# Silos in the School: Understanding Restorative Practices in Chicago Public Schools

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## Abstract

Restorative practices in schools have been found to mitigate negative effects of punitive and exclusionary practices. Because most research focuses on quantifiable student outcomes following the use of restorative practices, the field of education lacks an understanding of adult mindsets when learning about and implementing these practices. Acknowledging that school staff enact restorative practices as a policy through their role as street-level bureaucrats, this project focuses on how adults in Chicago Public Schools define, learn about, and implement restorative practices. Drawing on interviews with 19 participants and existing literature on school reform, I find that there is a tension between adult mindsets and structured learning attempting to change those mindsets. School staff and outside practitioners enter this work with understandings based on personal experiences and aspects of identity, making the processes of learning and implementing restorative practices highly personal. Meanwhile, the district framing of policy, high levels of autonomy, and low levels of oversight create significant variability in the learning and implementation of restorative practices. Based on these findings, I recommend that school staff and outside practitioners focus on peer-learning models that would engage adults with varying mindsets. I recommend that Chicago Public School aligns restorative practices more closely with restorative justice to ensure that implementation variability does not continue the harmful impacts of school discipline. The findings presented here may help guide Chicago Public Schools as they move to evaluate the effectiveness of restorative practices.

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## Introduction

In 2017 Chicago Public Schools (CPS) published a 148-page Restorative Practices Toolkit and Guidebook, giving attention to restorative practices as a method of school-wide management. CPS frames restorative practices as an alternative to punitive practices, which serve to enact "pain or unpleasantness to deter/prevent" certain behaviors (Chicago Public Schools, 2017, p. 12). Zero-tolerance discipline policies popularized during the 1990s mandated exclusionary and punitive practices such as school suspensions, expulsions, and police arrest meant to isolate students for incidents involving violence in schools (Allensworth et al., 2015a; Voices of Youth Chicago Education, 2011). In Chicago, punitive and exclusionary discipline policies disproportionately impact black students (Allensworth et al., 2015a), contributing to the school-to-prison-pipeline by positioning schools as institutions that disenfranchise people of color (Fasching-Varner et. al, 2014). Restorative practices, as a set of tools derived from restorative justice, are often framed as alternatives to such discipline policies. The primary principal of restorative justice is reorienting the understanding of a wrongdoing from a violation of a set of rules to a breakdown of relationships within a community (Buth & Cohn, 2017). CPS encourages the usage of restorative practices as a means to address a violation of classroom behavior standards.

Umoja is a nonprofit founded in 1997 to support Chicago Public Schools through "direct student service-provision" by placing restorative justice and social emotional learning specialists in CPS schools that have opted to partner with the nonprofit (Umoja n.d.). Umoja specialists administer professional developments to teachers in partner schools and work directly with students in peace rooms and restorative circles. In this study, I draw on interviews with Umoja staff members, school staff in Umoja partner schools and non-partner schools, professional

development staff at the Chicago Teachers Union, and a district official, along with observations of 2 community events to evaluate the following questions: How do outside restorative justice specialists and school staff understand restorative practices? How do these understandings impact the implementation of restorative practices? Are the values of restorative justice upheld through the learning and implementation of restorative practices? Lastly, do individuals understand and implement restorative practices in accordance with directives given at the district level?

In describing how outside specialists and internal school staff understand restorative practices, I begin to outline how adults charged with implementation carry out these practices with significant variability based on high levels of discretion and autonomy. I find that the function of restorative practices is not aligned with the philosophies of restorative justice during trainings and implementation. Restorative practices serve the same purpose as punitive discipline practices due to the lack of alignment and significant variability; therefore, adults implement a set of practices that are symbolic in nature and lacking fidelity. These findings articulate the adult knowledge of restorative practices as they are implemented in Chicago Public Schools and have consequences for both policy makers and district leaders embarking on potential evaluation of the effectiveness of restorative programs.

## Literature Review

### *Racialized and Symbolic School Reform*

Before a discussion of restorative practices, I outline a theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory and organizational theory to understand and analyze practitioner and school staff knowledge of restorative practices. Tara Yosso defines Critical Race Theory as "a framework that can be used to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and

explicitly impact on social structures, practices, and discourses" (2005, p. 70). CRT is rooted in a history of legal scholarship and has expanded to include the work of activists, artists, and scholars (Tate, 1997), acknowledging that CRT is a political practice as much as a theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In this way, CRT offers unique insights into the processes, practices, and policies of schooling.

CRT scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate theorize race as an analytical tool to study school inequity (1995), which I apply to the discourse surrounding the understanding of restorative practices. Challenging claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy is a key application of CRT to an understanding of educational inequity. It follows that CRT uses the theme of "naming one's own reality" through stories to expose and resist oppression (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, pp. 56-57). Similarly, Yosso identifies "centrality of experiential knowledge" as one of five tenants of CRT application to the field of education (2005, p. 73). When analyzing the history of zero tolerance policies and the movement towards restorative practices in CPS, CRT centers racial disproportionality in discipline practices. Furthermore, the restorative practices identified in this thesis, specifically peace circles and restorative conversations, require actions of understanding and speaking to one's own experience in school and disrupt power dynamics between those involved. The analysis in this thesis centers first-hand experience through interviews and direct quotations of outside RJ specialists and school personnel to understand how this work is approached.

Through CRT, the idea of whiteness as property is constructed. Property is something with value that gives status, and therefore must be guarded, protected, and regulated (Locke, 1689). Cheryl V. Harris argues that whiteness operates in a similar manner (1993). A key tenant of property, the absolute right to exclude, applies to whiteness as those who occupy the identity

get to draw the boundaries around whiteness (Harris, 1993). A second tenant of property, reputation and status, applies to whiteness in "the view of one's reputation as a commodity with values" (Harris, 1993). I use the framework of whiteness as property to understand how the implementation of restorative practices can reinforce power dynamics and the legitimacy of urban school reform. Whiteness as property is especially important for the analysis of white teachers and the connection between education policies, schools, and Black children, which can often "[diminish the policy's] reputation or status" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 60). Whiteness as property is an analytical tool to understand the historical context of restorative practices in schools and the legacy of disproportionate punitive discipline practices. Restorative practices, as a policy in Chicago Public Schools, impact students of color through direct implementation at the hands of adults. How those adults understand restorative practices as a racialized policy carries implications for the implementation of the policy.

Urban school reform—often policies that connect education reform to students of color—functions as a product of policy churn resulting in symbolic change. In 1999, Frederick Hess argued that policies changed in urban schools so frequently that "churn" became the status quo (p. 5). As a result of shifting policies in schools, school leaders often have to decide which policies to focus on, impeding attempts to create accountability for school reform (Hess, 1999, p. 7). Restorative practices exist within the same narrative of policy churn, following different periodic to discipline practices within CPS. The spinning wheel of urban school reform, which exists under the guise of moving towards education equity, can create frustration and resentment of those working towards new practices, limiting the ability for policies to create effective change (Hess, 1999; Payne, 2007).

*Practitioners of School Reform*

Restorative practices in CPS are a reform policy implemented by street-level bureaucrats, such as practitioners, teachers, administrators, and deans of students. Street-level bureaucrats are individuals who have a wide discretion over the implementation of a policy, and therefore construct the policy through their decisions (Lipsky, 2010). Michael Lipsky argues that as street-level bureaucrats implement policies, they make decisions about resource allocations with limited time, limited information, and large caseloads (2010, p. 29). These conditions all influence the work that street-level bureaucrats are able to produce, impacting client outcomes. Due to low levels of oversight, street-level bureaucrats act autonomously under ambiguous agency goals (Lipsky, 2010, p. 40). This can be understood as decoupling— the difference between formal policies and the actual organizational practices. John Meyer and Brian Rowan argue that institutionalized organizations "decrease internal coordination and control in order to maintain legitimacy" (1977, p. 340). Schools are an example of one such organization. Street-level bureaucrats construct policies through their actions, thereby decoupling practices from policies, and influencing client experiences (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Lipsky, 2010).

Organizational structures influence resource distribution and subsequently shape street-level bureaucrats' implementation, potentially reproducing racial inequality. Victor Ray argues that schools are racialized organizations, defined as, "social structures that limit the personal agency and collective efficacy of subordinate racial groups while magnifying the agency of the dominant racial groups" (2019, p. 36). Ray understands organizations as schemas, which are unwritten rules that create the rules; in doing so, he analyzes how the rules of organizations reinforce existing social hierarchies (2019, p. 31). Racial ideology produces unequal conditions that meso-level organizations, such as schools, accept as normative. The rules created within

racial organizations subsequently reinforce racial inequity by distributing resources unequally along racial lines (Ray, 2019, p. 33). Street-level bureaucrats operating within racial organizations often hold various amounts of agency when implementing policies and follow different hiring paths reinforcing racial inequity under the guise of a neutral meritocracy (Ray, 2019). In schools this can manifest through the treatment of students while school staff implement discipline policies unequally along racial lines.

Schools, as environments where street-level bureaucrats operate with high levels of autonomy and low levels of accountability, serve to reinforce the unequal distribution of resources. Street-level bureaucrats perform in ways that are difficult to measure, mainly because "agencies are not self-corrective, and the definition of adequate performance is highly politicized" (Lipsky, 2010, p. 48). Furthermore, street-level bureaucrats often work in environments where scrutiny is not the norm. Even when placed against certain standards, street-level bureaucrats are rarely measured on the fairness or appropriateness of their actions (Lipsky, 2010, p. 50). Instead, they often make sense of a policy internally through "prior knowledge, beliefs, and values." This internal notion of restorative practices then interacts with school and district structures, as well as social dynamics across a school and the district (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010, p. 156). The social organization of schools can impact an individual's usage of a certain practice, specifically if a teacher's "advice-seeking network" influence the use of the practice (Diamond, 2012, p. 165). Accountability in schools—answering the question "to whom or for what" are individuals accountable for—depend on the alignment between individuals' values, shared expectations in a school, and identified accountability mechanism (Abelmann & Elmore, 1999, p. 14). This project serves to center adults' firsthand experience in learning about

restorative practices to articulate how those charged with implementation by the district understand, make sense of, and are held accountable to this school reform policy.

