools have adopted restorative practice. Currently, restorative strategies can be found in school districts or schools in the following states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania (Ashley & Burke, 2012; Brown, 2013; Fertig, 2015; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Perez, 2015; Schneider, 2012; Schott Foundation, 2014; Westerveldt, 2015; Zahn, 2015).

Zehr (2007) uses the phrase *continuum of restorativeness* to identify four levels of restorative status or progression (see Figure 6). Zehr’s continuum was helpful in understanding the variability found across schools’ restorative models.

Figure 6

Levels of Restorativeness, adapted from Zehr (2007)

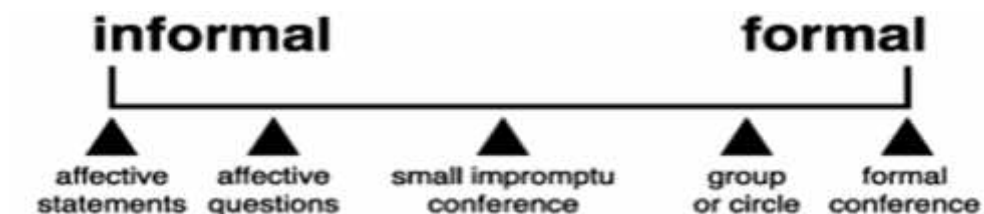


Nationally, restorative practices in schools vary (Brown, 2013). Duncan (2011) maintains “[r]estorative justice is not one procedure or a set curriculum that can be copied without adapting it to the specific needs and context of the communities and factual situations” (pp. 274-275). Adopters of restorative practice in U.S. schools occupy various positions along the *continuum of restorativeness*. In part, the level of restorativeness or restorative activity is a function of how long the practice has been underway in the school; the level of buy in from students and staff; level of parent and community engagement; availability and sustainability of funding and resources to train staff, students, and parents; and district and building-level support personnel (e.g., restorative coaches) to provide training and facilitate implementation of the site’s restorative model (ACSHSC, 2011; Oakland Unified School District, 2014). Restorative practice in schools is customized to fit the setting, skills, needs and level of support of each school community. This results in differences in frequency and scope of practice; proactive and/or reactive focus; differences in restorative tools and terminology; and the scale of implementation. Still, the U. S. schools that were the subject of my restorative practices review share critical commonalities. First, adopters of restorative practice promote relationship and community building for peacekeeping that

decreases wrongdoing, and increases cooperative conflict-resolution when challenges arise (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Duncan, 2011; Karp & Breslin, 2001). Second, schools primarily used restorative principles in response to student behavior—restorative discipline. Core tenets of restorative practice as a response to misconduct or harm in traditional justice or school contexts include the following: (a) identify the harm done and person harmed; (b) bring together all affected parties to discuss the harm, uncover the reasons for the behavior, and resulting needs; and (c) utilize collective and cooperative problem-solving to craft just remedies to repair the harm done (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; ACSHSC, 2011; Duncan, 2011). Third, schools engaged in restorative discipline practice use common informal and formal restorative tools—such as affective statements and questions, problem solving circles, restorative conferences—along the restorative practices continuum (see Figure 7). For example, affective statements and questions support communication and problem identification, while problem-solving circles and more formal restorative conferences focus on convening stakeholders to discuss the harm, the needs and obligations of those involved, and what is required to fix the harm (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Additionally, school-based restorative justice or restorative discipline practices also include peer mediation and/or peer juries (Burke, 2013; Schott Foundation, 2014).

Figure 7

Restorative Practices Continuum (Wachtel, 2013)



Source: International Institute for Restorative Practices

Restorative Practice and Racial Bias

Despite the variation in degree of restorativeness, all school sites implementing restorative practice in some form for two years or more report reductions in suspensions and expulsions (ACSHSC, 2011; Chicago Public Schools, 2015; Fertig, 2015; Karp & Breslin, 2001; OUSD, 2014; Perez, 2015). However, data is scarce regarding the impact of restorative practice on racial disproportionality. The lingering question, however, is whether restorative practice that may reduce suspensions and expulsions also reduces or eliminates racially disparate student discipline outcomes. Given the undeniable, racially disparate school discipline outcomes that have always existed for Black students in public schools, it is important to know whether schools' restorative practice models consider racial or other bias. And if racism or bias is examined, what strategies are used to address the issue to ensure more just discipline outcomes for Black children. Particularly in light of research that suggests schools' restorative practice measures typically do not replace traditional discipline responses (Fertig, 2015; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Suvall, 2009). In many school settings exclusionary discipline remains in use, and restorative practice is simply an alternative to, not a substitute for, suspension and expulsion (Fertig, 2015). According to Brown (2013) "some districts allow suspensions but now require stricter justification. Others, under pressure to reduce suspensions, put students on 'administrative leave'" (p. 4). In their study of restorative models in schools, which included examination of public schools in Minnesota using restorative practice, Karp and Breslin (2001) found "[t]he embrace of restorative measures was not directed at replacing traditional means of discipline but to provide an additional resource for schools to handle their own internal problems" (p. 256). Similarly, in their review of Denver Metropolitan Schools implementing restorative measures, Karp and Breslin (2001) found that restorative justice was added to the "continuum of possible responses" (p. 261) that also included customary punitive approaches. Suvall (2009) maintains that a "tension between a desire to use compassionate restorative methods and a desire to return to the more traditional punitive methods is seen in all attempts to introduce restorative justice in schools" (p. 564). Educators continue to have a great deal of discretion—especially in schools where restorative

discipline practice supplements rather than replaces punitive discipline—to determine which students and behaviors receive restorative or traditional discipline. In their description of restorative practice as a response to misconduct or harm, Amstutz and Mullet (2005) argue restorative justice and restorative discipline

promote values and principles that use inclusive, collaborative approaches for being in community. These approaches validate the experiences and needs of everyone within the community, particularly those who have been marginalized, oppressed, or harmed. These approaches allow us to act and respond in ways that are healing rather than alienating or coercive (p.15).

According to Burke (2013) treating restorative practice as a communal responsibility “for the well-being of all its members, including both victim and offender” (p. 5) acknowledges that [a]ll human beings have dignity and worth (p. 5). Amstutz and Mullet (2005) maintain restorative practice in schools requires policies that “reflect the values and principles of the school community [and] address the root causes of discipline problems rather than only the symptoms” (p. 27). If restorative practice, including restorative discipline, relies on caring relationships and shared community values to appropriately and humanely determine accountability, needs and obligations to fix harm caused when things go wrong, what happens in contexts where there is no shared understanding or communal consensus regarding justice, respect or inclusion? When attitudes and values of those in the community make shared understanding difficult or impossible, or hinder the ability to bring about just or restorative results in diverse contexts how can restorative practice be effective? In his investigation of the appropriateness of the use of restorative practice for hate crimes Gavrielides (2007) found that in contexts where there is no shared understanding or communal consensus of justice, respect or inclusion, restorative practice can be a risky proposition. According to Gavrielides (2007) “bringing people face to face with their fears and biases may help dispel myths and stereotypes that underlie hate attitudes” (p. 198) or expose those harmed to even greater cruelty. Practitioners of restorative philosophy have an obligation to be mindful

of and thoughtful about challenges or obstacles—like racial or other bias—to successful use of restorative practice (Gavrielides, 2007). Particularly since Payne and Welch’s (2013) investigation of racial composition and restorative practice (2013) found that as Black student enrollment increases at the school-level, the likelihood that schools will use restorative practices decreases. Not surprisingly, Payne and Welch (2013) argue “[s]chools will only be able to successfully implement restorative practices if they fully change their view of discipline” (p. 3). In U.S. public schools rife with racially disparate school discipline practice, a changed “view” of student discipline acknowledges and addresses racial disproportionality. To add to the understanding of the efficacy of restorative practice as a student discipline response and remedy for racial disproportionality in school discipline practice, my study examined a small, interdistrict, racially integrated school’s adoption of restorative practice as a more just approach to student discipline.

Critical Race Theory: Race-Conscious Epistemology and Scholarship

Legal scholar and former Harvard University Professor of Law, Derrick A. Bell, Jr., is credited with “placing race at the center of intellectual inquiry rather than at the margins of constitutional theory” (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 1345). Tate (1997) argues that it was Bell’s “effort to dismantle traditional civil rights language—for example, colorblindness and equal opportunity—to provide a more cogent historical and legal analysis of race and the law” (p. 216) that provided the theoretical foundation for what would become CRT. Professor Bell was a catalyst for the student resistance that exposed American institutions as “sites of racial harm” (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1285) for their role in recreating and protecting America’s racial hierarchy.

In 1989 CRT formally emerged from an intellectual movement led by progressive legal scholars of color who unapologetically centered race in the discourse and analysis of American jurisprudence, civil rights laws and racial power in the U. S. (Crenshaw, 2002; Crenshaw, 2011). CRT grew out of the realization that racism and “racial power [were] located not at the margins of traditional forms of racial

subordination but in some ways at the very center of liberal institutions that were otherwise lined up in favor of ‘racial reform’” (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1286). Alemán and Alemán (2010) observe that CRT exposed “institutions for their complicity in reproducing a racist social order” (p. 3). CRT scholarship was fueled by a frustration with liberal Critical Legal Studies’ (CLS) resistance to confronting race and racism in the law, and in the scholarship, policies and practices of America’s legal academies and organizations (Brayboy, 2005; Crenshaw, 2002; Yosso & Solórzano, 2005). The core principle of CRT is that racism in America is not the result of individual bad actors, but rather the construct of institutions, structures, and systems whose resources and power make and enforce laws, policies and practices that privilege and benefit White people, and oppress Black people (Taylor, 2009). Other key thematic tenets of CRT include: “racism as normal” (Taylor, 2009, p. 4); the falsehood of colorblindness (Crenshaw, 2011); interest convergence (Bell, 1980) and implications for social justice; experiential knowledge as a counter narrative (Solórzano, 1997); and contextualizing racism (Solórzano, 1997). Together these principles of CRT provide an analytical framework for exposing, examining and opposing racism and oppression.

Ordinariness of Racism

CRT argues that race is the most compelling factor in America’s structural inequality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005), and racism is at the center of America’s laws and policies that promote and sustain racial oppression (Crenshaw, 2002; Crenshaw, 2011; Solórzano, 1997). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) observe, “racism is about institutional power, and people of color in the United States have never possessed this form of power” (p. 24). The normalness of racism in this country has advantaged White people and disadvantaged Black people. Taylor (2009), citing Delgado (1995), argues “[t]he assumptions of White superiority are so ingrained in political, legal, and educational structures that they are almost unrecognizable” (p.4). CRT maintains that America’s persistent racism not only privileges White people but also inculcates a mindset and disposition—whiteness—that overvalues being White. Harris (1993) asserts that whiteness historically and presumptively favors White people in

its normalization and “hypervaluation” (p. 1743) of the culture, status, beliefs, values and practices of White people. According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002) “whiteness is a category of privilege” (p. 27). CRT challenges whiteness as the normative American standard against which the visage, behaviors, beliefs, culture, experiences, language, knowledge, and values of people of color are measured and found lacking (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Gillborn, 2005; Stovall, 2006; Taylor, 2009). Whiteness misconstrues, distorts, or avoids acknowledgement of race-based deprivations and inequalities as oppression (Taylor, 2009). Rather, the lens of whiteness views racial disparities as “accepted discrepancies” (Taylor, 2009, p. 6) resulting from individual acts of Whites and/or deficits of Blacks. Taylor (2009) argues,

Even stranger, racial inequality and discrimination in matters such as hiring, housing, criminal sentencing, education, and lending are so widespread as to be uninteresting and un concerning to most Whites (p.5).

Falsehood of Colorblindness

Critical race theorists assert the dominant narrative that the U.S. is a colorblind meritocracy is unsupported by customs, laws, institutions and systems that perpetuate racism and racial inequities to protect White supremacy (Crenshaw, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to Scheurich and Young (1997) Euro-American culture, consciousness, and epistemologies are drawn from a founding civilizational premise of White racial supremacy. Civilizational racism provides racial justifications for racial oppression, and race-neutral fictions of objectivity and neutrality to preserve White privilege. Yosso, Parker, Solórzano and Lynn (2004) point out “traditional claims of ‘objectivity’ and ‘neutrality’ camouflage the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society” (p. 4). Colorblind rhetoric makes sense to White people because “[c]olor-blind ideologies and assumptions fail to recognize the historical and contemporary realities of race and racism in American society” (Giles & Hughes, 2009, p. 691).