## Historical Context

### *The History and Function of School Discipline*

Many scholars identify obedience as central to the project of schooling; discipline is then understood as a means to teach this obedience through control (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Noguera, 2013). For decades, social theorists have argued that schools serve to create social control. Louis Althusser explains that schools are ideological state apparatuses; they reinforce the ideals of a capitalistic society and the ideology of the ruling class through curriculum, actions, and information (Althusser, 1971, p. 6). Schools utilize obedience as a tool to create social control and reinforce the class hierarchy through students' adherence to the curriculum, actions, and information (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Althusser, 1971). The centrality of obedience remains consistent with the dual objectives of schooling outlined by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis: equality of opportunity and social control (1976, p. 29). This understanding of the project of schooling is expanded upon by Pedro Noguera, who argues that schools focus on behavior management and social control over other goals. In teaching social control, schools are able to sort children based on academic ability and socialize children—the other two goals of education (Noguera 2003, 344). Educators turn to exclusionary and punitive discipline practices, such as out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, in order to maintain control over classrooms and students, reinforcing obedience.

Zero tolerance policies rose to prominence in the 1990s to address gun violence and drug use and follow a similar logic in removing students from schools via mandated suspension, expulsion, and police arrests for the use of weapons, drugs, or alcohol (Allensworth et al., 2015a;

Voices of Youth Chicago Education, 2011). In removing students for these infractions, policy makers believed that other students would be deterred from engaging in similar behaviors. Therefore, the policies use punitive, prescriptive, and severe measures regardless of context (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008, p. 2). In reality, these policies act to increase the number of students who are suspended (Noguera, 2003, 342), who are then more likely to drop out of school (Allensworth et al., 2015a).

Studies have found that students of color are more likely to experience zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline practices than their peers (Allensworth et al., 2015a; Morris, 2016; Heitzeg, 2014). These findings hold in CPS. A University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR) report found that African American students in CPS are more likely to receive an in-school suspension than any other racial group (Allensworth et al., 2015a, p. 2). An additional CCSR report published in the same year found that the driving force of these disparities can be attributed to differences across schools' discipline practices and the disproportionate distribution in the racial makeup of schools. Schools attended by Black students had suspension rates twice as high as school attended by Latino students, which had suspension rates twice as high as schools attended by white and Asian students (Allensworth et al., 2015b, p. 2). The first CCSR report stated that the majority of suspensions were based on defiance of adults, not threats to safety or illegal behaviors. Defiance of adults was defined by school personnel as students "refusing to comply with adult requests of 'talking back' to adults using inappropriate language" (Allensworth, 2015a, p. 22). A connection is thus drawn between school personnel's perceptions of students, particularly Black students, and punitive practices.

These exclusionary and punitive practices enacted in schools reflect punitive incarceration models and often act as the first step in the School to Prison Pipeline (StPP) by

removing students from the physical space of school (Heitzeg, 2014; Noguera, 2003, p. 342). The StPP refers to the journey from school to prison via interactions with punitive discipline practices, high stakes environments, a lack of effective resources in schools, and eventual arrest and incarceration (Wald & Losen, 2003, p. 11). Some authors argue that this is how the school system was intended to function—through the disenfranchisement of people of color while benefiting mostly white people (Fasching-Varner et al., 2014). Through zero-tolerance policies, police-based enforcement in schools mirrors enforcement in prisons (Heitzeg, 2014, p. 3), while the history and faith in these law enforcement personnel in schools serves as an obstacle to changing discipline practices (Nolan, 2011).

Understanding that schools create an environment reflective of the carceral institution through punitive practices and the disproportionate impact on Black and brown students, Erica Meiners works towards a definition of the School Prison Nexus. She argues that the relation between schools and prisons is both aesthetic – for example, the use of metal detectors – and functional, in the instance of punitive practices (Meiners, 2007). School discipline practices encourage students to internalize individual deficits, therefore placing a positive value judgement on the practices themselves; ultimately, she argues that these processes lead to trust of the prison system and police (Meiners, 2007). These practices also rely on mechanisms of surveillance, specifically through the presence of police officers, and more informally through the ideas of a panopticon, in which students begin to monitor their own behavior out of an understanding of the punishments (Foucault, 1975; Shedd, 2015). Although restorative practices can be seen as a shift away from this system, reforms are often the "re-forming of the system in its own image," reusing the same carceral mechanisms (Schenwar & Law, 2020, p. 17). Drawing on feminist philosopher Jaggar, Meiners calls on the idea of outlaw emotions, which are weaponized by

those in power to determine what an appropriate response is to a given situation (2007, p. 28). She argues that marginalized students respond with anger to "institutions that set [them] up for failure, or to a political state that systematically denies [them] the right to participate," but is not compatible with "dominant perceptions and values" (Meiners, 2007, p. 29). When marginalized students express anger in school, it is understood as an outlaw emotion to devalue the response and justify a punitive punishment (Meiners, 2007, p. 29). In this paper, I use the ideas of the School Prison Nexus, specifically issues of re-forming and instances of outlaw emotions, to situate the current use of restorative practices and understand adult perceptions of students through the implementation of the practices.

*Restorative Practices in CPS: An Unfunded Mandate with Limited Evaluations*

In the past decade, CPS has worked to dismantle zero-tolerance policies and other exclusionary discipline practices by identifying restorative justice practices as an alternative (Allensworth et al., 2015; Morris, 2016). After the creation of programming to address punitive discipline, and changes to the Student Code of Conduct, CPS published a 148-page *Restorative Justice Guide and Toolkit* in 2017. This guide signaled a commitment to the practices and attempted to offer practitioners and school personnel with a central definition of restorative justice (RJ) and an outline of restorative practices (RPs) (Chicago Public Schools, 2017).

There is not a universally accepted definition of RJ, but almost all definitions provided hint at the nature of RJ to be defined by individuals and within relationships or communities. RJ can be defined by the components necessary to use RPs. Former criminal defense attorneys and Northwestern University clinical law professors Ora Schub and Cheryl Graves are known as the "grandmothers of Chicago's restorative justice movement" (Simeone-Casas & Conway, 2018). In a 2018 interview with City Bureau, they highlighted that RJ takes time, it demands that

participants relinquish control to allow for all voices to be heard, and it requires community buy-in (Simeone-Casas & Conway).

Stemming from two primary definitions, this paper builds a definition of RJ centering relationships and an understanding of harm grounded in community. First, criminologist Howard Zehr defines RJ as a function of relationships, and wrongdoing as a breakdown in those relationships, necessitating some form of repair in those relationships (Zehr, 2015, p. 29). His formal definition of RJ is as follows:

> Restorative justice is an approach to achieving justice that involves, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense or harm to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible (2015, p. 48).

Second, Annalise Buth and Lynn Cohn define restorative justice as, "being in good relationship with yourself, others, and the natural world" (Buth & Cohn, 2017, p. 4). At its core, RJ uses storytelling to repair harm within the context of the community, reorienting wrongdoing from a violation of a set of rules to a breakdown of interpersonal relationships (Buth & Cohn, 2017, p. 5; Zehr, 2015, p. 28). Furthermore, RJ is a process situated in the response to "the ways in which the formal system [fails] to address the needs and wounds of all who are affected by harm resulting from wrongdoing" (Buth & Cohn, 2017, p. 7). Zehr's, and Buth and Cohn's respective definitions highlight key elements required for RJ and positions it in radical opposition to ideas of obedience, the state ideological apparatus, and punitive discipline. I use these two definitions of RJ, while also recognizing that RJ is best understood through experience (Buth & Cohn, 2017, p. 5) and cannot be limited to a singular program (Zehr, 2015, p. 16). Therefore, participants provided their own definitions of restorative justice, which I explore in the findings.

In using a framework of RJ, restorative practices allow for conflict to be a learning and healing experience, creating schools with community as the center (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015, 256;

Heitzeg, 2014, 29). In this way, RPs in schools, "lie across the boundaries between discipline and care" (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011, p. 5). This terminology can create some confusion of the precise differences between RJ and RPs, with some scholars gravitating more towards RJ to center the idea of justice and perceptions of injustice that arise during conflicts and harm (Zehr, 2015, p. 13). In Chicago, some of the earliest restorative justice practices were used in CPS. In 1996, Senn High School adopted a peer jury, which was used to address conflict in place of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and arrests (Buth & Cohn, 2017, 7). Today, CPS continues to use RPs to describe the policy implemented in schools across the district (Chicago Public Schools, 2017).

A number of studies report the positive effects of restorative practices in schools; however, these studies focus on specific school districts or programs, limiting the external validity of these findings. Whole-school restorative practices allow educators to address student behavior with stronger support of the school community (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015, 259; Nolan, 2011). Research has shown that children can learn and adopt conflict resolution techniques, applying them in different spaces. When integrated into a curriculum, these same techniques can lead to higher academic achievement (Liebmann, 2007, p. 105). However, evaluating restorative practices in terms of academic outcomes can be tricky. As Schub and Graves note in a 2018 interview with City Bureau, "What it comes down to is, what do we want to accomplish?" Beyond academic outcomes, restorative justice frameworks also impact schools' use of disciplinary outcomes. In a 2015 case study analysis on Denver Public School system, Thalia González found that implementation of restorative practices can play a key role in addressing disproportionality in discipline outcomes (2015). This is similar to a finding of a Chicago-based study, which concluded that restorative practices could diminish student disciplinary outcomes

and may have a larger positive effect for groups of students that are at greater risk for poorer outcomes (Rich, Mader, & Pacheco-Applegate, 2017). A further finding in a 2012 study encourages the use of restorative practices in shifting school culture (DeWitt). Taken together, this body of literature suggests that restorative practices, when implemented effectively, can influence school outcomes across multiple domains.

Other studies found that the implementation of restorative practices necessitated the buy-in and learning of school personnel. A 2019 study on the whole-school Restorative Practices Intervention (RPI) in Chicago found that implementation required training, monthly consultation, and ongoing participatory learning groups (Acosta, 2019, p. 880). The authors found that through proactive practices such as restorative circles, taking responsibility for behavior, and encouraging expression of emotions, RPI could enhance youth development (Acosta, 2019, pp. 878, 888). Similarly, in a 2011 article focused on a New Zealand high school, authors found that teachers bought into the practices due to the high level of involvement they had in the process of learning and implementing (Kaveney & Drewery). In the study, teachers attended consistent professional developments, and there was classroom programing to support both teachers and students. One of the key findings was first-year teachers felt more supported by the program and a greater ability to deal with behavioral issues (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011, p. 11). These findings highlight the importance of professional support in implementing restorative practices.

The implementation of restorative practices at the hands of school personnel is tied to their understanding of race through the connection to ongoing racial disproportionality in discipline practices. The teaching force is overwhelmingly white, and is becoming whiter in Illinois (Emmanuel, 2018). In Chicago, the Black teacher population is declining, and the overall demographics of teaching staff do not match the student population in the city (Emmanuel,

2018). This is important because research has shown that teachers of color benefit students of all races (Egalite & Kisida, 2017; Gershenson et al., 2018) while white teachers are prone to harmful hegemonic understandings of Black students and their communities as "dangerous and at fault for the educational challenges they face" (Picower, 2009, p. 211). Teachers set expectations for students based on these racialized understandings and their school's micropolitical contexts, which varies based on administrative expectations and student demographics (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004), not unlike the variance between CPS schools' racial disproportionality in discipline responses (Allensworth et al., 2015b.). Due to the connection between punitive and restorative practices, understanding how teachers treat their students based on race is critical to the implementation of restorative practices. Yet, there is a significant lack of research recognizing the role of race in the implementation of restorative practices in schools.

In Chicago, the introduction of RPs followed the history of punitive practices and a series of policy changes to school discipline. In 2010, CPS introduced the Culture of Calm initiative (CoC) after the beating death of Derrion Albert, a CPS student at Fenger High School, gained national attention (Lutton, 2009). In 2009, following Albert's death, then-Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced a $500,000 federal grant for Fenger, which was followed by the district's plan to allocate $18 million for CoC (Vevea, 2011; Lutton, 2011). This money was supplemented by $40 million for the 2010-11 school year from the $260 million in stimulus money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Vevea, 2011). The initiative focused on 47 high schools across the district, who could access money and resources to provide "professional developments for teachers, mentoring for students, case management, and curriculum" (Allensworth, Levenstein & Sporte, 2011, p. 3). Additionally, schools could hire

vendors to provide these services (Allensworth et. al, 2011). At the time, CPS allocated $1 million each to six "focus" schools, which were able to create a Peace Room staffed by Umoja Student Development Corp (Lutton, 2011; Allensworth et al., 2011). Umoja, an organization founded in 1997, specifically works with CPS to provide both trainings for adults and "student service-provision" in schools (Umoja n.d.). In certain partner schools this takes the form of Umoja-staffed Peace Rooms, such as the ones that began during the CoC initiative. While the Consortium reported that the CoC initiative was showing promising starts by shifting teachers' reports of safe environments, the CoC initiative was only funded from 2009-2011, following the loss of stimulus aid in the 2011 budget cycle (Allensworth et al., 2011; Vevea, 2011).

Ten years after the CoC initiative informally ended, RPs are currently implemented as what some teachers and staff identify as an "unfunded mandate" (Karp, 2020). Across district documents, RPs are stated as possible approaches for classroom management and behavioral issues. In both the 2020-21 updated SCC and *Guidelines for Effective Discipline,* CPS identifies restorative conversations and peace circles as a choice for inappropriate and disruptive behaviors. These categories also warrant punitive responses, such as removal from a classroom or detention. CPS outlines that teachers and school staff should be implementing these interventions "with fidelity," necessitating a knowledge of RPs and desire to use them (Chicago Public School, 2017, p. 8). This messaging is confusing, potentially disincentivizing school staff from engaging in RPs.

Although the district suggests RPs as an alternative to other forms of discipline, Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) has made it known that they believe in the usage of these practices. At the end of the fall 2019 CTU strike, the district promised to add 120 new positions over four years for the "neediest school" (Karp, 2020). Schools could choose from a counselor, librarian,

or RJ coordinator. In the spring of 2020, half of the new 30 positions were given to RJ specialists (Karp, 2020). This clear signal of commitment on the part of street level bureaucrats to include stronger programming and support for the implementation of RPs is not matched by similar support at the district level in their discipline policies. In 2017, Annalise Buth and Lynn Cohn identified "financial stress" as a main barrier to the implementation of RPs across CPS (p. 8). The lack of funding in programs like the CoC initiative and contradictory language in discipline policies that indicate an expectation of implementing RPs have led street-level bureaucrats to identify RPs as an "unfunded mandate" (Karp, 2020). This project serves to understand how adults in CPS are attempting to navigate the implementation of RPs by focusing on the internal and professional work that often dictates the choice to implement.

## Methodology

This project uses qualitative methods to understand and analyze school staff learning and implementation of restorative practices in Chicago Public Schools through the facilitation of restorative justice practitioners. Conducting interviews and ethnographic observations allows me to situate the data collection within the theoretical framework of critical race theory that prioritizes "naming one's own reality" (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). The data collection mimics certain restorative practices—such as restorative conversations—by allowing participants to tell stories, observing the work in community-building spaces, providing space for open dialogue, and requiring me to actively listen to those involved in the process of repairing harm (Buth, 2017; Liebmann, 2007; Ryan & Ruddy, 2017). In doing so, the findings and policy recommendations offered in this paper are built on the foundation of restorative practices, rather than using tangential outcome data to evaluate the practices, as past researchers have done (e.g. Acosta et al., 2019; Allensworth et al., 2015a).

*Data Sources*

Between September of 2020 and February of 2021, I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with 19 key informants of varying occupations within the education system in Chicago to gain a wide perspective on the role of practitioners in encouraging school personnel learning and implementation of restorative practices. In total I interviewed 6 current or former restorative justice specialists and practitioners, 8 Chicago Public School (CPS) high school teachers, two specialized staff members, one dean of students, one Chicago Teachers Union professional development director, and one district leaders. For a table of interview participants, see the Appendix (1). In line with the ethos of restorative practices, the participants should not be understood as perfect representations of everyone in CPS or other districts who occupy similar roles. Each participant brings their unique perspective to the work based on their identity, positionality, and experiences in learning about and implementing restorative practices.

To recruit participants, I first contacted four participants directly through my network at the University of Chicago and my job at the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR). I had previously interviewed two of these participants for a class project conducted in the spring of 2020. I recruited the remaining 15 participants through snowball sampling and direct emails using publicly available contact information. Interviews took place over Zoom and lasted between one and two hours. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic with remote learning taking place in Chicago Public Schools, all participants were familiar with Zoom, evident by the comfort with which they navigated the platform. During the interviews, I took notes by hand, while still on camera. This meant I would take only occasional notes, to ensure I was still maintaining eye contact and actively listening to the participants. One additional follow up interview was conducted in order to clarify topics brought up in the initial interview.

During the same time frame, I observed two different community building and fundraising events hosted by Umoja. During the events, which took place over Zoom, I took notes in my notebook. The events were open to the public and each had over 40 participants at the meeting, with some participants on camera and others opting to have their camera off. This meant I could have my camera off and take notes inconspicuously and without impacting the natural activities and presentations during the events. I observed these events in order to supplement my interviews with instances of real time community building that utilized and explored restorative practices. These events were hosted by the organization that employs three of the participants I interviewed. Therefore, the observations also offered organizational context to those specific interviews. These events lasted for one hour.

*Data Analysis*

Each semi-structured interview included a unique set of questions based on the participant's occupation and answers. For a general guide, see the Appendix (2). Prior to each interview I reviewed the interview guide and added questions based on the participants role and position in implementing restorative practices. After each interview, prior to the subsequent interview, I reviewed my notes and edited the interview guide to include questions based on emerging themes I noticed. These themes often emerged from moments in the conversation that surprised me or challenged my prior assumptions.

After conducting 10 interviews and observing the two community events, I produced preliminary analytical memos to help consolidate and clarify emerging themes in the conversations. These preliminary write-ups then impacted the types of questions I asked to the second half of participants, while I still followed the same procedure outlined above. After I completed all 20 interviews, I sent the audio recordings of the conversations to Rev to be

transcribed. I typed all observational notes by myself. I coded the transcriptions and observations using the qualitative coding software NVivo, using initial and then focused codes (Saldaña, 2015). After coding all 20 interviews, I organized my codes into the three findings sections presented in this project.

*Researcher Positionality*

As a current undergraduate student, I have never worked in a school environment. During interviews, some participants would push back against the framework of my questions, alluding to experience or the reality of working in schools. As a white Latina, I was demographically similar to some participants, and different than others. In instances where I was demographically similar, often racially, participants were more comfortable broaching the topic of race and its relation to discipline practices and professional developments. With participants that were not white, a similar pushback occurred as noted above, some people acting skeptical about the framing of my questions. It is important to note that my white womanhood could have impacted the ways that people answered my questions.

Participants' candor and comfort in answering questions varied, often by how I connected with the interviewee. Prior to the project, I enrolled in a class in the spring of 2020 that required me to interview key actors in Chicago Public Schools to produce a miniature thesis. Through that class I interviewed two people who then participated in this project, Abraham and Rae. They were noticeably more comfortable than other participants when I began the interview as we had an established rapport. Furthermore, participants that I met by way of snowball sampling often remarked on the person who connected them to me as a means of establishing comfort and relationship. Two participants, Abraham and Nora, are alumni of the University of Chicago and used our mutual experience at the university as a means to relate to me and respond to questions.