Interest Convergence and Social Justice

CRT insists on a commitment to true racial equality and social justice. CRT confronts the contradiction in liberal thought and CLS tradition that prefers paced, restricted racial progress—that preserves America’s race-based hierarchy—to comprehensive, expansive, racially transformative civil rights remedies (Brayboy, 2005; Crenshaw 2002). Critical race theorists stress the need for proactive, emancipatory, wide-ranging strategies and efforts to achieve racial equality and social justice for oppressed people (Solórzano, 1997). However, absolute racial equality for Black people threatens White power (Ladson-Billings, 1998). López (2003) argues “racism cannot be remedied without substantially recognizing and altering White privilege” (p. 86). Bell (1980) used the phrase “interest convergence” to identify the principle that the “interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (p. 523). CRT argues that civil rights gains and/or racial progress for Blacks and other communities of color occur only when there is interest alignment or a clear benefit to Whites as well (Alemán & Alemán, 2010; Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1998). For example, in Connecticut, the statutory purpose of interdistrict magnet schools (magnets) is to reduce racial, ethnic and socioeconomic isolation (Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-264I(a)). While the state articulates an interest in integrated public education, for many families—particularly suburban White families electing to send their children to schools in urban areas—the benefit or quality of the educational opportunity may be the primary concern rather than integration (See Bell, 1980; 2009). So magnet operators strive to provide program options that are either unavailable or in short supply in suburban districts. High-demand themes like: aerospace; science, technology, engineering and math; performing and fine arts; science, technology, engineering, arts and math; and dual-language curriculums; as well as no-cost, themed full-day preschool offer school choice opportunities that attract suburban families which may promote integration.

Experiential Knowledge as a Counter Narrative

CRT recognizes the richness of the perspectives and lived experiences of Black people as valuable and legitimate sources of knowledge “appropriate and critical to understanding, analyzing, and

teaching about racial subordination” (Yosso et al., 2004, p. 4). According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002) “the ideology of racism creates, maintains, and justifies the use of a ‘master narrative’ (p. 27). Dominant discourse that Solórzano and Yosso (2002) refer to as “monovocals, master narratives, standard stories, or majoritarian stories” (p. 28) are a manifestation of the power and legitimacy of White privilege, and a construct of whiteness. Because majoritarian stories about race “purport to be neutral and objective yet implicitly make assumptions according to negative stereotypes about people of color” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 29), counter-storytelling is an affirming, cathartic and empowering act of resistance (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). “Voice scholarship” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 11) opposes a dominant racial narrative that marginalizes Black people and magnifies the value and power of whiteness (Harper, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Giving voice to experiential knowledge in the form of counter-narratives or counter-storytelling is a mechanism for liberation.

The Historical and Contemporary Contexts of Racism

CRT opposes ahistorical, discipline-specific analysis of race and racism in the law (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). To facilitate the analysis of race and racism within the appropriate historical and contemporary contexts, the innovators of CRT grounded their race-conscious framework in critical theory drawn from law and a variety of disciplines, which included history, sociology, and cultural, ethnic and women’s studies (Alemán & Alemán, 2010; Crenshaw, 2002; Yosso & Solórzano, 2005), to create a multidisciplinary perspective on racism and oppression.

Understanding Whiteness in Education

Whiteness is more than the coveted possession that confers the full indicia of U.S. citizenship in a nation founded on the principle that whiteness determines wealth and power (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1998). The concept of whiteness is a way of knowing, perceiving, and interacting in the world that is reinforced by social, economic, educational, legal and political systems (Crenshaw, 2011; Gillborn, 2005; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Leonardo, 2002) created by White people. Leonardo (2002)

argues “‘whiteness’ is a racial discourse, whereas the category ‘white people’ represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color” (p. 31). Green et al. (2007) observe that whiteness “places white people in dominant positions and grants white people unfair privileges, while rendering these positions and privileges invisible to white people” (p. 390). Whiteness is the reification of a belief that White people and what White people value matter more than anyone else and anything else. Gillborn (2005) observes, “those who are implicated in whiteness rarely even realize its existence—let alone their own role in its repeated iteration and resignification” (p. 490). Whiteness feeds America’s systemic, regenerative racism. While CRT advocates for a historical and contemporary analysis of the centrality of race and racism, Gillborn (2005) insists that whiteness is unwilling to identify racial inequality as racism, and diminishes the historic and contemporary significance of racism as a persistent factor culturally, educationally, economically, legally, and politically.

In the context of education, Dixson and Rousseau (2005) argue that there is a legacy effect of whiteness that has not yet been closely examined by education researchers. Rogers and Mosley (2006) point out that whiteness has not been examined “as an idea that manifests and affects schooling in tangible ways, such as setting standards for ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ actions” (p. 465). There is a need to examine P-12 student discipline policy and practice that disparately selects and punishes Black children system-wide through a CRT lens that centers race and racism, and implicates and examines whiteness. Educators’ views of students and their behaviors influence which students are selected for discipline, and the severity of the sanction imposed (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Ladson-Billings (1998) maintains that “[i]t is because of the meaning and value imputed to whiteness that CRT becomes an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (p. 9). CRT provides a compelling and comprehensive conceptual framework to situate and examine U.S. public education systems whose race-neutral student discipline policies reproduce race-based societal inequalities in P-12 education (Carter et al., 2014; Kupchik, 2009).

Critical Race Theory in Education: Race Consciousness and Fairness

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first recognized the promise of applying CRT principles to education research to examine the effects of race and racism in schools generally, and school inequalities, specifically. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) observed that until the emergence of CRT, in education race was “untheorized” (p. 49) as the focal concept in educational inequalities. While acknowledging the intersection and import of race, class and gender in education outcomes, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) assert,

examination of class and gender, taken alone or together, do not account for the extraordinarily high rates of school dropout, suspension, expulsion, and failure among African American and Latino males. . . . [it] is not that class and gender are insignificant, but rather, as West suggests that ‘race matters’, and, as Smith insists, “blackness matters in more detailed ways.” (pp. 51-52).

The usefulness of CRT in education research is not simply that it argues that examination of racial inequalities in education systems must be considered in a context of routine and structural racism. The value and relevance of CRT in education is that it provides a research epistemology from the perspective of racially marginalized and oppressed people as a conceptual and methodological tool to engage in a “radical critique of both the status quo and the purported reforms” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 62). In their examination of epistemologies traditionally used and heralded as legitimate in education research, Scheurich and Young (1997) found “ways of knowing” (p.4) that reproduced and supported White supremacy. They coined the term “epistemological racism” (p. 4). According to Scheurich and Young (1997),

Different social groups, races, cultures, societies, or civilizations evolve different epistemologies, each of which reflects the social history of that group, race, culture, society or civilization; that is, no epistemology is context-free. Yet, all of the epistemologies currently in education arise exclusively out of the social history of the dominant White race. They do not arise out of the social history of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans,

or other racial/cultural groups—social histories that are much different than that of the dominant race (a difference due at least partially to the historical experience of racism itself [see, for example, Collins, 1991]) (P. 8).

The resulting bias or *epistemological racism* favors and perpetuates White domination, racism and oppression. A White worldview distorts, marginalizes or simply ignores non-White theories and sources of knowledge thereby “unnecessarily restricting or excluding the range of possible epistemologies” (Scheurich & Young, 1997, pp. 8-9) in scholarship, policy and practice. CRT scholarship in education follows key CRT principles and themes: the permanence and ordinariness of racism (Stovall, 2006); the value of experiential knowledge of students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005); the myth of colorblindness and race-neutrality in schools (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005); the need to challenge the liberal view that fairness is a paced process (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005); and a requirement to take action to disrupt and eliminate inequality (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Stovall, 2006). Stovall (2006) argues that the application of CRT in education must “expose and deconstruct seemingly ‘colorblind’ or ‘race neutral’ policies and practices which entrench the disparate treatment of people of non-White persons” (p. 244), and “change and improve challenges to race neutral and multicultural movements in education which have made White student behavior the norm” (p. 244). The application of CRT in education, generally, and in this study, specifically, is useful to investigate the purpose and effect of colorblind or race neutral policies and practices in schools and school systems to determine whether they disadvantage and oppress certain students, and advantage and privilege other students.

During the last twenty-years CRT has been used or proposed as a conceptual and methodological framework in education research (Yosso et al., 2004) to examine: admissions and financial aid (Tate, 1997); curriculum (Brown & Au, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1998); culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2009); education administration (Parker & Villalpando, 2007); education policy (Gillborn, 2005; Stovall, 2006); education researcher epistemologies (Milner, 2007; Scheurich & Young, 1997); instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1998); multicultural education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995); racial

literacy in elementary school (Rogers & Mosley, 2006); school finance (Alemán, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997); school desegregation (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997); schooling experiences of African American males (Howard, 2008); teacher attitudes (Vaught & Castagno, 2008); teacher education (Lopez, 2003; Milner, 2008; Solórzano, 1997); and university recruitment (Tate, 1997). CRT has also been used in education as a tool to explore racism experienced by Black high school students (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004); to deconstruct racism and antiracist praxis (Gillborn, 2006; Stovall, 2006); and to inform a critical race methodology and pedagogy for obtaining social justice in education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

The Relevance of CRT to the Present Study

In the U. S., the culture, climate, and curriculum of P-12 public schools reflect the lived experiences, perspectives and values of predominantly White, female, middle class educators (Carter et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2014; Monroe, 2006; USDOL, 2014; Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). As a result, public schools and classrooms are racialized settings for Black children (Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Schools have racial and cultural climates and contexts that determine school norms, influence educators' attitudes, behavior and expectations, and define the processes and practices of schooling (Ladson-Billings, 1998; López, 2003; Monroe, 2005). Structural racism is about power and oppression, and in schools it is manifested in the power to punish. According to Sarason (1990) classrooms "are the only places in our schools where almost all of the dilemmas of power can be found," (p. 74). Classroom management is a euphemism for establishment of control; a strategy to minimize or eliminate perceived student nonconformity, challenges to teacher authority, or undesirable students. Student compliance is expected. Perceived student disruption or disrespect is not tolerated, particularly in a context where "establishment of [a teacher's] authority and power is so central to how they and others judge their professional competence" (Sarason, 1990, p. 80). So in a power struggle between a teacher and student the ultimate "authority of the teacher is powered by the power to punish," (Sarason, 1990, p. 79). In schools students are generally selected and/or referred for disciplinary action because of

educators' impressions of their behavior. In situations of perceived power struggles between educators and students, why are Black children so often disparately punished? Whether or not a sanction is issued, and the severity of any sanction imposed is typically influenced by educator perceptions of the student and the student's behavior, as well as beliefs about the student's family and community (Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; Skiba et al., 2013). Whiteness can influence educator perceptions of student behavior even when educators appear to be unaware of the "material effects of [their] whiteness and the manner in which it is deployed and maintained" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 24). According to Gillborn (2005),

[s]cholarship on race inequity (in numerous disciplines and in many nation states) has long argued that a deliberate intention to discriminate is by no means a necessary requirement in order to recognize that an activity or policy may be racist in its consequences. (p. 498).

Furthermore, Gillborn (2005) argues "those who are implicated in whiteness rarely even realize its existence—let alone their own role in its repeated iteration and resignification" (p. 490). At a minimum, racially neutral student discipline policies that universally result in racially disparate school discipline practices and outcomes suggest that educators and students "do not ascribe the same meanings and intentions for the student's behavior" (Milner, 2013, p. 484). Scheurich and Young (1997) observed "[t]he unfortunate truth is that we can be anti-racist in our own minds but promulgating racism in profound ways that we do not understand" (p. 12). Therefore, CRT provides powerful epistemological and analytical principles to examine race neutral student discipline policies, racially disparate student discipline outcomes, and the efficacy of a single school's adoption of restorative practice as a more just approach to student discipline. To understand the form(s) that race, racism, and/or whiteness take in student discipline practice, and whether or how the form(s) create or maintain subordination of Black students, I use CRT's analytical tools of experiential knowledge—student narratives about school discipline, and the principle of interest-convergence to examine the efficacy of a small school's changed response to student discipline.

Experiential Knowledge, Storytelling and the Counter-Narrative in the Present Study

CRT argues that the important contextual and situational experiences and stories of non-White people have been distorted, erased or marginalized in America's master narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Yosso (2005) maintains "CRT asserts that the experiential knowledge of People of Color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing and teaching about racial subordination" (p. 74). Similarly, Crenshaw (2011) argues that "loss of the ability to name and contest [one's] reality [is] perhaps the final triumph of racial power" (p. 1348). CRT challenges the dominant narrative that perpetuates and protects whiteness. CRT identifies storytelling as a powerful mechanism for marginalized, oppressed and silenced people to give voice to their reality (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2005). The ability to tell one's truth with the force of feeling and emotion from the experience powerfully disrupts the dominant narrative. According to Ladson-Billings (1998) naming one's reality can "catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism" (p. 14). Students' perspectives of school environments (i.e., school discipline and instructional practices) are often overlooked in the discourse and scholarship public schools (Howard, 2001). My study will include student voices and views. High school juniors and seniors in the study site will be given an opportunity to communicate their thoughts about school rules, school discipline and restorative practice. Capturing students' voices recognizes that they are "holders and creators of knowledge" (Bernal, 2002, p. 107). Howard (2001) argues,

[t]he scant attention paid to student' voice is inexcusable given their role as the primary clientele in K-12 schools. If the programs, practices, and policies rendered within the framework of the places called schools are delivered with students' best interest in mind, we must ask why their voices and viewpoints are so blatantly omitted (p. 132).

Students' view of discipline and restorative practice in their school is legitimate and important to understanding whether the school's newly adopted restorative model is indeed just. According to Howard (2001) the "shortcomings of numerous interventions and misguided practices merit the creation of a space

for students to offer potential solutions for what they believe works best for them in schools (p. 132).

Interest-Convergence in the Present Study

The concept of interest-convergence in CRT examines the impetus for social change and racial progress in the U.S., and posits that America's legacy of racism and racialized power persists because White people are unwilling to consider or accommodate change if they believe it endangers their "interests, position, status, and privilege" (Milner, 2007, pp. 391-392). CRT argues that civil rights concessions serve or converge with the interests or needs of White people (Bell, 1980; Milner, 2007), not because equal rights for all citizens including Black Americans is the law and socially just. The principle of interest-convergence requires me to look beyond the expressed intentions of school administrators regarding their changed student discipline strategy to examine three critical questions (Gillborn, 2005). Gillborn (2005) argues that the principle of interest-convergence demands that the effect of educational policies and practices rather than their stated purpose be examined to determine whether they impede or promote racial equality. According to Gillborn (2005), there are key questions that probe the "material consequences of educational policy" (p. 492). Gillborn (2005) argues CRT's interest convergence tenet necessitates investigation of the interests or agenda being served; the benefit or harm; and the practical effects of the policy or practice for Black people. Using Gillborn's (2005) test for interest convergence, my examination of the efficacy of restorative practice as a school discipline response will also consider: who or what is driving the study site's changed discipline practice; who is advantaged or disadvantaged by the practice; and what are the effects of restorative practice for Black students in the school?

Racially Disparate School Discipline Practices and Outcomes

Nationwide, racial disparities in student discipline throughout the P-12 continuum are well documented (Gregory et al., 2014; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; USDOE, 2014). The numbers of Black children denied access to public education and put at risk for school failure and negative life outcomes has reached epidemic proportions (Gregory et al., 2014; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Losen & Martinez,

2013; OCR, 2014; USDOE, 2014). In the face of research that finds no evidence “that discipline disparities are due to poverty . . . nor is there evidence that students of color engage in rates of disruptive behavior sufficiently different from others to justify higher rates of punishment” (Skiba et al., 2014, p. 2), why do Black children continue to be at significantly higher risks for exclusionary discipline and school arrest than their White peers? Researchers’ hypotheses about the reasons for unequal student discipline generally fall into two broad categories: student attributes, and system and school-level factors.

Student Characteristics

Early research suggested characteristics and deficits of Black children and Black families caused the persistent pattern of Black students’ overrepresentation in public schools’ exclusionary disciplinary practices (Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba, et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2002; Welch & Payne, 2012). Economic insecurity and resulting low socioeconomic status (Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002), and unintended but inevitable consequences of the concomitant ills of poverty caused Black students to be viewed as more unruly or disruptive (Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2002; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). A deficit narrative situated the problem of systemic, racially disparate school disciplinary practices in Black children, Black families and Black communities (Skiba et al., 2002; Welch & Payne, 2012). Mattison and Aber (2007) argue that “[a]lthough research on the achievement and discipline gaps has raised awareness of racial disparities in schooling, it has over-emphasized the characteristics of students (e.g., genetics, attitudes toward school) and families (e.g., socioeconomic status, parental attitudes) as explanations for these racial differences” (p. 1).

System and School-Level Factors

According to Mattison and Aber (2007) researchers began to expand their narrow focus on students’ attributes when evidence of “high achieving schools in racially segregated and economically depressed urban areas call[ed] into question explanations of the achievement gap that focus[ed] narrowly on students’ race or socioeconomic status” (p. 1). Scholarly exploration shifted and expanded the discourse and foci of inquiry for racialized student discipline practices and outcomes. Especially in light

of the research demonstrating that although Black children are punished more, there is no evidence that they misbehave more than White children (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Skiba et al., 2014; USDOE, 2014; USDOJ, 2014). Investigation of other possible factors influencing disparate rates of Black children's selection and referral for school discipline surfaced important information about the intersection of student race and system and school-level factors. Research continued to contradict the narrative that students' socioeconomic status was a compelling factor in light of evidence that "significant racial disparities remain even after controlling for socioeconomic status" (Skiba et al., 2002, p. 333; Skiba et al., 2014).

Scholarship in the academy reflects a noticeable shift away from the focus on Black children as the sole reason for educators' disparate student discipline practices, and increased movement towards scrutiny of systemic and school-level factors in public education as the causes of over-selection and excessive punishment of Black children throughout P-12 education. A growing body of research now theorizes that system and school-level factors, and students' race (Rocque, 2010), influence unequal discipline practices in public schools. Investigations of school-level factors that affect school disciplinary practices have included examination of: decisions of classroom teachers and school administrators (Skiba et al., 2011); educator attitudes and bias (Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Neal et al., 2003); teacher expectations (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007); the quality of the black student-teacher relationship (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007; Rey, Smith, Yoon, Somers, & Barnett, 2007; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011; Skiba et al., 2013); the connection between school desegregation and increased suspension of Black students (Skiba et al., 2002); racial composition of schools (DeVoe, Peter, Noonan, Snyder, & Baum, 2005; Kupchik & Monahan, 2006; Welch & Payne, 2012); the effect of racial composition of student enrollment on educator fear and/or perception of racial threat (Milner, 2013; Welch & Payne, 2012); educators' culturally responsive fitness (Milner, 2013; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004); the association between school racial climate and students' academic and discipline outcomes (Mattison & Aber, 2007); and the quality of school

leadership (Milner, 2013; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002).

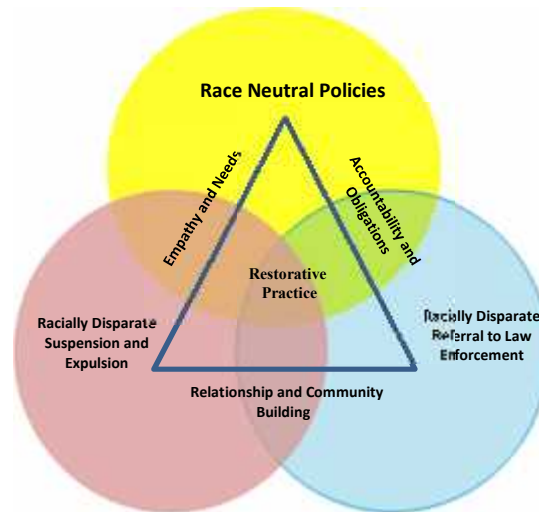
Researchers' knowledge has improved and progressed as the attributes of schools and educators—not simply Black children—are examined as factors in disparate student discipline outcomes (Carter et al., 2014). New learning confirms that characteristics of schools and educators influence the decision-making that determines which students are disciplined and how they are disciplined (Gregory et al., 2014). Skiba, Arredondo and Rausch (2014) argue that “rather than focusing on individual student deficits, disparity-reducing intervention efforts will be more productive by focusing on changing school factors” (p. 3). Research examining and recommending strategies to reduce referrals and exclusionary discipline considers the effect of educator bias in discipline decisions and the role of schools in student discipline reform (Gregory et al., 2014; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Skiba et al., 2014).

Still there are gaps in the literature regarding the efficacy of school-based interventions to address pervasive racial disparities in student discipline. CRT frames America's problem of persistent racial disproportionality in school discipline as one rooted in White oppression and structural racism, not simply individual's discriminatory attitudes and practices (Taylor, 2009). Figure 8, below, illustrates and contextualizes the relationship between the problem of practice, the theory and the proposed discipline reform of restorative practice.

Figure 8

Contextualizing the Problem, the Theory, and the Proposed Reform

CRITICAL RACE THEORY



U. S. P-12 Public Education Systems

Indeed, the very title of the article by Carter et al. (2014), *You Can't Fix What You Don't Look At: Acknowledging Race in Addressing Racial Discipline Disparities*—underscores the crux of the still inadequately acknowledged and addressed problem of race in America. The problem is not simply a problem of race, but of the ordinariness of systemic racism that makes unceasing racial barriers, racial injustices, and racially disparate treatment unrecognizable or uninteresting to beneficiaries and purveyors of whiteness (Taylor, 2009). My study using CRT as the conceptual framework to examine the efficacy of a small, interdistrict, racially integrated school's adoption of restorative practice as a more just approach to student discipline will add to the existing scholarship on the usefulness of restorative approaches to racial disproportionality in school discipline.

Research Questions

There is much more to learn about school-level disciplinary processes and practices, particularly disciplinary approaches assumed to make schools fairer and safer learning spaces. Using the principles of CRT's application in education and education research, my capstone study examines how the study site conceptualizes restorative practice as a response to student behavior, and whether restorative practice is a

fairer school discipline practice for students generally, and Black students, specifically. To contribute to the research in the field, and increase the understanding of restorative practice as a potentially more humane and just response to student conduct, my research investigated how restorative practice is understood by administrators and high school students, and carried out in a small, interdistrict, racially integrated school in the Northeast. I examined the following research questions:

1. How do school administrators conceptualize restorative practice in this school?
2. What are high school students' views on restorative practice and student discipline in this school?
3. Do school administrators consider racial or other bias in their responses to student misconduct?
4. In this school, what are the effects of a restorative response to student behavior, overall, and for Black students, particularly?

Methods

Research Design

Using CRT as my contextual and analytical tool, I conducted a qualitative research study to investigate administrators' conceptualization and implementation of a restorative practice model in a small, interdistrict, racially integrated school. Situating my study in an authentic school context allowed me to gather firsthand accounts of restorative and disciplinary practice in a school context (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014). The single instrumental case study design informed my bounded study of the efficacy of restorative practice as a more just school response to student behavior, generally, and Black students, particularly. The single instrumental case study design assisted my interpretive understanding of how school leaders imagine and carry out restorative practice, and how high school students understand school rules and rule enforcement—including restorative practice—as a response to student behavior (Creswell, 2007; Flyvbjerg in Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Data were collected through interviews with school administrators and upper class high school students, observations in the setting, and examination of

school artifacts, data, and documents. All interviews were conducted at the study site during the school day.

Setting

Opportunity Academy (pseudonym) is the school that served as the site for this research study. It is a small to medium-sized K-12 school with a total student enrollment of less than 750 students. Certified staff is 75% female and White. Opportunity Academy is required by state statute to attract and maintain a racially, ethnically, economically, and geographically diverse student enrollment. School administrators for the middle-high grades, and upper class high school students were the focus of this study. In the high school, the composition of student enrollment is predominantly Black (50%) and White (30%). The remaining students are Latina/o, Asian and mixed race. Opportunity Academy intentionally brings together diverse students, and educators and staff who might not otherwise interact, or have an opportunity to be in a setting together regularly. CRT is implicated here because of the possible tension created between legally mandated requirements that Opportunity recruit and maintain a diverse student enrollment, the social preferences of educators and/or students unaccustomed to such diverse contacts, and the reality that this School is intentionally racialized space. Additionally, CRT scholarship in education asserts the permanence and ordinariness of racism and challenges whiteness as the norm for appropriate or acceptable student behavior in public schools.

Participants

School Administrators

Billings (Administrator 1) and Channing (Administrator 2) are school leaders for the middle-high grades. School administrators' names are pseudonyms. It was necessary to interview administrators for two reasons. First, as building leaders, Billings and Channing are expected to play critical roles in establishing the academic and social climate and culture. Second, the authority to establish and apply behavioral policies and practices that regulate and respond to student behavior can affect the school

experience of students. I spoke with Billings about my research topic and interest in conducting the study at Opportunity Academy before obtaining approval for my study from the University of Connecticut's Institutional Review Board (IRB). That exploratory conversation was necessary to find out if there was a willingness to participate in the study, and if so, I needed to know what was required of me by the district and the school to move forward. As a result of my conversation with Billings I was directed to communicate with the district's research compliance representative for further discussion and direction. After providing the assurances sought, I received a letter of support from Billings for my IRB application. A soft commitment from the district was given pending receipt of a copy of the IRB approval for the study that was forwarded following receipt. After obtaining IRB approval I moved forward with formal recruitment of school administrators, and 11th and 12th grade students at Opportunity Academy. First, I formally and more fully communicated the purpose of my study, orally and in writing to school administrators individually. Specifically, I provided each administrator with the IRB approved recruitment letter and invitation to participate in the study, written study protocol, and voluntary consent form. I answered their questions about the planned research study. Consequently, both Billings and Channing provided written consent to participate in this study. School administrators also pledged to provide requested data and documentation, as well as critical assistance to recruit student participants, collect parental permission (under age 18) and student consent (over age 18) forms, and schedule and conduct focus group and individual interviews with student volunteers.