These existing connections could have impacted the relative comfort that participants approached interviews with.

## Findings

CPS charges school staff to implement restorative practices (RPs) "with fidelity" in response to varying behaviors as part of effective school discipline (Chicago Public Schools, 2017, p. 8). In outlining the policy, CPS does not identify what school staff should be faithful to, leaving those school staff to construct their own idea of fidelity. In talking to 19 participants, I found that there is significant variability in how RPs are understood, leading to variation in implementation. Participants' pre-existing mindsets influence their perceptions of RPs to create a personal understanding of the usage of such practices. These mindsets and perceptions manifest in unique definitions of restorative justice (RJ) and RPs, which highlight each participants' understanding of the purpose and function of these practices. In doing so, these definitions reveal the various beliefs that participants feel loyal to as they implement the practices—creating the basis for implementation "with fidelity." Experiences with RPs further influence personal understanding by offering tangible touchstones to build and reinforce mindsets. These experiences exist as unstructured and structured learning opportunities for RPs. I identify unstructured learning as experiences with identity and relationships with family and colleagues. Unstructured learning creates mindsets that participants then approach RPs. Structured learning, often in the form of voluntary professional developments facilitated by RJ specialists, attempts to shift mindsets but often end up reinforcing them. The multiple avenues for learning about RPs result in varying understandings of how these practices should be implemented. This implementation occurs in isolation within schools. School staff and other street-level bureaucrats create and transform RPs into practices that makes sense based on their own definition and

learning experiences. In doing so, restoratives practices are decoupled from the policies written by the district, and the mandate of implementation "with fidelity" is unrealized.

## Defining Restorative Practices

In an effort to better understand participant's mindsets, I first explore how they defined both restorative justice (RJ) and restorative practices (RP). In this section, I examine how definitions of RPs highlight variations in understanding of student needs, relationships, and harm. While over half of participants recognize RPs as a tool to create change in approaching relationships and instances of harm, the remainder of participants define RPs as an alternative to punitive discipline. A Venn diagram of participants' definitions based on these two non-exhaustive categories can be found in the Appendix (3).

### *Defining RJ and RPs as Fundamental Change*

At its core, restorative justice (RJ) builds and repairs relationships by being in community with other people (Buth & Cohn, 2017; Zehr, 2015). When asked how they define RJ, the majority of outside specialists used the word "relationships" in their answer. Trevor, an Umoja Impact Coach, starts off, "I define it as a mindset or a philosophy of living that centers relationships above all else." Rae expands on this centering of relationships by identifying what relationships RJ and RPs utilize:

> The long story short for me is RJ, restorative justice, restorative practices has a lot to do with relationships, relationships, relationships, relationships, and that's relationship to other people, relationships to communities, to neighborhoods, to systems, to ideas.

While the practices in schools—mainly restorative conversations and peace circles—hinge on relationships between people, Rae introduces the idea that relationships also extend to communities, neighborhoods, systems, and ideas. Michael takes this a step further, saying that, "a restorative justice intervention should leave relationships stronger." RJ interventions

strengthen relationships through mutually and balanced interactions. Walter, Michael's boss and the Director of Professional Development at the Chicago Teacher Union Foundation, defines RJ as, "a certain type of mindset and heart set…an understanding of how to work with people as opposed to doing things to them or doing things for them, or even God forbid neglecting them not to do anything." In Walter's words, RJ restructures the idea of relationships to emphasize mutual respect and action. Instead of a teacher punishing a student within the context of control and power, Walter explains that people are working together. These four definitions, when combined, acknowledge RJ must restore relationships in instances of harm. Mutual relationships act as the foundation and the mechanisms through which RJ is enacted, leading to the cyclical nature of RJ.

Restorative practices (RPs), if taken as an extension of the ideas of RJ, ask participants to approach one another without concern for power and hierarchy present in many relationships and across communities, and instead show care for all parties involved in harm. Kate, a former Umoja SEL Learning Manager, defines RJ by explaining the necessity to listen and show care for, "both sides—whoever the both sides are," to ensure that, "the harm has been repaired…but not at the expense of the person who did the harm." Instead of creating a dichotomy between punishing perpetrators of harm and consoling victims of harm, RPs bring all parties together to ensure that there is a restoration of the entire community. Mac, an Umoja Impact Manager, defines RPs in a similar way, emphasizing the need for adults to reframe how they approach conflict in schools:

> When I'm working towards restorative practices, I'm working towards all adults in the building understanding that you bounce in and out of conflicts and how everyone plays a role in that. I think sometimes restorative practice challenges adults to move past the conflict and move into reengagement, healing, and relationship building.

Through this understanding of RPs, Mac encourages adults in schools to shift focus from the rules that were broken to the relationships that were harmed in the process. She also understands that within the framework of RPs, conflicts are seen as breakdowns of relationships involving all participants in a community such that, "everyone plays a role." This begins to break down some established hierarchies within classrooms, which Mac identifies as a challenge for many school staff at her partner school.

Shifting the understanding of harm can be a difficult concept to introduce in a school environment, where relationships often have a clear power hierarchy. Focusing on student and school staff relationships, this power is often wielded to create control and obedience within a classroom through discipline. RPs ask adults in schools to move away from such imbalanced relationships. Amanda highlights the challenge of this in her definition of RJ:

> It's a process that really checks this idea of power and who holds power in that process. I think it's basically the antithesis of how our societies is run, which makes it really challenging to implement in spaces that are typically really punitive.

Billy, a librarian at a selective enrollment CPS high school, put it in almost identical language, saying RJ "is antithetical to everything we know." Underneath these provocative statements is an understanding that RJ challenges stakeholders to break free of common perceptions of relationships and power. By centering existing relationships and working towards building relationships, RPs in schools demand that all those involved in the harm, including adults, work to actively repair the relationships and renew a commitment to the community. This poses a challenge in schools because, as Michael said at the end of his first interview, "it's immediately in tension with lots of the foundational workings of a school, like hierarchy, for instances." Recognizing this directly calls for new language and structures to understand where these practices fit. In understanding the definition of RPs as a shift towards mutual relationships to

repair harm, a fundamental change must occur to allow for such relationships outside the confines of hierarchical structures. Divorcing RPs from the idea of obedience also begs the question of: what purpose are RPs serving in schools?

Participants articulate the purpose of RPs by outlining how such practices address student needs. While providing his definition for RPs, Cameron shares that the usage of such practices require seeing children as complex people:

> Like I said, just understanding, being able to understand. Everyone has their particular issues, and that helped me understand a lot of things that were key to helping me embrace restorative practices, by realizing that children do go through things as well.

By recognizing that students have a diverse and dynamic set of needs, Cameron breaks down aforementioned power hierarchies by placing student needs on the same level of his own. He states that a child's needs exist beyond the vacuum of a singular instance of harm within the school, thereby connecting RPs to a larger culture that exists within a school and community. His comments also remark on the importance of recognizing children's emotions in instances harm. Lisa similarly highlights centering emotions in her definition: "It's almost like a movement which focuses on repairing critical love, caring, nurturing, restoring." In Lisa's understanding, a built and supported culture of RJ does not serve to create order, establish an adult's power in the situation, or reinstate a set of rules. Instead, it works towards building and supporting relationships between community members and addressing student needs through "critical love."

Participants who define RPs as a fundamental shift place the responsibility of building a culture that centers student needs on adults. Mac sees adult responsibility as a key aspect of RPs in schools:

> What's key is making sure that that young person and those affected are reconnected into their community. You take responsibility for that. You have

> functional structures that supports that and that's consistent, no matter how many times that young person flows in and out of a conflict.

Mac moves beyond identifying adults as responsible for providing for students via RPs; she calls for structural support in this process. The "consistent" and "functional structures" make space for RPs by creating a culture that redefines harm and centers relationships. Through defining RJ as ideas that center relationships and reframe understandings of harm, participants concluded that RPs challenge power dynamics by focusing on student needs and adult responsibility and require a cultural shift in schools.

To work towards this greater cultural shift, participants include preventative and responsive aspects of RPs within their definitions. Thomas, a teacher at a select enrollment high school with no outside specialist, paraphrases ideas from his colleague, Julio, another participant:

> [Julio] talked about it being more like an empathetic response. The problem that teachers have is that because we only see students for 15 minutes a day, sometimes our weight and even sometimes our efforts can be not enough to change a student's behavior, just because of the sheer lack of influence that we hold in their life, personally for them. So the idea is to build a culture where that gives more weight.

Thomas defines RPs within temporal limitation; teachers have limited time with their students, so an interventionist mindset will not suffice in creating a shift in understanding relationships and harm. Thomas proposes building a culture that prioritizes RPs and "gives more weight" to centering relationships—a preventative measure that establishes norms prior to instances of harm. Julio, in his own words, parses out the preventative and reactive duality of RPs:

> First is preventative, it is introducing language, policies and processes in which any grievances can be communicated, worked on and hopefully solved. You're setting this baseline of like, here's what we're going to do, and here's what we're going to practice. And then if something happens, if there's any harm caused, then being able to address it with another set of tools, namely talking circles, as well as restorative conversations between a small group of individuals.

Julio defines RPs as a structural change that first establishes a culture that increases communication between people. He then outlines the different ways to address harm in moments that necessitate a response. This definition calls upon schools to create a more comprehensive culture that supports both proactive and reactive aspects of RPs.

Through creating a culture that supports RPs, schools can begin to address more systemic harm. Lucy describes this within her definition of RPs as "recognizing and repairing."

> It's repairing, as best as one person can, through consistent practice, doing the best you can, and repairing the systemic harm, the systemic oppression, institutional oppression, and racism that exists in society by being cognizant of these factors. I don't want to say differences. They're just factors in how a child learns and how a child interacts with their world, and celebrating rather than having a deficit mindset about these factors.

Lucy relies on a definition of RPs derived from the ideas of RJ in centering relationships and proactively building a culture that can effectively address harm. In doing so, she argues that RPs can address the "systemic oppression, institutional oppression, and racism" that permeate throughout society and within schools. The definitions provided in this section highlight an understanding that RJ and RPs necessitate and use relationships to repair harm. With this understanding comes a budding tension between the mutual relationships of RJ and hierarchical relationships of schools. In historically punitive spaces, such as CPS high schools, and within the context of district policies, some school staff understand RPs as a disciplinary intervention, not a cognitive shift in understanding relationships and harm.

*Defining RPs as the Opposite of Punitive*

Some school staff participants working in CPS high schools present a contextual definition of RPs. Stephen is a young teacher at an Umoja partner CPS high school who makes his opinion known—he is wary of restorative practices (RPs) but is committed to implementing his version of them within his classroom. He defines restorative justice (RJ) as, "keeping kids in

the classroom and getting them educated and keeping them out of the system," and RPs as, "working with kids, figuring out a way, making where you can be like, 'Come on, man, chill,' versus, 'That's defiance. Get out of here.'" His defines RPs in direct opposition to punitive discipline; in doing so, he draws a connection between RPs and creating order, working towards the same goal as punitive discipline but through alternatives methods. Alex, a teacher at an Umoja partner school, uses oppositional language to define RJ as a way to address harm and "communicate in a non-violent way. Sort of a path to reconciliation, rather than taking a consequential punitive approach." Alex identifies important aspects of RJ, such as non-violent communication and creating an opportunity for reconciliation. Similar to Stephen, Alex's definition situates the use of RPs as a policy shift from the usage of punitive approaches in schools, as indicated by his comparison to punitive approaches. In schools, which have historically centered obedience, restorative practices can be (mis)understood in a similar context due to the history of punitive discipline in CPS, district language around RPs, and overall policy churn. This is echoed in school staff members' desire for consequences, and fear that restorative practices lack the necessary mechanisms to dole out those consequences.

Defining RPs in relation to punitive practices serves to situate restorative ideas within an obedient framework. Abraham, a teacher at a CPS high school without an Umoja specialist, defines RPs as how, "you actually go about implementing these consequences…that are not punitive but are restorative." He defines RJ as the ideas proceeding RPs, which are, "less about punitive compliance and more hopefully about positive compliance." Rather than a shift away from hierarchical power dynamic, he understands RPs as maintaining order in classrooms through "positive compliance." Similarly, Stephen emphasizes the need to maintain structure through RPs. Stephen perceives that students will, "respect the stability and the structure far

more than they respect, 'How are you feeling today?'" This comment implies that students' need order to function in the classroom. Abraham and Stephen believe that order can be reached through RPs as an alternative to punitive discipline.

Defining RPs in comparison to punitive practices, while also maintaining the purpose of order, can be explained in part by the language and direction put forth by the district. On page 12 of the *Restorative Practices Guide and Toolkit* there is a 5-point table describing differences between punitive and restorative approaches. For example, the goal of punitive discipline is stated as, "pain or unpleasantness to deter/prevent," whereas the goal of restorative practices is, "meaningful restitution to reconcile and acknowledge responsibility for choices" (Chicago Public Schools, 2017). While this district language sets up a dichotomy between RPs and punitive discipline, the *Guideline for Effective Discipline* offers both restorative and punitive approaches for the same offences (Chicago Public Schools, 2015). This language from the district both connects RPs to punitive discipline and muddles the lines between them. Trevor offers his perspective on the "mixed messaging from the district":

> The district on the whole is saying, restorative practices, that's what we're doing. But then, people from higher up sometimes come in usually in moments of crises, or schoolwide crises or large fights, or kind of just bigger incidences and kind of just revert back, everybody kind of falls back to their old habits. Including the district itself. And just kind of saying okay, this was a huge brawl, out of control, five-day suspension. Five-day suspension. Five-day suspension. Five-day suspension…And then tries to kind of do the repair on the other side of things after the five-day suspensions. So, I think it's hard for the school sometimes because I have seen examples where the school is all ready to issue a relatively minimal punitive response, and focus more on the restorative side of things, and then the district or the network or somebody higher up will come in and say, "No, no, no. That's not severe enough. You actually need to do this."

Both in writing and in practice, the district creates and confuses the distinction between punitive and restorative practices, likely impacting the way school staff understand RPs. Trevor's comment on the back-and-forth nature of district instructions points to a reversion back to "old

habits," meaning punitive discipline. This creates the impression that RPs are not upheld at the district level, alleviating individuals from upholding the practices and contributing to the perception of RPs as a replacement of punitive practices.

The inclination for school staff to define RJ and RPs in relation to punitive practices is perceived by some participants as a function of CPS policy churn for discipline practices. Following the rising numbers in suspension rates and racial disproportionality in the effects of discipline practices, CPS outlined RJ as a shift away from punitive policies. In discussing the intention of RPs in CPS, Michael describes that this framing of RPs fails to align practices with the deeper purpose of RJ:

> CPS led the nation in I think the 2012 school year and the suspension rates. I think restorative justice was introduced as backpedaling and a means to that end of reducing suspension rates. I think in, what, 2016 or 2017 there was a mandate that no suspensions anymore, like a moratorium on them. And that using restorative justice as a means to that end is already not true to form because you should be doing it because it's the right thing to do. They're using it as an emergency brake on a problem. And that misses the notion that it's a culture of respect and rapport and caring.

Here, Michael touches on a key aspect of policy churn for urban school reform. The high visibility of nationally recognized rising suspension rates pushed CPS to change the discipline policy to include RPs. This created the appearance that the district was addressing the negative outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline practices. From Michael's perspective, he understands the purpose of RJ as "the right thing to do," in that it centers relationships and reorients understandings of wrongdoing, as indicated in his earlier definition. The district, however, created a policy that functioned more as a symbolic intervention for the harmful outcomes of rising suspension rates, thereby skipping steps that lay the foundation for widespread understanding of RPs as cultural shift and relationship-centered practice.

By framing RPs as a policy intervention to lower suspension rates, some school staff understand RPs as a change in practice, leading to pushback. As an outside specialist, Trevor recognizes that school staff at his partner school understand RPs in the context of policy churn, thereby limiting their enthusiasm for yet another new practice:

> People are seeing that their way of doing something is not really being accepted anymore. When it comes to relationships or to discipline, they're seeing that the district is moving on from it and the schools is moving on from it. And here's another person coming along who's trying to get me to stop doing one thing that I've done for 30 years and learn something new.

Cameron, the dean of students at Trevor's partner school, offers a similar observation of veteran teacher's apprehension:

> The [school] I believe opened in 2011, and it was a really punitive school. You still have teachers who were there, who are still there, who are used to the whole merit system—your shirt's untucked so you have a detention, or you might have walked down the hallway and been loud so now you have a suspension. And because we're not going that way anymore, it was easier for them back then, because they didn't have to deal with the students. So now that they have to more so deal with the students in a one-on-one and try to get an understanding of the students and be more receptive to what these students are going through, they can get frustrated at times. Which is understandable, because you've been set, you come into a building and things are done one way, and then now they're being changed to another way, which honestly makes your job a guess a little harder, if you want to say, for some teachers.

Both Trevor and Cameron's remarks highlight school staff frustration over continuously changing policies. Phrases like "here's another person coming along," and "things are done one way, and then now they're being changed to another way," are in line with symbolic policy reform that lacks substantial change. Furthermore, their remarks on veteran teacher's understanding of RPs highlight the contextualization of the policy and the impact of understanding on adult's mindsets and willingness to learn.

Outlining RPs as an intervention to decrease suspension numbers—thereby creating a comparison to punitive practices—also led some participants to understand RJ and RPs as

lacking consequences. When describing school staff reactions to his professional developments, Michael says, “they'll say, ‘I'm old school,’ and will say that suspensions and detentions work.” Defining RPs in comparison to punitive discipline practices, which respond to harm with consequences, leads to mindsets that are unwilling to engage with RPs due to a lack of consequences. Amber expresses these concerns about RPs and the lack of consequences:

> I'm talking about when we're in a classroom, and things get thrown around, or people get bullied or cursed out. That's something to me that warrants, everybody needs to see…Consequences are not only for the person who did the crime. It's to persuade other people not to do the crime.

Similarly, Stephen defines RPs as a way to keep kids in his classroom, but not necessarily without consequences for their actions in instances of harm:

> The whole point of, to me, restorative practice is a Latino or Black male doesn't get their life ruined because they got suspended so much or got charges pressed because they were defiant because someone who'd never been in a physical altercation got intimidated by the physical proximity of someone taller than them. So to me, that doesn't mean there's not consequences. It means you're actually understanding the frame of reference.

Both Amber and Stephen identify themselves as using RPs in their respective classrooms. At the same time, they understand RPs as lacking or needing consequences. In Stephen’s opinion, the consequences of RPs should be less detrimental to those of punitive practices, which actively contribute to the School to Prison Pipeline. Nevertheless, consequences should be tied to RPs to “persuade other people not to do the crime.”

Amidst defining RPs in comparison to punitive practices is an underlying concern at the district and individual level for disproportionality. The roll out of RPs at the district level followed rising suspension rates, specifically and disproportionately for students of color. This is reflected in Stephen’s comments above. Amber, a Black woman teacher, uses this contextual

definition of RPs as an intervention to explain her discomfort in a perceived deficit narrative of Black students:

> I understand the reason why we want to have it…I've always worked in schools that have a low income or low social economic status, high majority black population. That's one of the reasons why they want to have restorative practices, is because when you look at the discipline statistics of suspensions and detentions, across the board, especially in CPS, Back males get suspended, get consequences more than anybody else. So, if they're going to get consequences, let's going to consequences that don't take them outside of school, which a suspension, etc., such. Which is why we have the in school [suspension] — meaning, this why we have those sorts of practices. As a teacher, who is also Black, and I don't want to discriminate against Black students either, I feel that there is a lack of consequences in restorative practices. So, I teeter. Because, I get it, we don't want to isolate. We don't want the Black boys to be singled out. We want them to know that there's another way, other than a punitive damage or go through the school to prison pipeline. But on the other hand, you need to know there's consequences to your actions.