Students

High school students were included in this study. First, because school rules prescribe student conduct, and school responses to student behavior have the potential to directly affect students' school experiences so it was important to understand their perspective of school rules and discipline, and restorative practice. Second, because my analytical lens is CRT, the tenets of CRT require me to include the voices and views of students often excluded from research on school discipline practice. Third, by questioning students' and capturing responses that reflect their experiential knowledge I was able to

compare their perspectives to those expressed by school administrators to understand if school leaders' conceptualization of their restorative practice model aligns with or differs from students' views on the subject. I targeted students in grades 11 and 12 at Opportunity Academy for participation in this study because I believed they were the students most likely to be enrolled in the school for the longest period of time. Additionally, I thought 11th and 12th graders would be most knowledgeable about the evolution of the school's discipline policies and practices, including the restorative practice model that began during the 2014-2015 school year. Since seniors are in the terminal grade, I also hoped they might be more likely to speak candidly about their experiences with and/or views of school rules and enforcement, including restorative practice. Students in grade 11 were targeted to ensure an adequate student population from which to draw a student sample for my research study. I made a direct recruitment appeal to all targeted students. Billings gave me the opportunity to meet with groups of 11th and 12th grade students during a designated morning class period. In each class visited, I introduced myself, explained the purpose of the study, and shared information about the study's protocol, including individual administrator interviews, grade-level focus groups, and individual student interviews. Recognizing that students, especially minors, are vulnerable populations, personally meeting with students gave them an opportunity to ask me questions about the research study. My responses to students' questions about the study helped to clarify for them where interviews would occur (at the school only), and when interviews would take place (during their school day only). I offered additional explanation regarding the time-commitment required, and emphasized students' ability to opt out of participation in the research at any point during the study, without any recourse at all. No student in grade 11 or 12 was hearing impaired, and there were no English Learners in either grade. Therefore, it was not necessary for me to enlist the services of an interpreter of any kind. Two follow up meetings were necessary to address students who were absent from school when I met with their classmates. At the conclusion of every student recruitment session, each student was given a recruitment letter that described in detail both the purpose of the study and the study protocol. Students were urged to discuss the study

recruitment meeting and documents with a parent or guardian. The recruitment letter also contained my personal contact information in case of questions about the study. I received no emails or telephone calls from any parent or guardian, or student regarding the study. School administration assured me that it was unnecessary to provide recruitment or study protocol documents in a language other than English, so recruitment documents were not translated. Students under the age of 18 received two parental permission forms, while students aged 18 or older received two consent forms. Targeted students received oral and written instruction about the permission and consent forms. Specifically they were told to keep one copy of the appropriate form for their records, and return the other by the due date to Billings who collected the forms for me. I signed each permission and consent form, including the duplicate form to reflect my awareness and acceptance of my obligations as a student researcher to each study participant.

Total student enrollment in grades 11 and 12 is less than 160 students. 18% of juniors and 31% of seniors agreed to participate in the study. In grades 11 and 12 student enrollment is mostly Black (56%) and White (30%). While study participants were more than 50% female and Black, participants also includes males, and White and Latina/o students. No student participant opted out of this research study. However, one student was unavailable for the scheduled student focus group, and another student (who participated in a focus group) declined the individual interview.

Data Collection

In this study, data were collected from multiple sources using several qualitative research techniques. These included face-to-face individual and group interviews, artifact collection and examination, classroom and lunchroom observations, and review of school documents and discipline data (Table 1). These data were triangulated to check the trustworthiness of the viewpoints shared against school data, documents and artifacts gathered and reviewed (Creswell, 2007).

School Administrators

Two semi-structured interviews of approximately 90 minutes each were conducted with each school administrator individually. The first round of administrator interviews focused on the origins and evolution of administrators' student discipline philosophy and practice, including the recently adopted restorative practice model. Each administrator was also asked if student race or color was a factor in school discipline practice. A follow up interview with each administrator took place about five weeks after the initial interview, and after the student focus group and individual interviews were conducted. The second round of administrator interviews addressed school climate and educator-student relationships. As well as school rule enforcement, factors that influence perceptions of student behavior, educator responses to student behavior, and student discipline data. The interview responses were digitally recorded then professionally transcribed and reviewed by me for accuracy. Transcript (TR) data from first round interviews is designated as TR1 and second round interviews as TR2.

Students

Two student focus groups—one for each grade-level—were convened. Each focus group had fewer than ten students. Focus group participants were racially and geographically diverse. The 11th grade focus group was more than 50% male and Black. While 12th grade focus group participants were mostly female, Black, and White. The study design used grade-level focus groups because Opportunity is a small to medium-sized school and I believed that the division of student participants by grade-level or cohort might create a familiar or safe composition. My goal was to minimize or alleviate any nervousness participants might feel about being part of a focus group, despite their voluntary participation. So individuals with a shared school context (grade level) but not necessarily shared experiences in that context were grouped together. To support my efforts to create a relaxed and permissive space for the focus groups, school administrators gave me access to two comfortably sized school conference rooms with large oval shaped tables that comfortably seated participants and allowed eye contact with each

other. Mindful that talking can create dry mouth, and as a small gesture of appreciation, I provided chilled bottle water for focus group participants. It is important to note that I hired a professional sound technician (tech) to make a digital audio recording of each focus group. The sound tech signed a confidentiality agreement prior to the study. The sound tech's role included setting up the room for optimal sound and audiotape quality, and professionally audiotaping discussion to make sure that comments were not missed, and participants' views were accurately and fully captured for transcription and later analysis. The sound tech was introduced to the students before each focus group session began. Hiring a sound tech meant that I could concentrate on listening to the responses and dialogue generated by my pre-planned, open-ended questions. After participants were settled in their seats, I began each focus group session with brief remarks—about 5-6 minutes. I welcomed and thanked them for their participation, quickly explained the discussion format, the reason for audiotaping the session, and the importance of ground rules to ensure a safe space for all points of view. I concluded my remarks by emphasizing that there were no right or wrong answers, just valuable points of view. Finally, I reminded students of their right to opt out of the session at any point, and their obligation to go directly to their regularly scheduled class or activity if they did. To maintain confidentiality and preserve privacy, I created a tented place card for each participant. Students were asked to use the designation on the place card (i.e., Student 1 through Student 13), instead of their names. To enhance the audio and aid transcription, each student was asked to identify her/himself using the place card designation before speaking. In my notes for each focus group session I drew a table and placed participants around it by seat location and place card number to record their placement in the room.

Without the direct responsibility of audiotaping the focus group sessions I was at ease as an active listener, and aware of the impact of my verbal and non-verbal cues, and those of the participants, as I worked to get everyone talking or at least paying attention to the discussion. I asked clarifying and probing questions when necessary, jotted down notes, and assisted with the pacing of the conversation. It was important that students were not talking over each other, and that key questions were addressed.

Since each session was a little more than one hour, time management and monitoring were also crucial. Participants were very interested in expressing their views about Opportunity Academy's school discipline practices. As a result, very little prompting or encouragement was necessary to start the discussion or keep it going. In both sessions the conversation naturally flowed from participant's responses to my questions and their classmates' comments. Students talked candidly and on occasion with great emotion about their experiences with rule application and enforcement at Opportunity Academy.

The strength of the focus group as a method of qualitative data collection was the group dynamic that stimulated rich discussion on the research topic (Finch & Lewis, 2003). That discussion also provided a chance to identify focus group members who might also provide more personal or nuanced perspectives in a follow up individual interview. Since my student participant sample was small, my data collection strategy included an invitation to all student participants to do a more in-depth individual interview. A drawback of a focus group is that some members either don't participate, or don't participate at the same level as others in the group. According to Finch and Lewis (2003) reasons include, "the person may be naturally quiet, or lack confidence in groups, or perhaps be uncomfortable due to the group composition, feeling significantly different in some way from other participants" (pp. 183-184). In the focus groups that I conducted there were two students—one in each focus group—who took their time joining the conversation so they did not participate at the level of other students. Still, the body language I observed signaled that each student was listening to the discussion. I made a point of making eye contact with all students while they spoke, as well as the two who did not speak initially. Eventually both students found an entry point for comment. Another drawback or criticism of focus groups is that the views expressed tend to be similar rather than different because of real or perceived group pressure "to conform to a socially acceptable viewpoint and not to talk about divergent views or experiences" (Finch & Lewis, 2003, p. 189). Students clearly expressed their personally held views in each of the focus groups. Some of the comments included observations that did not wholly align with those expressed by

others in the group. One of the students who took longer to join the conversation expressed a perspective that personally differed from those in the focus group session and group members had no problem with what was expressed. Interestingly, despite points of difference, overall there was a shared perspective about student discipline and school rules that did not appear to result from any group pressure. Rather, it seemed to reflect members' personal experiences and/or observations.

Two days after completing student focus group sessions, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with 92% of student participants. All interviews were held at Opportunity Academy, and each student interview lasted about 30 minutes. The students interviewed were a geographically diverse group representing several different cities and towns. 67% of students interviewed were female and 33% were male. 67% were Black, 16.5% were White and 16.5% were mixed race. Students were asked to share their views of school rules and school discipline, including restorative practice, relationships with educators and school climate. Before the start of each interview, I briefly welcomed the student, explained that I would digitally record the interview to ensure an accurate record for transcription, and underscored the student's right to decline to answer any question, and/or stop the interview at any time without explanation or penalty. No student participant declined to answer a question, and all participants who agreed to be individually interviewed completed the interview.

Observations and School Artifacts

Observations

After data were collected from initial administrator interviews, and student focus group sessions I scheduled observations at the study site for further data collection using a different qualitative technique, and to validate interview responses recorded to date. Restorative practice can be proactive (relationship and community building) and reactive (restorative discipline response to student conduct). Therefore, it was important to conduct observations of participants in the school setting in various contexts—junior and senior classes, and school lunch waves—for evidence of Opportunity Academy's restorative practice model. Observations, along with examination of school artifacts, documents and data also served to

validate interview responses. Contemporaneous recording of information as field notes (Creswell, 2007) documented my first-hand data collection in the natural setting. Creswell (2007) suggests that both “descriptive and reflective notes” (p. 134) be taken to contemporaneously record “experiences, hunches, and learnings” (p. 134). While considering observations at Opportunity Academy, I was guided by my interest in settings where proactive and/or reactive restorative practices might be evident, and spaces where I could observe juniors and seniors interacting with each other and administrators (or other educators). I conducted two 30-35 minute observations in the school’s cafeteria during scheduled middle and high school lunch waves, and I audited four 11th and 12th grade classes for about 45 minutes each. While I used a restorative practice lens in both contexts, I also looked for evidence of posted expectations or norms to communicate behavioral expectations. If norms or behavior expectations were posted I focused on whether the expectations or norms were followed. Student behavior and adult responses were also examined for evidence of behavioral or restorative strategies, or more traditional discipline approaches. Participant observations were coded using categories like setting description, context norms or rules posted/followed, discipline used, and/or restorative practice used. Coded observations were then placed in a comparative matrix (Appendix 1, Comparative Observation Matrices).

School Artifacts

In addition, I examined school artifacts and available data from Billings and Channing relevant to my investigation of school discipline and restorative practice at Opportunity Academy. For example, I reviewed the school website, and student handbook containing rules and regulations regarding student conduct and the discipline processes for information about the new restorative model. I examined demographic data for school staff and students, as well as school discipline data. Finally, I reviewed training materials for creation and implementation the school’s restorative practice model. These and other school artifacts allowed me to better understand the context in which the study took place. Importantly, since the observations and artifact review occurred after initial administrator interviews and student focus group sessions, observation data informed my follow up interview protocol with school

administrators for a second individual interview, and individual student interviews. Overall, data collection at the study site took place between November 2015 and January 2016. More than 16 hours was spent at Opportunity Academy. And as a result of the interviews and focus groups conducted 210 pages of single-spaced transcription was generated (Table 1). Specifically, designations used for administrator transcripts include A1 and A2 to identify administrator 1 or 2, and TR1 or TR2 to indicate the first or second interview. Student focus group (FG) transcripts were identified as FG1 or FG2 to indicate whether the statement was made in the first or second FG.

Data Analysis

All interviews were professionally transcribed and reviewed by me for accuracy. Because data analysis is a continuously iterative process (Hesse-Bieber, 2010), the appropriateness of planned codes initially derived from my research questions and literature review were reconsidered as transcript review began and I became immersed in the data. For instance, there were nine final interview codes that emerged from school administrators' responses, eight from student focus group discussion, and six from individual student interviews (Appendix 1, Final Code List – All Participant Interviews). School administrator codes included school's restorative model and level of restorativeness, student race as a factor in school discipline, and evidence of a race effect in the school. Student focus group responses led to creation of codes that included students' beliefs about educators' perceptions of them, bias in rule enforcement and/or student discipline, and evidence of restorative practice. While school experience and student voice are examples of codes used for individual student interviews. School climate, school rules, student discipline, and compelling/key quotes were common codes used for all administrator and student interviews.

Computer-based tools (Mac OS X's and Microsoft Word's comment and text highlight tools) rather than coding software proved useful in helping me with data reduction and code category revision. Computer-based instruments facilitated code alignment and mapping within and across data sources where patterns or themes were similar or connected which made data analysis more manageable. Coding

enabled visual displays to assist my understanding of the data, and made it possible for me to identify areas where follow up or additional data were necessary (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and instances where interview responses were compellingly dissimilar. Placement of data in comparative matrices facilitated examination and interpretation of the data. Comparative matrices, and Excel data tables and displays allowed “useful and important manipulations” (Yin, 2014, p. 129) to explore data separately and holistically as it was gathered (Glesne, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Collectively, these analytic tools assisted data analysis and directed presentation of my findings (Yin, 2014) in a way that is understandable to the reader (Creswell, 2007), and helpful in determining whether this school’s restorative practice model is a more just student discipline approach.