RPs are understood by some school staff as the antidote to disproportionality in discipline data, specifically for Black and brown students. Amber, thusly, understands RPs as lacking consequence, where punitive practices enforced an exclusionary consequence. As a Black teacher, she feels this lack of consequence creates a deficit understanding for Black students. A 2015 Consortium on School Research report found that the disproportionality in discipline was enacted across schools, rather than within schools. CPS schools with higher percentages of Black students were more likely to suspend students than schools with lower percentages (Allensworth et al., 2015b). School staff perceptions of RPs as a response to these rising suspension rates would lead to understanding the policy as a mechanism to address these disparities across different schools based on the racial makeup. This reinforces Amber's fear that the policy was meant to intervene in schools with rising suspension rates, which would disproportionately target Black and Latinx students.

Participants define RJ and RPs as a substitute for punitive measures, regardless of if they agreed with how effectively one works in place of the other. This definition is based in district policy language, frustration from policy churn, and personal beliefs of consequences and structure. By substituting RPs for punitive discipline, this definition equates the purpose and function of both practices. RPs become a mechanism for discipline, thereby aligning it with order and control within a classroom. Instead of radically shifting school culture towards relationships, love, and redefining harm, RPs are seen as a new method of addressing disruptions and behavior management. RPs are a "re-forming of the system in its own image," continuing to play a role in the school prison nexus by not changing the ways in which students are policed and taught to conform (Schenwar & Law, 2020, p. 17; Meiners, 2007). A lack of a cohesive and unified definition across 19 participants highlights that the preexisting punitive structure is able to continue during the implementation of RPs. The competing definitions presented in this section reflect participants' understandings of such practices, demonstrating the variability in mindsets and experiences.

**Learning Restorative Practices**

While all participants express that they use and implement RPs in school, they learned about RPs through two primary channels: unstructured and structured learning. I find that unstructured learning has a more substantial impact on creating adult mindsets because they begin or culminate in internal processes of self-reflection. These reflections often focus on aspects of upbringing and identity, forming the basis of participants' understanding. Participants pointed to unstructured learning as a means of learning to do what they do by building common practices in their classroom or within their schools over time and with the help of adult friendship networks. While unstructured learning is often in line with participant definitions of

RJ and RPs, it also serves to change adult mindsets, shifting definitions and contributing to implementation. I find that structured learning is less integral to implementation, but emphasized more by schools, the district, and individuals. I define structured learning as any form of learning involving an organized or intentional educational outcome. This takes the form of professional developments (PDs), the presence of RJ specialists, and facilitated firsthand experiences with RPs. Structured learning takes place within the setting and culture of specific schools, is often voluntary (intentionally or otherwise), and is approached with predetermined mindsets based on individuals' definitions and experiences with unstructured learning. This process of learning and mindset set the stage for decisions surrounding implementation of RPs.

*Unstructured Learning*

School staff center aspects of their identity, family lives, and educational experiences when explaining how they learned to use RPs. These aspects of identity impact school staff's understanding of the purpose and limitations of RPs. When explaining, "how did I learn how to do this even though I didn't know what the hell I was doing," Abraham takes a long pause. "I don't know," and then sighs before giving his answer:

> I credit my upbringing for having good open and honest conversation. I credit my education…I credit some of my time at U of C and the intellectual-social community that existed there with helping that development… One of the things that attracted me there was the level of student-to-student trust…I trust that you want to help me, and I trust that you're not going to look down on me because dammit we all made it here. Bringing that environment into my high school classroom is really important. Establishing that trust. And I can establish that trust, because now I know that it's a thing and it's especially unique.

Abraham credits his upbringing and college environment with foundational experiences of trust in relationships, leading him to trust his students in his classroom. In doing so, Abraham moved towards restorative practices by establishing relationships with his students, even before he knew what those were. Abraham teaches in a school without the presence of an outside RJ specialist,

necessitating drawing on life experiences as a first step in using RPs. He uses his experiences in college to prioritize creating an environment of trust, thereby building relationships with his students, a foundational element of using RPs. Abraham configures the policy through his own values derived from personal experiences.

Participants explain that reflecting on their own school experience, particularly interactions with discipline practices, contributes to learning significantly. Cameron, the dean of students at an Umoja partner school, brings up a time he was suspended in high school, describing it in vivid detail. From his body language and tone, it becomes clear that he still thinks about this moment from high school:

> My senior year, we had a freshman who was on the basketball team, and he played a lot, and we were playing with him. I think it was snowing outside, he was throwing snowballs at us, so we threw snowballs at him, and we caught up with him and was just messing with him and held him up against the school building just messing with him. And one of the staff members came outside and saw and was like, "Hey, are y'all bullying him?" And they never gave us a chance to explain our side of the story. We were automatically just suspended. And the reason why we were holding him, because at one point he did get serious and was trying to hit us in the face, and we were like, "Hey, hold on, that's not... We was just playing with you, calm down and we'll let you go." But she called us before we could let him go, and we were suspended for five days, without even giving our side of the story. But of course, our dean of students was a good guy, understanding guy, but... "What's that, you were talking in class?" Detention. No if, ands, buts about it. You got into a fight, suspension. No ifs and buts about it. That's just how it was.

Cameron highlights the punitive punishments doled out in his own schooling experience. There was little room for conversation, explanation, or addressing harm holistically by including all parties involved. He says, "they never gave us a chance to explain our side of the story." This remark came at the end of Cameron's interview, after he expressed a mindset oriented towards using RPs—something he defines in terms of addressing student needs. In telling this story, he connects his own experiences with punitive punishment to his current understanding of the

necessity to listen to students in moments of harm. At the same time, after reflecting on this instance of harm, he notes that kids these days, "got it good." This comment is contextualized by the fact that Cameron began his career as a dean of students at the same high school he attended as a student:

> The high school I graduated from is the same high school I went back to and started coaching, became a dean, security officer, and all that. So just to see the difference was just amazing. Like I say, when I first got there and they started introducing restorative practice, I was like, "Man, y'all got it good, I wouldn't have got away with that." And honestly, there are times that truthfully I can still go back and be like, sometimes I feel like it needs to be handled in a different way, because you do have some students who just don't get it and won't get it and take advantage of that situation.

This reaction alludes to the importance of healing from previous experiences as a necessary part of learning about restorative practices. He goes on to say that "maybe that's why there is limitation to restorative justice," connecting his own negative experience with school discipline to a perception of other's pushback on RPs. This is what Trevor, the Umoja Impact Manager at Cameron's school, refers to as "what about-ism" and the hardships of challenging adults' mindsets, which are based in learning through these experiences. There is room to create possible scenarios or find limitations when impressing one's own experience onto understandings of RPs, as demonstrated by Cameron. He understands both the power and limitations of RPs within the context of his individual experience in school.

Beyond experiences, self-reflection focuses on aspects of identity, specifically race, as a way to learn about and understand RPs. Lisa is a Black woman and Equity Coach as an Umoja partner school. She periodically references her racial and gender identity as a way to understand RPs. Prior to meeting Trevor, the Umoja partner at her school, she had not formally learned about RPs, but she was still committed to the principals of RJ: centering love, healing, and

relationships in her school. “I just believe those things.” When I ask her *why* she believes those things, or how she came to believe those things, she cites her identity:

> I think for me, being a black woman and have experienced inequities and racism doing my own education, it just makes it easier for me to buy into it, because I know how important it is to have a teacher with a conscience. I know how important it is to have a teacher whose whole job is the pursuit of joy for you, is to cultivate your genius, and to honor you and recognize you and hold space for your identity being a black woman.

Lisa identifies experiential knowledge in her identity as a Black woman as a mechanism for understanding the value of RPs. She learned to value holding space for students’ identities, pursuing joy, and cultivating genius based on her experiences as a Black woman in an education system that was not historically designed for her success. For Lisa, race is not an afterthought of RPs, but the avenue through which she learned about and understands these practices and philosophy:

> Nobody had to sell it to me, nobody had to convince me it was the right thing to do. Nobody has to sell for me what's right for children. But I think it just comes from my own experience as a black girl in an education system that was not designed to make sure that I had a great joyous life.

She recognizes that her learning was unique and unstructured as a result of her experiences in school and her acknowledgement of her racial and gender identity. While “nobody had to sell” Lisa on RPs, she notes that other school staff in her building are hesitant to approach structured learning surrounding the practices. According to Lisa, these school staff are often white, and the structural trainings fail to “talk about what it means to dismantle whiteness.” While Lisa creates a cohesive understanding of RPs as a result of her experience, she notes that many of her white colleagues lack this same level of reflection.

While adults in schools reflect on a variety of individual experiences, they also can collaborate informally with colleagues and friends to learn about RPs. Thomas and Julio both

work at a select enrollment high school without an outside specialist. Thomas, a white man, regularly credits and cites his friend and colleague Julio, a Latino man, throughout the interview:

> I also build the sets for the musicals and whatnot, I'm very close friends with the director of the plays at Lane and the music department and all that kind of stuff…[Julio], he's an orchestra teacher. They're huge influences in terms of my practices, maybe not, for example, for teaching chemistry, but for dealing with classroom management, or—I'm a white dude…It's real easy to fit in for myself, and so collaborating with other teachers and for my BIPOC kid's issues is essential if I'm going to give any kind of relevant feedback to those students.