To check the quality of the data collected I used four validation strategies to increase trustworthiness and decrease the threat of researcher bias. First, in addition to collecting data from multiple and different sources using several qualitative methods, observations and *plausible* interpretations (Creswell, 2007, p. 205) have been triangulated to heighten the trustworthiness of the sources used. Second, *rich, thick description* (Creswell, 2007, p. 209) of the setting, and participants’ views provides depth and illuminates the context and interactions to assist readers in their ability to transfer or apply aspects of the study to their experiences or contextual reality. Third, perceptions expressed by school administrators and students are treated *equitably* (Creswell, 2007, p. 205). Fourth, because there is always a researcher effect on the process regardless of the type of research methodology, quantitative or qualitative (Malterud, 2001; Williams & Morrow, 2009), I avoided sharing personal thoughts or experiences with study participants to allow study data and findings to reflect the perspectives and voices of study participants rather than mine, (Malterud, 2001; Williams & Morrow, 2009). Still, because this alone does not eliminate the potential for researcher bias, the concept of reflexivity or self-awareness in qualitative investigation is critical. Reflective journaling and bracketing are two reflexivity approaches intended to safeguard the integrity of qualitative research, (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Reflective journaling requires a qualitative researcher to think about the attitudes, assumptions, and

worldviews they bring to their research, and the impact on what is studied, why it's studied, and what is found (Creswell, 2007; Ortlipp, 2008). Bracketing requires a qualitative researcher to control or "set aside [lived] experiences as much as possible, to allow a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination," (Creswell, 2007, pp. 59-60). For purposes of this research study I bracketed my views and experiences. I followed the patterns that emerged from the data. Repetitions in the data produced code categories that revealed the themes that frame my research findings.

Findings

In this section, I present a summary of research findings using three thematic categories that emerged from the data collected concerning: (1) the school's restorative model and level of restorativeness; (2) school climate and educator-student rapport, and school rule enforcement; and (3) perceptions of racism and/or bias in the school.

School's Restorative Model and Level of Restorativeness

School Administrators

In 2013 school administrators at Opportunity Academy were intrigued by information shared with them about restorative practice. Especially since traditional student discipline methods were not deterring behavior Billings explained:

We were not seeing a major change in the behavior as a result of those types of practices, so we reevaluated and adopted the restorative practices model (A1TR1, p. 3).

In interviews, administrators said that restorative measures were an attractive alternative to traditional punitive discipline because of the potential for changing behaviors—for both students and educators. How educators viewed student discipline, and how students experienced school discipline. The possibility that restorative practice could reshape educator thinking about students, student behavior and school discipline practice, while also changing the experience of school discipline for students, made

the restorative concept even more appealing to administrators. Administrators described restorative practice as a “mindset change” and “paradigm shift” in the aim and outcome.

Restorative practice is the name given to the school’s two-pronged restorative model because it reflects middle-high school administrators’ intention to use restorative measures proactively and reactively. Cultivating strong, caring relationships is a key proactive component of the model. Channing clarified:

Our core principle is that relationship building is essential to promoting a positive school culture and climate. . . . so it’s really important for us to model an appropriate, and warm and accepting climate. That’s essential. Because once you get to know each other on a personal level, it makes it easier to work together. You become more of a family. That’s what we promote here, a family-like atmosphere (A2TR1, pp. 1-2).

Restorative justice is the reactive component of the school’s model. As a school discipline response the model’s objective is to use restorative practice to address misbehavior in an empathetic but instructive manner. Channing explained how administrators conceptualize restorative justice as a student discipline response at Opportunity Academy:

We understand that suspension and isolation do not work. You know, we want to make sure that our students understand that they have done harm, and that they need to fix it and they need to know why it’s wrong, and how the other person felt so that they don’t do it again and suspension doesn’t do that (A2TR2, p. 15).

As middle-high school leaders were being formally trained in restorative practice they informally introduced *circles* to teachers as a relationship building strategy and a restorative problem-solving tool. Participants literally stand or sit in a circle. According to administrators, the circle symbolizes equality. In the circle everyone is equidistant from the center and there is no beginning or end. Importantly, students and teachers are expected to have equal voice. While acknowledging that circles should be used sparingly, administrators initially encouraged teachers—particularly in the middle school—to tryout

relationship circles for about 10 minutes once or twice a week. The purpose was to familiarize educators with the versatility and value of the practice. Relationship circles are useful as a more intimate form of group work (i.e., review or discussion of classwork), not simply as a bonding strategy. When circles are used for problem solving, affective statements are useful to tease out the issue in need of resolution to restore the fractured relationship, and affective statements are helpful expressions to indicate how behavior has affected or impacted an individual. However, since formal training of certified staff began in late 2015, to date there has been a low-level, informal implementation of restorative practice at the study site while the school creates capacity to formally implement its restorative model. As a result, in interviews school administrators said Opportunity Academy continues to use mostly traditional discipline responses to student behavior. Whether a restorative response to student misbehavior is even an option is at least dependent on the type of infraction and the harm caused. Billings explained:

The hope is that we're going to phase out the traditional consequences over time to the extent possible, and leave the restorative measures. If we're able to establish and identify a way to blend in restorative measures, then we do that when we can. But that's going to be a function of the continued training and investment that we put into the restorative philosophy (A1TR1, pp. 4-5).

I think you act based on what you have available to you in your tool belt. And I think we have a lack of tools at this point in restorative practice, it's not complete. So when we don't have something, we assign more traditional consequences. If we lack an approach for how to deal with something, we have to go with a traditional approach like a suspension (A1TR2, p18).

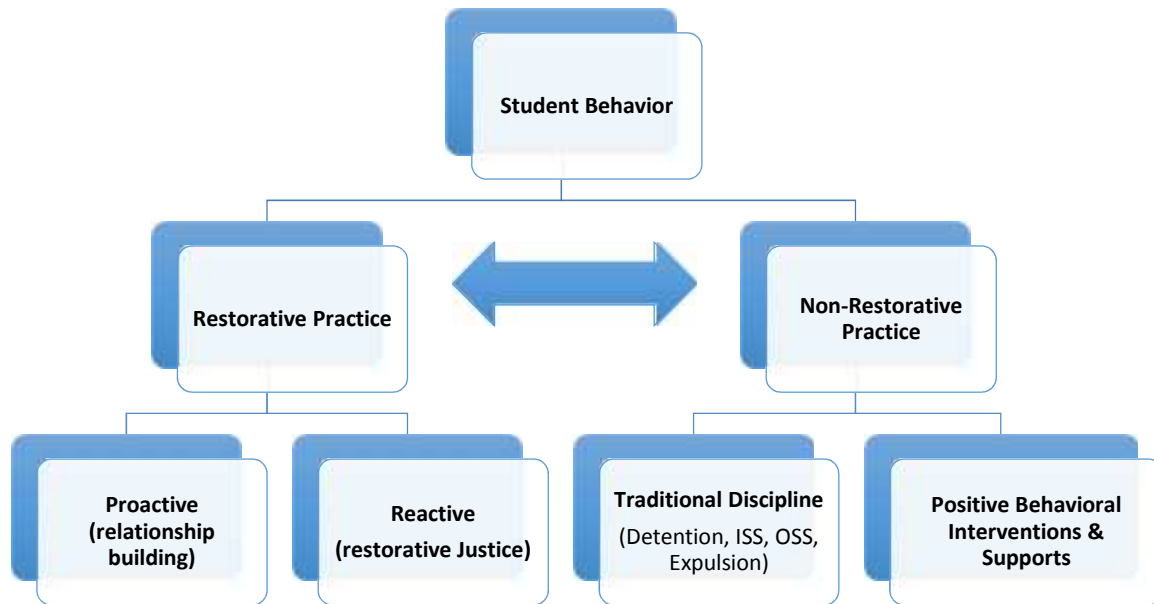
The target date for full implementation is currently school year 2017-18. When fully implemented, building leaders conceptualize their restorative practice model as one that will nurture and support trusting and respectful relationships between and among students and school staff. And when students fail to follow the rules, school administrators expect adults in the building to make discipline responses instructive rather than punitive. Administrators agree that students deserve meaningful

opportunities to understand why their conduct was wrong, repair any harm caused, learn from their misstep, and have a fair opportunity to restore their standing in the school community. Channing emphasized:

As teachers, you know, when a student does something wrong on a test, you don't just correct the test and say oh you got an F, you're done. You reteach, you know. You break it down. You teach it a different way. You have all these instructional strategies for how to get math and English and science into a kid. Well why can't we use those strategies to teach morals and ethics, and what you should and shouldn't do? (A2TR1, p. 13).

I did not observe any restorative discipline practice while at the study site. However, administrators shared a few examples of what Billings referred to as “pockets of success” using restorative practice informally as a student discipline response. Administrators’ examples of their informal use of restorative discipline practice involved a blending of traditional punitive discipline with restorative measures.

To build capacity, school administrators’ informal restorative efforts have focused on middle school rather than high school. School leaders also said students have received no training in restorative practice. Restorative strategies that use students as resources—like peer mediation or peer juries—are planned but not currently formally implemented in the school. Nevertheless, school leaders stated that middle and high school students—except perhaps seniors—would be familiar with the term and function of *circles*, and other restorative terminology like *harm done* and *fixing or repairing harm*. Figure 9, below, illustrates Opportunity Academy’s blended discipline model of traditional punishment and restorative practice.

Figure 9*Illustration of the Study Site's Blended Discipline Model*

In interviews, in addition to articulating a belief that restorative practice would change minds and consequently behaviors, school administrators also identified another reason for their transition to restorative practice. Building leaders described what they believe is a link between discipline practice, the loss of instructional time, and students' academic performance. Billings stated:

I believe there will be a link between improving student achievement and um, restorative practice. Yeah. It's quite an investment to take this on. So I think there has to be a, you know, an expectation that by building the capacity of the class environment to be a more positive setting that that will advance the academic rigor in the time that we're focusing on academics (A1TR1, p. 8).

This statement implicates CRT's concept of interest-convergence. Policymakers have an interest in seeing gains in student achievement. At Opportunity Academy restorative practice is also seen as a strategy to advance and support administrators' goals of greater academic success for enrolled students by keeping them in classrooms learning. Administrators described the plan to begin collecting baseline classroom-level discipline data in school year 2016-17. Data will be collected for the purpose of examining the quantity of instructional time lost because of classroom disturbances or behavior distractions, and amount of instructional time gained by using restorative practices (e.g, relationship building and/or conflict-resolution circles).

Students

As school administrators predicted, when asked about the term *restorative practice* 11th and 12th grade focus group participants had no idea of what I was asking about. Students had never heard the phrase, were unaware of the concept, and made no connection to student discipline practice at Opportunity Academy. However, after a brief explanation of restorative practice, mentioning *circles* triggered a connection for one student. The student recalled how middle school conflict is sometimes handled at the school:

Oh, like, when the little kids get in trouble they have to, like, have a peer mediation type of thing, that, um, the guidance counselor does. We don't really do it. Like the older kids don't do it, but I know little kids do it all the time. Like if two little girls have an issue, then they'll put them in the group together. And then they'll just sit there and talk. They, like, express why they were upset, and why it ended up negatively, and stuff like that. (FG1, pp18-19)

Overall, in interviews, 11th and 12th grade students demonstrated little awareness of restorative practice or restorative phrases like *harm done* and *fixing or repairing harm*—except as something that has been used or talked about for the “little kids” (middle school students).

School Climate, Educator-Student Rapport, and School Rule Enforcement

School Administrators

While they work to fully establish and formally implement a proactive and reactive restorative practices model, school administrators expressed their belief that the school's current climate is already extremely positive. In part, the smallness of the school was used as a rationale for the continuously stated belief that teacher-student interactions were very positive. Building leaders characterized the school's existing climate and culture as a "family-like" atmosphere.

We're such a small school we already have a strong, family-like atmosphere (A1TR1, p. 8).

That's what we promote here, a family-like atmosphere. When we talk to parents we talk about our family. You know, your child is in our family. We are a family, because we really believe that (A2TR1, p.2).

When asked to rate the quality of students' interactions with teachers, administrators rated them highly. Billings stated the hiring process played an important role. Specifically, the attributes successful teacher applicants were expected to possess were identified:

Most I've hired. And, you know, the core attribute that they all had to have first was that they were caring and they were able to be a mentor to kids. And I think I started from that and then built on it. Are they able to, you know, understand—are they experts in their content area. Do they demonstrate the ability to, you know, to be an effective instructor? But it started with being a caring mentor (A1TR2, p7).

When administrators were probed to say more about what a positive educator relationship with a student looks like at Opportunity Academy, Billings explained:

For teachers it's being an instructor, but it's also being a mentor. And I think that, you know for administration it's enforcing school policies, but it's also understanding and getting to know students and developing relationships (A1TR2, p. 5).

Channing identified three factors as being important in determining what a positive educator-student relationship looks like in the school:

Well, I think it's respectful. I think that students are heard. Um, their input is valued (A2TR2, p. 3)

When questioned further about the school's climate, this time regarding whether school rules were fairly applied, administrators qualified their responses. Channing noted that student behavioral plans and individualized education plans made it difficult to respond to the question. Billings answered the question but stressed the "intent" to be fair:

I think the intent to treat students fairly is there. But I don't think that we've had enough time and experience to fully calibrate how we apply the rules, especially from a restorative practice perspective, so I think it takes time to calibrate that over time. So I don't think necessarily right now it's being fair in a sense across the board, but I think the intent is there (A1TR2, p. 2).

Neither administrator felt they could answer a follow up question concerning the consistency of rule enforcement. Although, again, Billings pointed out the importance of educators' intention to be both fair and consistent in the application and enforcement of school rules. However, *an intention* to be fair is not the same as *actually being* fair. Administrators' initial statements that the school's climate and educator-student rapport are positive and "family like" were at odds with follow up responses to more probing question. The *intent* to be fair and consistent in rule enforcement supports administrators' stated beliefs that all is well, but intention is not evidence of actual fairness and consistency in school rule enforcement. School year 2015-16 is the first year administrators have collected and analyzed student discipline data. Billings explained:

I've required [Channing] to summarize the discipline data at the end of each month and report to the staff, and that was something that I'd never done before. So that's, that's been really helpful. I mean, we haven't done this in the past, but we're such a small school (A1TR2, p. 26).

We [now] look at it from a student perspective, from a grade level perspective, and from an infraction perspective (A1TR2, p. 26).

According to Billings, in prior years, suspensions and expulsions were reported to the State each month as school-wide total suspension and expulsion data. Review of the student discipline data collected during the first three months of 2015 confirmed that the school was now examining which students (by name), which grade(s), what infraction(s), and which educators were making discipline referrals. But administrators do not disaggregate student discipline data by race or ethnicity, gender or disability. When asked about the rationale for not disaggregating the data further, Billings responded:

It's hard to do that because we—well, our school is small. So the sample sizes, you know, for us there would be a more drastic change from year to year because it's a relatively small population. So when 2 or 3 kids change, that changes the percentage more (A1TR2, p. 27).

Full disclosure, I mean we never analyzed what it meant from month to month to have more suspensions versus less suspensions. But again, it's such a small school that I think we knew when we had a tough month or when, you know, we needed to have conversations, in-staff meetings around student behavior or discipline so, you know, we were able to make adjustments. On paper that looks like we didn't do anything and then this year we got our act together (A1TR2, p. 28).

Administrators at Opportunity Academy are not looking at student discipline data to determine whether there are patterns of racial or other bias in their school. Administrators use school size as a justification to avoid disaggregating student discipline data for objective investigation of whether racially disparate discipline is practiced at Opportunity Academy. The size of the school has become the rationale for reliance on subjective and anecdotal assessment of the fairness and consistency of rule application and enforcement rather than examining discipline data in a manner that facilitates more objective determination of whether students discipline practices and outcomes are equitable.

Restorative practice advocates doing things *with people rather than to them*. When responding to a question about the role of students—specifically 11th and 12th graders—in rule making at Opportunity

Academy, administrators acknowledged that 11th and 12th grade students were not being utilized enough as resources in the school. Instead of being treated as resources, administrators tended to treat students as recipients—in need of having things done to them, or imposed on them. Billings observed:

I wish that they would do more of that [advocacy] to make the school better for themselves. And I think oftentimes they're more fearful of either getting shot down with an idea or maybe not really feeling that they would be heard. Again, though, it goes back to the intent. I would absolutely and honestly listen to a student that had a suggestion about, you know, altering the school or adding or subtracting something. But I don't know that students widely take advantage of that, or know that they can take advantage of that. Which is the responsibility, I think, of the administration (A1TR2, p.3).

Administrators' beliefs about educator-student rapport were also searched by asking, *what do you think shapes an educator's gut reaction to a student?* Billings identified educator attributes that implicate CRT and whiteness in a setting that is 75% White and female:

I think who the educator is. I think their background helps shape that – how they perceive everybody—anybody. I think, you know, we all have expectations and judgments and things that we bring to us and I think that's based on who we are as people, as individuals (A1TR2, p. 5).

Channing identified educator perceptions that may also implicate CRT:

Past experience with them, I think. Reputation. I hate to say that, but [teachers] they're human (A2TR2, p. 3).

Students

Focus group and individual interviews revealed that 11th and 12th grade students and school administrators have contrasting views of the school's climate and educator-student rapport. Students shared accounts of what they characterized as “pretty horrible” and “unfortunate” communication

practices in the school. One student emphasized the irony of the school's poor communication to students given its size:

Because this school's is not big it should be easy to communicate (FG1, p 7).

While administrators attempted to use school size as a shield, students see it as a sword. Students stated it was common not to know about important opportunities in the school in a timely fashion. Participants offered the example of ineffective announcements about the application process for the school's honor society. Students complained about the lack of communication provided to the student body about student government opportunities this year:

Like a new teacher came and she runs it. And no one really knows her, and she didn't do like a vote or anything like that. The people she had a good relationship with just became the president and the vice-president and I think that's all, that's it. (FG1, p 7).

During the second interview, Billings acknowledged:

I think I've let student government be run by the advisors, not by the students.

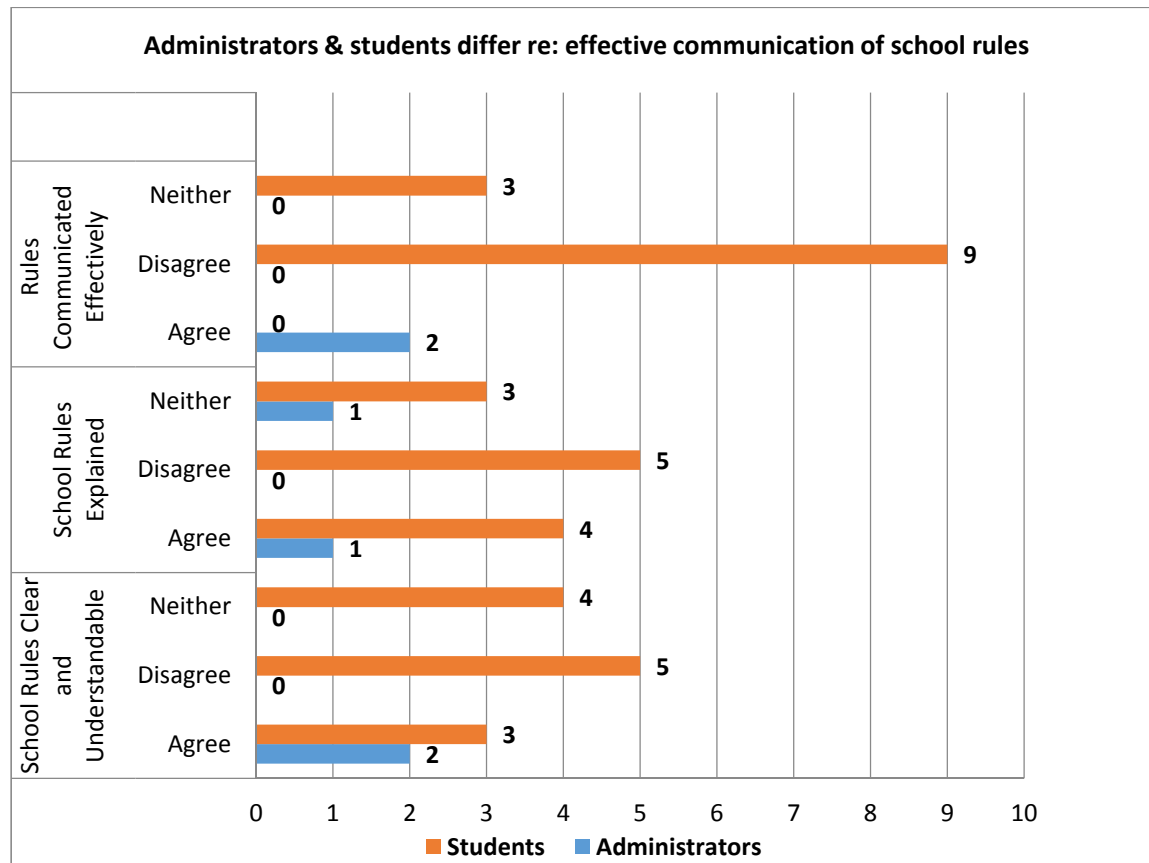
It's supposed to be an election process. It had been in the past. This year was like the first year where they didn't do an election (A1TR2, pp. 4-5).

In student focus groups and individual interviews 11th and 12th graders expressed views that clearly differ from the views of school administrators concerning how school rules are communicated, applied and enforced. The majority of student participants said school rules were ineffectively communicated, unfairly applied, and inconsistently enforced. In contrast, school administrators said school rules were effectively communicated to students, fairly applied and consistently enforced. In part, the misalignment of perception may be a function of what students characterized as school administration "moving without warning" from a pretty lenient school climate even though rules existed, to what they perceive as an inflexible culture—for some students—where rules are relentlessly applied and strictly

enforced. Figure 10, below, illustrates the stark contrast in responses between students and administrators when both were asked whether school rules were effectively communicated.

Figure 10

Comparison of Student and Administrator Responses re: Communication about Rules



Despite concerns expressed by students about school climate and school rules, participants unanimously agreed and stated that there was at least one adult—usually a teacher—in the school with whom each had a positive relationship. However, students were candid and sometimes emotional in their focus group discussions and interview responses about less positive interactions with educators in the school. Their statements presented a much less rosy view of school climate and student-educator rapport.

All students agreed that an important measure of whether an educator in the school genuinely cared about a student was the individual's willingness to demonstrate it by supporting their aspirations and making time to help them succeed academically. Statements of several different students typify student responses:

Well, you can tell the teachers that just work just to get a paycheck. And then you can tell the ones that like, actually like care and will go out of their way to help you (FG1, p8).

So you have those type of teachers that want to help you be the person that you want to be, and you also have those teachers that look down on you. And you know who they are. You know the difference (FG2, p. 13).

I said that I want to be a writer. They're like you're not gonna make a lot of money. Like I heard a lot of negative feedback about what I want to be. And as a teacher even if you, if you don't agree with it, then just don't say anything. But like don't try to hold me back from what I want to do. Don't be negative. A teacher shouldn't be negative (FG2, p. 13).

Students identified several other qualities they believed "good teachers" should possess in addition to being caring and helpful. They included being empathetic, a good listener, an effective communicator, and most importantly an effective and competent teacher. Multiple students commented about teachers' ineffective instruction and unwillingness to tutor them after class or school:

You might be a teacher, but I mean if you can't explain to me what I don't know even though you're a teacher, that's a problem. You're supposed to know how to explain it to me and show me (FG2, p 14).

A lot of teachers, a LOT of teachers like to suggest to you to look online or to self-learn and it's not helpful (FG2, p 14).

I think teachers try to get you like, to learn by yourself. Trying to like give you that push that they think that you need. But sometimes trying to understand by yourself is not helpful. Like, we need their help, not to be pushed away (FG2, p 15).

When students were asked if they voiced their concerns about teachers to administrators, participants stated they did not believe administrators cared about how students felt about experiences in the classroom. One student's statement during a focus group session reflected the sentiment expressed by others in both focus group and individual interviews:

They seem to think that somehow the teachers are doing everything right and the kids are doing everything wrong (FG2, p 17).

When asked to provide their opinions about the attributes of a "good administrator" one student's comment seemed to capture the essence of other participants' responses:

School administrators gotta be open to change. And talk to the students, and like actually care about how the students feel regarding the rules and the school atmosphere (FG1, p 22).

In interviews, school administrators said that students' voices mattered. Specifically, school leaders expressed an intention and willingness to listen. However, students' responses suggest that they are not made to feel like their voices matter. Several students said educators mischaracterize students' self-advocacy or differing point of view as defiance or misconduct to silence or punish them:

Let students have a voice. Like let them speak. Don't, like, shut them down when they have an opinion, or they're not agreeing with you. . . . Calling it disrespect (FG2, pp.19).