Much like Lisa recognizes her ability to learn about RPs informally as a result of her racial identity, Thomas understands that as a white man he lacks this same informal reflection to connect with students of color. Given the connection between RPs and students of color, explored in the previous section, Thomas notes that moving beyond reflections based in his own identity is "essential." Through his friendship with Julio, however, he is able to gain advice and learn foundational elements of RPs. In turn, Julio draws from personal experiences of being one of few Latinx students at the school he now teaches at. This personal reflection is pivotal in his appreciation and usage of RPs. Julio says, "There was something about coming back to my high school that I remembered what it was like to be a high school student—which was this hiding." Julio draws on this reflection to relate to students and build the foundation of his philosophy of teaching. Through their informal friendship, Thomas reaps the benefits of Julio's reflection, and is able to pass that along to his own students.

Beyond close friendships, informal collaboration between teachers is encouraged by sharing practices. Danielle explains that sharing best practices is common in her school.

> Just like somebody will learn something and then will share it in a month or so. But it's not necessarily in some kind of structured manner, it's more just we talk about teaching and learning. And we talk about what's working and what's not working.

In this way, she explains teachers benefit from each other's successes and mistakes. Adults in her school learn to use certain practices not through professional developments, although those are required, but through conversations with one another. In Cameron and Lisa's school, these conversations are encouraged through the recent introduction of Friday happy hour. Drinking is a popular activity for collaborative conversations about best practices. When describing the school culture, Lisa identifies that there are adult cliques. She points out that these cliques are often racially homogenous, even though the school staff is not. But "The Friday evening hanging out together helped a lot, and diversifying different groups helped a lot too." Cameron agrees that the Friday hangouts are beneficial for organic collaboration between staff members:

> I think for the most part we definitely do a great job organically of collaborating with each other. We have things on the first Friday of every month, we do a happy hour, even though it's virtual now, we do a virtual happy hour. We all just kind of sit back and just talk about things.

Opportunities to interact with colleagues in a more informal environment allows adults to build relationships with trust and openness. In turn, teachers are able to build on each other's practices and move towards implementation. At the same time, these opportunities often exist outside of structured time and spaces in schools and require adults to approach each other voluntarily.

Unstructured learning mechanisms contribute significantly to the mindsets of adults in schools. They are part of highly personal processes of reflection and relationships building, making it difficult to standardize or codify. The personal nature of unstructured learning determines discretion with which participants approach implementation, allowing for individual practices to reflect internal mindsets. Furthermore, unstructured learning often determines adults' willingness to participate in structured learning about RPs and implement the practices. Structured learning is often voluntary, thereby necessitating an internal desire to use RPs or learn

more about them. As the next section explores, this willingness to participate is often solidified within the unstructured learning outlined in this section.

*Structured Learning*

Structured learning takes the form of outside specialists, trainings, and facilitated experiences with RPs in schools. The goal of structured learning is to shift mindsets about RPs by providing a greater understanding of RPs. At the beginning of her interview Lucy establishes, "You can do as many things as you want in a classroom, but if it's not rooted in an authentic understanding and, beyond understanding, an authentic desire to do the theory, then the practice is a moot point." Lucy recognizes the importance of providing structure and theory around RPs. This requires building relationships with adults in the building and creating ample opportunities for adults who are against RPs to experience to positive benefits of the practices. I found that perceptions of structured learning are heavily influenced by the location and materials used in trainings. Furthermore, most of the structured learning depend on existing mindsets because they are voluntary opportunities. Structure learning opportunities attempt to change mindsets but require preexisting mindsets that ensure adults are predisposed to believing in the ethos of RPs.

Outside specialists encourage structured learning through their presence in a school. Umoja specialists explain that their role first takes the form of observing common practices in a partner school as an unbiased third party. As Amanda explains, "When you walk into schools, you're walking into a whole bunch of stuff like history that you haven't been involved in. I think it's a unique opportunity to be like an outside neutral person in this." She understands neutrality as an asset to her ability to teach about RPs. Many of the outside specialists were formally teachers, themselves, which they point to as helping them build relationships with teachers in their partner schools as they observe common practices. After observing, outside specialists

provide feedback and trainings. Mac, though, expands on this rudimentary description of her role. “I really take my role in the building larger than just coaching teachers. I see it as an opportunity for teachers to have more voice and to also be supported in their professional learning development.” Through relationships with school staff in her building, Mac sees her role as advocating for the usage of RPs while also allowing space for teachers to have more support and be seen as experts of their work.

The relationship between school staff and outside specialists is the foundation of structured learning and is complicated by understandings of responsibility. According to school staff, the responsibility to implement these practices fall on outside specialists. Alternatively, outside specialists see themselves as facilitators of RPs, with a time limit on their position in a given school. Outside specialists understand that their role is to pass on knowledge about RPs and provide the tools so school staff can implement the practices on their own. A large part of outsider’s roles is to organize this learning. Amanda continues to explain the goals of her role as an outside specialist as, “eventually phasing out of schools. If we build capacity well enough, the schools can do this on their own.” This requires encouraging school staff to take up the work, themselves:

> I think that's still something I want to work towards and something that continuously is one of our goals at the school is how do we get more staff to want to sit down and have these conversations with kids? I think we're at the place where they want myself or the dean to just figure it out and talk to the dean and fix it. And we know that we're not the ones in the classroom every day, so wanting to get to that relationship piece.

Amanda places equal responsibility on herself, as the educator of educators when it comes to RPs, and school staff, who should take up this work to ensure its longevity. Alternatively, she notes that school staff often expect her or the dean to use RPs, without using the practices themselves. Lisa builds on this idea, noting that although she has a wonderful relationship with

the Umoja specialist in her building, other school staff do not approach Trevor with the same enthusiasm. “The ones who do not [believe in restorative practices], they cannot stand him, because they want him to throw children in the back of a class like an old, dirty t-shirt.” This difference in understanding comes to a head during structured learning, as school staff—particularly school staff who do not believe in RPs—are perceived as not seeing the implementation of these practices as their responsibility.

Structured learning can be interrupted by relationship between outside specialists and school staff, highlighting the importance of perceived responsibility. Thomas approaches this topic by noting, “there is nobody harder to teach than a teacher.” Although said in a jokingly manner, poking fun at his own authoritative tone, this sentiment is reflected across participant answers. School staff want to be treated as authorities of their own schools and classrooms. This can create a tension between outside specialists and school staff. Cameron explains, “Who wants constructive criticism, right? Especially from somebody that they don't know, and they don't do the same exact job as them, so it's like, how are you going to tell me to do my job?” At the core of Cameron’s sentiment is a desire to be treated as an expert of his own job. The presence of outside specialists and the trainings they provide are perceived as a threat to this expertise.

Structured learning opportunities are voluntary, making the relationship between outside specialists and school staff important to the success of such opportunities. Michael, an RJ specialist, advocates for voluntary trainings. “Just go with the people who are interested and work with them, because one, that's true to form on any restorative intervention being voluntary. And two, you'll just get more energy from those people.” Michael understands that RPs must be authentic in order to be implemented with fidelity. The learning of RPs must come from a

similarly authentic desire to engage with the practices. Rae similarly outlines the reason for voluntary structured learning in her partner school:

> This is completely voluntary space. Even at the mandatory PDs that we do, we still try to do a lot of community building within those. So just try to help people relax a little bit and gets to know each other and build rapport amongst the adults. But the talking circles, it's a completely voluntary space. I invite everybody, but the teachers that I work with closely, I tell them, bring a friend, bring a teacher with you.

The desire to create a more authentic voluntary space for adults to learn about RPs is in direct tension with the adult mindsets that exist as a result of competing definitions and unstructured learning opportunities.

Due to the voluntary nature of structured learning, people with mindsets opposed to RPs get left behind. Michael describes the different groups of resistant adults in partner schools as "haters and waiters." It is phrase he first heard during a commencement speech:

> The speaker talked about haters and waiters. There are people that will resist you in your life, but then there's also people that you're not going to hear about but they're kind of watching and seeing what's going to happen. Among staff, you'll have people that are outright resistant, and then you'll have some people that'll stay on the sidelines a little bit and will just kind of see how it goes.

Michael goes on to explain that his work as an outside specialist ultimately concerned waiters—people who were hesitant, but still open to RPs. Haters, on the other hand, were perpetually resistant to using RPs. The voluntary nature of RPs and structured learning is thus competing against these preexisting mindsets that siphon adults into three categories: haters, waiters, and the implied category of enthusiastic fans. Amanda describes similar difficulty in bringing all school staff into this work:

> I think at every school, you have really enthusiastic teachers who are on board and they typically tend to work together and be spearheading a lot of things. And then you have some teachers who are just not really connected to anyone and just doing their thing.

If RPs are to be understood as a change in how relationships and communities operate within schools, then the voluntary nature of structured learning is failing to create such a shift. Abraham adds to this discourse on voluntary opportunities, saying, "There are a number of teachers, usually the ones that are super resistant to it, that I feel like could really benefit from having those kinds of structured conversations." Here, Abraham constructs a similar group of school staff, those who Michael would identify as "haters," who would benefit the most from learning opportunities, yet are also the least likely to attend such events.

Outside specialists often point to firsthand experiences with RPs as a structured mechanism to slowly change adult mindsets to combat the "hater phenomenon"; however, in this study I found only one participant who exhibited a change in mindset as a result of these experiences. Firsthand experiences with RPs take the form of witnessing other adults implement the practices or participating in a restorative conversation or peace circle, themselves. These experiences are voluntary, thereby limiting who it reaches following the same limitations described above. Kate, a former Umoja specialist, explains the power of firsthand experiences as witnessing "what it meant to sit in circle and do community building with students. Therefore, they saw the power of that when students went to the peace room." This description of firsthand experiences is backed up by Kate's former colleagues at Umoja. School staff, on the other hand, did not express the same fondness for firsthand experiences, or expressed that these were not a part of their training. Alex explains that firsthand experiences would probably be beneficial, but he worries about the time it would take:

> I haven't seen teachers actually go to a peace circle…That'd be kind of cool to actually have. Once again, you have to get a teacher, give them time and not just field their prep. And then they're going to be, "I got to sit through this damn peace circle." You know? "Even though I have to grade 90 papers."