There's a difference between just being belligerent and actually wanting to stick up for your self (FG2, p. 19)

Regarding school rules, participants were unanimous in their agreement that school rules at Opportunity Academy are applied and enforced unfairly and inconsistently. Students gave numerous

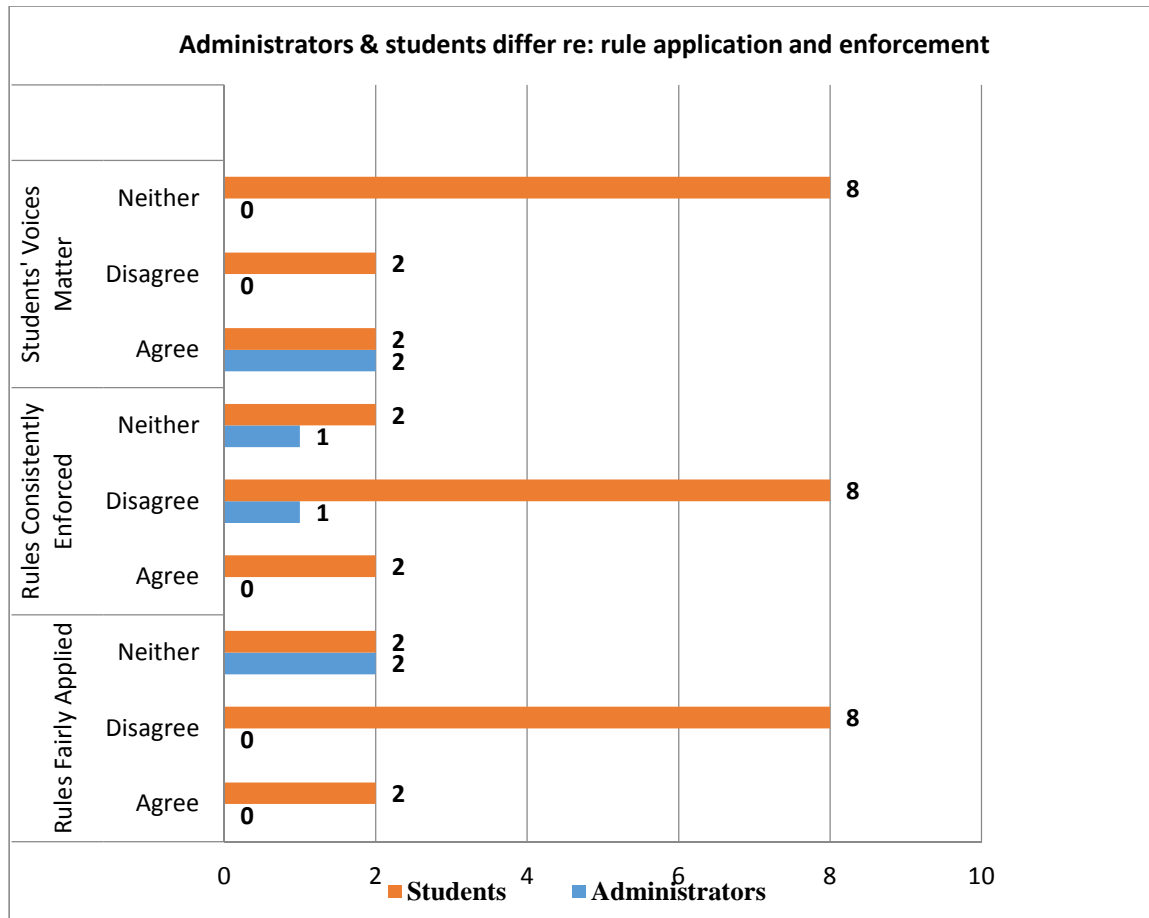
examples of teachers and administrators selectively enforcing school rules that earned them or certain classmates discipline points largely because of nonviolent school policy violations that are mostly cell phone or technology, and dress code or school uniform infractions. During student focus group interviews student participants explained to me who among them was out of uniform and who had been—or was most likely to be—disciplined, and who was not. In one focus group session five students were “out of uniform”. One was wearing a bandana, another a scarf, a third non-uniform pants, the fourth a non-uniform shirt under a uniform polo, and the fifth a bandana and jacket. However, it was only the fifth student who reported receiving an in-school suspension that day for the dress code violation. School policy violations are handled using the school’s traditional discipline point system. Accruing discipline points can adversely impact a student’s ability to participate in school activities and trips, and ability to access rewards—including the school honor society. One student expressed the feelings of focus group participants the most succinctly:

The staff picks and chooses who or what to, I guess, persecute and subject to their rules—and it happens all the time (FG2, p 2).

Figure 11, below, compares student and administrator responses to interview questions soliciting their views about fairness and consistency in school rule enforcement. It also illustrates the misalignment of student and educator views on whether students’ voices matter in the school. School administrators agree that students’ voices matter, while students’ responses reflect less certainty.

Figure 11

Comparison of Student and Administrator Responses re: Rule Application and Enforcement

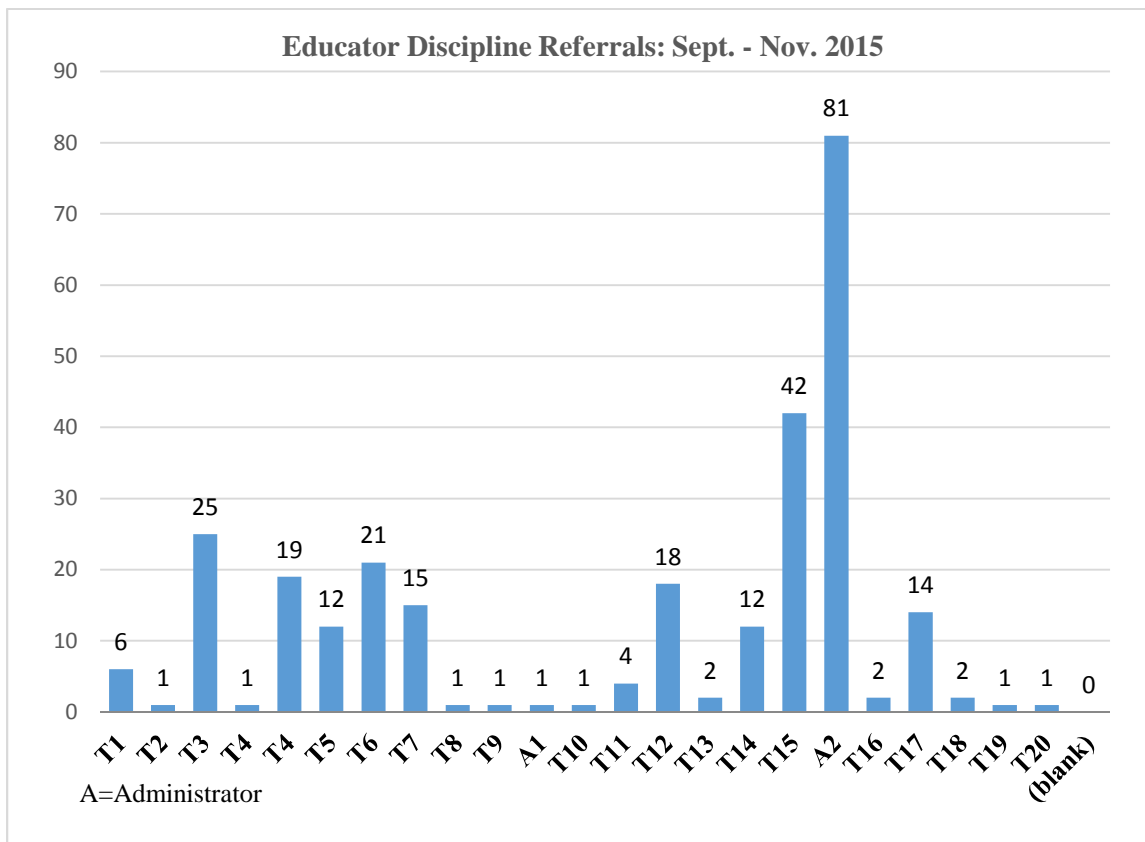


During second round interviews, administrators acknowledged that uneven and inconsistent discipline referrals may result in unequal discipline outcomes. But they emphasized their intention to have fairly and consistently applied rules. School administrators stressed their preference for fairness and consistency in student discipline practice. In an effort to promote greater consistency among educators in enforcing school rules, a *Student Discipline Referral by Staff* bar graph (Figure 12) was created by Channing to illustrate the widespread discrepancies and inconsistencies in discipline referrals during the first three months of school year 2015-16. Channing, represented as A2 in Figure 12 explained why it was necessary to create the graph:

There was a great discrepancy. There's no consistency here. My referrals come in the afternoon. So if I have to give out uniform violations, you know, in the afternoon that means that the people who saw this student first, second, third, fourth and fifth period did not do what they were supposed to be doing. And so it's a check in regard to the teacher and their practice of being consistent. I prefer fairness and consistency and I don't think it's fair for a student to be written up at the end of the day for something that should have been addressed in the first [class] (A2TR2, p. 24).

Figure 12

Study Site Discipline Referrals by Staff September through November 2015



School rules at Opportunity Academy are inconsistently enforced. Eleventh and twelfth grade students conveyed their frustration and disappointment that school rules are not only applied unfairly and inconsistently, but also in a manner that they feel does not acknowledge their maturity and upper class

status in the school. Students complained that middle school and high school students are treated alike, even though they are not the same. Channing stated in interviews that middle school students were responsible for more classroom disruptions, while high school students tended to be guilty of more cell phone and dress code violations. During my observations of two lunch waves at the study site the middle school lunch wave was extremely noisy. Middle schoolers were a very raucous group whose conduct would be more appropriate for outdoors. They appeared to need greater supervision. The cafeteria demeanor of high schoolers as a group was far less noisy, more measured, and consistent with being in a cafeteria, restaurant, or other indoor space.

Student participants are not opposed to school rules. In fact, when asked if they believed Opportunity Academy needs rules they agreed that it does, and schools do. An exchange between students in a focus group session seemed to reveal what was at the core of students' negative feelings about the school climate and educator-student rapport at Opportunity Academy:

Yeah, the school needs rules.

Yeah, to provide structure. But the rules should be consistent and fairly enforced.

We dread going to school.

Yeah, we like dread it. Like we don't want to go to school.

I think people would want to come to school more if they could feel comfortable (FG1, pp 23-24).

Student participants said administrators should respect that they are young adults—which is how they see themselves—and treat accordingly. Students stressed the fact that they do not feel that the school rules applied to them consider their age or maturity level. School administrators do not differentiate rules for middle and high school students. One student's remark summoned up participant's views:

[W]e're in high school not middle school. But somehow, the whole school is treated like middle school instead of high school being treated like high school, and middle school being treated like middle school. Like we're all treated like we're 7th graders. Like instead of treating us like we're juniors and seniors—16, 17, 18 years old (FG2, p. 2).

Perceptions of Racism and/or Bias in the School

School Administrators

Administrators characterize the school's existing climate and culture as tolerant. However, Administrators' statements about the collegial, familial and accepting atmosphere in the school are not borne out by any practices that would allow school leaders to objectively determine whether their beliefs are in fact true. The school handbook mentions acceptance of diversity and dignity and respect for all as school-wide goals. However, when asked what that looks like at Opportunity Academy, administrators talked generally about being "mindful of differences" and "learning from different cultures." In response to a follow up interview question about whether there are things that building leaders intentionally do to foster respect and appreciation for diversity with teaching staff, Billings replied "no" (A1TR2, p13).

In interviews, issues of racial or other bias were neglected until asked the question. For example, when asked whether a student's race or color is a factor in rule application and enforcement at the school Billings responded:

I don't believe it is a factor. I certainly hope it's not. We take measures to ensure that that's not specifically a factor. In terms of race and demographics, and in terms of treating students fairly, it is consistency, I think, that is important. It is the effort of our school. As school administrators we communicate on almost every consequence we assign. So that we are ensuring that we are in agreement so that there is a sense of consistency, that we're not doing it unilaterally, and that we are trying to make an effort to make sure things are fair and equitable (A1TR1, p6).

The suggestion is that as long as administrators agree with the discipline outcome, consensus ensures consistent, fair and equitable school discipline practice.

During a follow up interview, administrators were asked more probing questions about whether racial incidents or concerns existed in the school. Billings candidly remarked that the school was experiencing “the cafeteria problem”:

We’re seeing kids sitting together by race and things like that. We never had that. Now we have that. And so it’s happened now. So I think that, you know, it’s gonna need some professional development and adult action to try to facilitate out of that. Whereas I think before we were lucky that we just didn’t – it wasn’t an issue. Yeah, we’re seeing it this year. When I walk in the cafeteria I just see groups, groups, groups. Yup. I’m not sure why. I’m not sure of what changed – unless we were lucky before. . . . I think overall we’ve had a fairly tolerant and accepting atmosphere here. Which is good. Still positive. It doesn’t change that, you know, because White kids are sitting with White kids, and Black kids are sitting with Black kids. But it does, I think, at least provide one metric of success. . . . I mean it’s very rare when it comes up. Yeah. Which makes it a big deal when it does happen. Which is good because, you know, I think it impacts us in a really profound way. Which is an indicator to me that, along those lines, I think that there’re things that we’re doing that are very right, you know. (A1TR2, pp. 13-15)

I also observed students sitting at lunch tables with students who appeared to be of the same racial and ethnic background during cafeteria observations at the study site.

Billings subsequently described three other racial incidents involving the use of racial slurs against Black students in the school—including one that occurred in the fall of 2015. A White student used a racial slur towards a Black student. Billings described the school’s response:

The White student immediately apologized and knew that they messed up, had done something wrong; it was sixth graders. And the quote unquote victim accepted that apology very quickly. The White student you know, worked through it. We worked through it. We did peer mediation. And of course there was a consequence issued to the student. And this is a student that’s never had any, you know, issues with behavior at all. She’s on all levels a model student. So to have a suspension in that case, to have that on her file I think was really impactful for her, for her family.

And I think, you know, everybody understood that it was handled very well. So I think the kids were ok with it (A1TR2, p. 15-16)

Administrators' restorative practices model does not consider racism and/or bias. This despite their acknowledgement that: racial issues have bubbled to the surface in the school; inconsistent rule enforcement has created unfairness in student discipline practice; and student reputation and educators' beliefs and background influence rule application and enforcement at Opportunity Academy.

Students

In interviews, students said that it is not race, but one's reputation in the school—as determined by grades and classroom demeanor—that determines which students are subjected to school rules, and the kind of sanction imposed. Participants agreed with a classmate who stated:

If they have a straight-A reputation they get all these rewards . . . and they're gonna' kinda let 'em slide (FG2TR, p. 11).

Two other students shared emotional responses:

If people are improving themselves they don't look at that. That doesn't count. They look at people who have always been doing good.

I think a lot of the students work hard here to be like improved, better people. Not just in the classroom, but even around the school. Like they want to change themselves to react better to other people. Not just for the other people, but for themselves. They want to better themselves so they can have a brighter future and when we're trying to prove ourselves to the teacher, they always kinda wanna reject that and act like they don't see it. They kinda wanna see what's the bad in us, and they never wanna see what's the good in us. (FG2TR, pp 10-11)

Overall, the sentiment expressed by student participants was that many teachers in the school do not demonstrate genuine care for them because they simply do not support them in ways that meet their

needs, or make them feel valued and respected. Additionally, students stressed that a student's reputation or teacher's perception of a student, and status with an educator help or hinder rapport, and equality in rule enforcement in the school. A student's positive reputation based on educator perceptions of intelligence and demeanor can create favored status for some students. Similarly, participants also said teachers' advantaged some students with favored or "friendship" status. Student comments, below, typify participants' responses:

I just feel like some students are noticed and some students aren't (FG2TR, p. 10).

Teachers have their favorites and those students get away with all kinds of things—like the silliest dress code things (FG2TR, p. 10).

So they treat the students that they're not friends with horribly. And treat the kids that they're friends with like they're angels (FG2TR, p. 14).

Conclusions

Administrators at this school are sincere and well-meaning in their desire to implement a restorative practice model that supports a transition from traditional punitive student discipline practice to restorative discipline. But Opportunity Academy's restorative model is not currently imagined or implemented in a way that can promote school-wide caring or assure just student discipline practice. Comparison of administrator and student responses to interview questions about school climate, educator-student rapport, and school rule enforcement has exposed significant gaps in perceptions of practice in each of these critical areas. School leaders have begun to plant before they fully understand how to plant, and before testing the soil to make sure it contains the nutrients necessary to grow the crop they intend to harvest. Much deeper, more difficult work must be done to expose and examine the attitudes and values of staff and students that appear to be impediments to a strong restorative foundation of trusting, caring, respectful relationships between educators and students, and students and students in the school. An

equity audit may provide school administrators with some of the answers that can help them re-conceptualize their restorative model before they move forward.

The perspectives offered by students in this study provide a crucial lens through which school leaders must begin to view and evaluate current school policies, practices, and relationships. While it is absolutely meaningful and important that every student in the study was able to identify a positive relationship with at least one adult in the building, the clear challenge for school leaders using a proactive restorative model is to be able to nurture a school climate where educator-student rapport is the rule rather than the exception. School administrators must begin to have and lead uncomfortably honest and complex conversations about racism and bias. That work first requires guided self-assessment and critical self-reflection to develop and support anti-racist, mindful, and courageous leadership practice.

Race neutrality appears to be the norm for schools using restorative practice in the U.S. But school or district-based restorative practice that does not consider and center racism and/or bias in its restorative model neglects the reality of well-documented, persistent racially disparate student discipline practice. If Black school children are disparately and excessively punished when traditional punitive discipline approaches are used, unless racial disparities are examined and addressed in a restorative discipline model why would Black children expect that they could be beneficiaries of restorative practice? Student discipline referral and outcome data—for traditional and restorative approaches—must be purposely collected, analyzed, disaggregated, and closely monitored to objectively assess the impact of school rule application and enforcement. Otherwise, school leaders avoid exposing and eliminate race-based inequities that persistently, negatively impact academic and social outcomes for Black students. Trusting, respectful relationships are difficult when individuals feel oppressed, marginalized, or treated unfairly. Regularly collected and analyzed school discipline data and an equity audit can reveal areas in the school that need targeted care—like the cafeteria problem that has surfaced at Opportunity Academy. Segregated seating and the use of racial slurs—no matter how infrequent—are symptoms of the problem not the problem. Unless the root causes are uncovered the symptoms are likely to worsen. Renowned

author, James Baldwin, made the point perfectly, “not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

Administrators at Opportunity Academy are urged to engage and utilize 11th and 12th grade students as resources in the development of the school’s restorative practice model. Engaging high school students in new ways can produce the kind of two-way learning between educators and students, and older (high school) and younger (middle school) students that nurtures relationships that build capacity and community. Given the school’s admittedly very low level of restorativeness school administrators have an opportunity to reconsider the timing and principles of the school’s restorative model. A re-conceptualized restorative practices model that truly represents a paradigm shift in how students and educators view and interact with each other can have the transformative power to ensure equitable and humane responses to all students’ behavior. Anti-racist policies, practices and values, along with authentic connections and caring will support respectful, trusting relationships in a restorative practice model that promotes academic and social success for all Opportunity Academy students.

Limitations

The present study of a single, small to mid-sized racially diverse interdistrict school in the Northeast may not apply to other school contexts. Especially since this study focused solely on administrators and 11th and 12th grade students. The perspectives of building leaders and students are part of the study, but examination of teachers’ views and use of restorative practice is beyond the scope of this study. Still, how teachers make sense of and carry out restorative practices is important to know and may serve as the impetus for a future study. My hope is that this study surfaced useful information and understanding to add to the growing research on the efficacy of restorative practices in U. S. schools as a more just student discipline approach.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Genuinely well-intentioned school administration is not the same as anti-racist school leadership. Even in educational contexts where administrators are sincere in their desire to promote better academic and social outcomes for students and believe restorative practice is the answer, there are limitations in a restorative practice model that neglects racism and other forms of bias.

Restorative philosophy is rooted in the notion that communal relationships and shared values create a sense of belonging and a desire to avoid causing harm. When conflict avoidance is not possible and harm is caused, it is the connectedness and caring that is expected to create remorse, accountability and a sense of obligation to repair the harm done. But whose community and whose views and values? What happens when connectedness and caring are not present or not possible for all in the school community because of attitudes or perceptions held and unaddressed? Attempting to implement restorative practice in a setting where unfairness or injustice is acknowledged but not addressed is inconsistent with anti-racist and restorative ideals. Anti-racist leadership proactively identifies strategies and processes to root out and eliminate attitudes, behaviors, values, perceptions, policies and practices that support oppression and racially disparate outcomes. To establish educational spaces of genuine caring, empowerment, equity, and mutual trust, school leaders must actively ensure students' views and voices are not muted or silenced. School administrators must actively expose and eliminate attitudes and values that nurture *isms*—e.g., racism, favoritism, sexism.

This study helps to answer the question regarding the efficacy of restorative practice as a more just student discipline approach. The answer is that it cannot be if racism and other forms of bias are not addressed in the model. This study also reveals that fidelity to restorative principles and practices, including training, is critical to achieving a viable level of restorativeness.

It will take race-conscious, humane, empathetic, and just educators to disrupt persistent racial disparities in America's school discipline practice. Whiteness and dysconscious racism must be

confronted and dismantled. Educator preparation programs, policymakers, and state and local educators have an opportunity to actually begin to prepare pre-service and in-service educators for 21st century work in racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse public schools. Restorative practice has the ability to transform schools' academic and social cultures. We know that the sense of belonging and pride in school are related to successful academic performance, and exclusionary discipline increases at-risk behavior and involvement in the criminal justice system. The greater the uninterrupted involvement in school and positive peer groups the more likely students are to continue on a path to academic and social success.

Changing from a punitive to a restorative mindset represents a paradigm shift. It's widely recognized among school leaders that conventional discipline is ineffective. Out-of-school suspension rewards misbehavior for students who don't want to be in school. In-school suspension promotes the growth of negative subcultures which disrupt the whole school climate. Restorative practice is a credible discipline alternative. However, the efficacy of restorative practice as a more just student discipline practice for Black students at this critical juncture in education is still in question. Race neutrality appears to be inherent in restorative practice. But in a country where public schools' racially neutral discipline policies result in alarmingly high rates of racially disparate student discipline practice against Black school children, restorative practice models must consider and address racial disproportionality, racism and other bias. Otherwise, it is difficult to imagine that restorative practice in schools will eliminate the devastating and lifelong negative effects of exclusionary discipline for Black children.

- Restorative justice or restorative discipline offers an approach to school discipline that treats student misbehavior, or school violence, as harm against interpersonal relationships within the school community. Restorative discipline seeks to involve students in conflict in constructive dialogue to facilitate repair of damaged relationships which is more educative than exclusionary practices.
- Key challenges to adoption and implementation of restorative models are: (a) resistance to changing beliefs and practices that influence attitudes and perceptions of people in the school

community; (b) lingering pressures to suspend or continue to use traditional punitive measures as an automatic default because restorative practice is often viewed as permissive; (c) administrator and staff time demands, especially during the initial training phase and thereafter as formal restorative circles or conferences are employed for conflict-resolution; (d) funding for training of educators, students and parents (depending on the model); (e) financial costs associated with hiring and training Restorative Practice Coordinators who can devote their time to the day to day administration and oversight of the restorative model; (f) time costs associated with lost instructional time as classroom teachers incorporate restorative practice in their classes; and (g) costs (financial and time) associated with data collection to be able to assess how the model is working.

The potential benefits of an inclusive, race- and bias-conscious restorative practice model in public schools can outweigh its costs. The disparate human costs of exclusionary discipline for Black children remains disturbingly high. A restorative practice model that examines and addresses racism and bias can reinforce positive social values and caring, trusting relationships in schools and strengthen bonds inside and outside of the school community.

Table*Data Collection at the School Study Site: November 2015-January 2016*

Data Source	Technique	Duration (minutes)	Protocol	Resulting Artifact(s)
School Administrators	Interviews - 2 with each administrator individually on site	80-90 each= 320-360 total	open-ended questions; digitally audiotaped by student researcher; professionally transcribed	Transcript - 97 pages; data codes; and comparative matrix
11th and 12th Grade Students (Focus Groups)	Focus Group - 2 grade level focus groups on site	60-70 each= 120-140 total	open-ended questions; digitally recorded by a sound technician; professionally transcribed	Transcript - 39 pages; data codes; and comparative matrix
11th and 12th Grade Students (Interviews)	Interviews - 12 separate individual student interviews on site	25-30 each= 300-360 total	open-ended questions; digitally audiotaped by student researcher; professionally transcribed	Transcript - 74 pages; data codes; and comparative matrix
Study Site (Cafeteria)	Observations – observed 2 lunch waves	Lunch=30-35 each 60-70 total	student researcher takes contemporaneous notes focusing on: setting, norms, behavior/demeanor, evidence of restorative practice	Data codes and comparative matrix
Study Site (Classes)	Observations - observed 4 student participant classes	Amount of class period observed =40-45 each 160-180 total	student researcher takes contemporaneous notes focusing on: setting, norms, behavior/demeanor, evidence of restorative practice	Data codes and comparative matrix
Total	24	960-1110=16+ hours		210+ pages

APPENDIX

Final Code Lists and Definitions for All Participant Interviews

Administrator Interview Code List & Definitions

1. **School climate** – school administrators share their views about their school’s climate, including beliefs about the quality of educator-students relationships.
2. **Student discipline philosophy & practice** – school administrator share information concerning the evolution of their discipline philosophy and practice from traditionally punitive responses to restorative practice.
3. **School rules**– school administrators give their opinions about this school’s rules, and views about this school’s rule enforcement.
4. **Restorative model** — school administrators discuss their conceptualization of restorative practice at this school.
5. **Level of “restorativeness”**— school administrators discuss implementation of their restorative model.
6. **Student race as a factor in student discipline** — school administrators share their views about whether student race is a factor in student discipline.
7. **Evidence of a “race effect” in this school** — school administrators discuss whether there is evidence of racial or other bias at this school.
8. **Student voice** — school administrators share their beliefs about whether students’ voices and views matter at this school.
9. **Compelling/key quotes** — school administrators provide compelling/key quotes.

Focus Group Code List & Definitions

1. **School climate**– 11th and 12th grade students share their views about their school’s climate, including beliefs about the quality of educator-students relationships.
2. **Students’ beliefs about educators’ perceptions of them** – 11th and 12th grade students share their beliefs about educators’ perceptions of them.
3. **School rules**– 11th and 12th grade students give their opinions of this school’s rules, and views about this school’s rule enforcement.
4. **Bias in rule enforcement and/or student discipline** - 11th and 12th grade students share their beliefs about the presence of racial or other bias in school disciplinary practices.
5. **Student discipline process and practice** - 11th and 12th grade students share their knowledge of this school’s student discipline process, including views about rule enforcement.

6. **Evidence of restorative practice** - 11th and 12th grade students discuss this school's restorative model.
7. **Student voice** - 11th and 12th grade students share their beliefs about whether students' voices and views matter at this school.
8. **Compelling/key quotes** – 11th and 12th grade students provide compelling/key quotes.

Individual Student Interview Code List & Definitions

1. **School experience** – 11th and 12th grade participants talk about their experience at this school.
2. **School climate** – 11th and 12th grade students discuss this school's climate, including beliefs about the quality of educator-students relationships.
3. **School rules**– 11th and 12th grade students give their opinions of this school's rules and rule enforcement.
4. **Student discipline process and practice** - 11th and 12th grade students share their knowledge of this school's student discipline process, including views about rule enforcement.
5. **Student voice** - 11th and 12th grade students share their beliefs about whether students' voices and views matter at this school.
6. **Compelling/key quotes** – 11th and 12th grade students provide compelling/key quotes.

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