Other school staff participants echo this sentiment—although it would be nice to have more comprehensive trainings that include firsthand experiences, it is not feasible given the limitations of outside specialists and trainings. In this study, Cameron was the only participant who describes a shift in mindset based on trainings.

Cameron, the counterexample who follows the desired outcomes described by outside specialists, is a dean at an Umoja partner school. He describes his metamorphosis during his interview. When he first stepped into his role as a dean, he was extremely hesitant to learn about or use RPs, even though there was an Umoja specialist in his school:

> I definitely was like, "All right, I'm sending them to the dean," and she'll (the Umoja specialist) be like, "What's wrong?" I'll be like, "Well they just did this." So she like, "Well let me talk to them." And I noticed the kid would come out with a different mindset. So once I started seeing that I said, "Okay, let me send them to there first." At least whatever it is, if they just needed somebody to vent to, calm down, whatever the case may be, that definitely helped.

When he began sitting in on the meetings, he saw the power of a restorative conversation. He says, "I just sat back and just observed the entire time." Ultimately, these observations built the foundation of a new mindset—one that enabled him to use RPs on his own. At the end of his interview, he notes that RPs have made their way into his personal life, affecting the way he approaches conflict resolution with his girlfriend.

Structured learning is constrained by understandings of the purpose of RPs, returning to individual definitions. Some school staff who recognize the necessity of RPs to shift school culture and make space for more horizontal relationships between adults and students. These participants are the same participants who recognize mechanisms of unstructured learning creating open mindsets. Currently, RPs are taught to school staff within the same system that views these practices as an intervention for punitive discipline. As school staff move into

implementation, they make decisions based on the same mindsets and understandings that predispose them to participate or not in structured learning opportunities.

**Implementing Restorative Practices**

Adults in schools act as street level bureaucrats; they make policies through their high degrees of discretion and autonomy. Participants implement RPs with discretion based on their mindsets. As discussed in the previous two findings sections, individual mindsets are impacted by participants' definitions and learning experiences with RPs. These mindsets create specific and personal understandings of RPs. Individual discretion is utilized to implement or not implement RPs, or to transform the policy into actions that align with an individual's understanding of a restorative approach. Participants indicate that these decisions to implement RPs occur within classrooms or in isolated instances. The isolated nature of implementation combined with a range of understandings of RPs ensures that a variety of practices exist all under the same language of "restorative practices."

In this section, I explore the isolated nature of implementation in schools and how that shapes decisions to implement RPs when combined with individuals' perceptions of the practices. I then walk through the decisions of three individuals who all work in the same school and claim to use RPs. I find that due to the high levels of autonomy and discretion and a lack of accountability from administrators, restorative practices are not implemented with fidelity. Instead, participants implement their own version of RPs that are not necessarily aligned with the foundational ideas of RJ. Without this alignment, RPs will continue to be added as a school reform and re-form the same punitive and disproportionate discipline structure that contribute to the school prison nexus.

*Silos in the School*

Teachers run their own classrooms with high levels of autonomy. This environment is shaped by perceptions of administrative oversight. Danielle is a veteran teacher of 17 years, who expresses confusion around the implementation of RPs. She affirms that in her classroom she establishes norms that allow for a cohesive culture. When I ask how she is supported and directed in this process she explains:

> I feel like I have always heard the message from every admin ever, which is like you create your classroom culture and however you want to do it, you can do it as long as things are going harmoniously, and kids are learning, and people are respected in your class.

Danielle has worked in multiple schools throughout her career, most recently switching to her current school two years ago. The autonomy she has over her own classroom is not specific to her current administration or school culture, but is an established norm across schools she has worked in. Other participants, both teachers and broadly school staff, similarly express that they have significant autonomy to establish norms with students, create a classroom or school culture, and implement policies as they feel fit.

The autonomy that school staff perceive in their work environments allows individuals to make implementation decisions in isolation. Rae is the Umoja RJ specialist at Danielle's current school, who recognizes the highly individualistic nature of schools and its impact on policy implementation. In a preliminary interview in the spring of 2020, she expresses that teachers in her partner school all operate on their own "island…Everybody wants to do their own thing." In her interview in the fall, she brings up the same issue but with slightly different language. She describes the creation of norms in, "the silos inside each classroom," meaning these norms, "might fluctuate a bit from classroom to classroom." Due to the high levels of autonomy that teachers experience, teachers and school staff are able to implement RPs within their own spaces

and based on their own mindsets, creating variability. The implementation of RPs, much like the creation of norms, occurs in silos inside the school.

The silo phenomenon ensures that there are significant discrepancies within the participants' schools in how school staff handle behavior and discipline. Mac, another Umoja RJ specialist, observes that in her partner school:

> The policies and practices in a classroom could be totally different than outside of a classroom and the role that, again, the educator plays in that. It's either "Get this student out of my class, and that's it, and I'm done with it" when it comes to discipline, or the educator is more prepared to be a part of this supportive discipline response. They know there's a cycle that includes them that's restorative.

Mac highlights that some teachers in her partner school use a restorative approach to instances of harm as an alternative to punitive discipline. Other teachers in her school still rely on punitive approaches, namely removing students from a classroom. This interpretation of implementation resides in the understanding of RPs as a disciplinary tool. Mac describes a restorative cycle as a "supportive discipline response," highlighting that RPs address instances of harm, while defining the practices in opposition of punitive discipline. In the silos of classrooms, individuals utilize their definition of RPs and inclination towards a restorative approach to make decisions about implementation.

A few participants offer a more positive interpretation of this autonomy and individual interpretation when implementing. Walter states that "good teachers" diversify their practices based on who they are serving. In relation to the professional developments that he offers through the Chicago Teacher's Union, he states, "we like to tweak things and make it fit, if you will, the particular context of the school, and that's important. That's what a teacher does." Cameron similarly highlights the importance of implementing RPs with the unique setting and stakeholders in mind. "I think that you have to sometimes be a little more creative with your

restorative practices, based on each student or the classroom setting you're in to, if there are limitations, get rid of those limitations." Here Cameron encourages the use of specificity in RPs. Setting clear norms with students, building positive relationships between adults and young people, and prioritizing those relationships in instances of harm all fit in within this framework of specificity. Both Cameron and Walter indicate that it is important to implement RPs based on unique understandings of school staff, classrooms, and schools. Their description of implementation aligns with understandings of RPs to address breakdowns of specific relationships. When approached with this comprehensive understanding of RPs, implementation in the silos is not a limitation but a strength.

As adults make implementation decisions in isolation, the question of accountability becomes paramount. Accountability is important to realize the district's call for implementation "with fidelity" (Chicago Public Schools, 2017, p. 8). On the whole, school staff participants express that there are low levels of accountability for carrying out RPs. In schools with an Umoja RJ specialist, school staff are encouraged to use a restorative approach both by the specialist and their administration. Cameron states, "[teachers] know that our principal and assistant principals are pushing restorative practices, so they understand that they have to be more accountable for it." But he also indicates that teachers, "hold themselves accountable," and are not observed with the intention of checking for RPs. Similarly, Alex describes Umoja as, "a great resource," but indicates that the presence of an outside specialist does not increase accountability because "people don't have enough time to do anything." As Alex and his colleagues make decision to implement practices with limited time, they signal which policies they prioritize or feel accountable to. Furthermore, the lack of accountability ensures that variability in understandings of RPs continue, creating different interpretations of what school staff should feel fidelity *to*. Due

to a lack of specific accountability measures, school staff in Umoja partner schools understand that they *should* be accountable but are not held to a standard of implementation with fidelity.

Participants express mixed messages about the importance of high levels of accountability to carry out practices. Walter expresses that accountability is necessary for the practices due to the nature of restorative practices:

> But if a key aspect of restorative practices is this idea of accountability, I think it's really important that we try to have the folks that we work with be accountable to this work and to making this work as successful as possible. Otherwise, it's just a practice of futility.

Walter understands that accountability is a central aspect of RPs, and therefore must be a part of the surrounding infrastructure during implementation. This idea of accountability is juxtaposed by Abraham who states that accountability and autonomy go hand in hand. As autonomy reigns supreme during the implementation of RPs, accountability to implement the policy lacks. Abraham explains that increasing accountability would potentially decrease autonomy, attributing the low accountability for RPs to this calculated equilibrium:

> I'm not sure it's completely a bad thing, because with an increase in that structure and accountability, we would lose certain levels of autonomy and we would lose some aspects of our culture that I like.

Abraham calculates that autonomy allows him the space to create his own classroom culture and operate in ways that he wants to; he argues that increasing accountability would result in a loss of this autonomy. Although accountability is ideally centered in RPs, it is noticeably absent from the implementation process in participants' schools.

The different interpretations of RPs combined with the lack of accountability render implementation in the silos confusing, but also potentially dangerous. Participants explain that individual interpretations means that different school staff implement different policies. Lucy

takes this one step further saying that if someone thinks they are implementing RPs, but are actually acting in a more punitive manner it can be dangerous:

> At best, it's inauthentic. At worst, it's damaging, because you think, "Oh my god. I'm doing such a good job. I'm being so restorative. I'm doing these practices", when you're not actually doing anything. You think you're doing something that you're not.

This quote is contextualized by Lucy's own definition of RPs as a fundamental shift in schooling. Therefore, this dangerous label could be applied to any individual claiming RPs when they view it as a singular intervention for discipline. As the policy comes into contact with students, these interpretations and decisions carry significant implications.

*Restorative Stories: Perspectives in One School*

Participants across schools express that individuals are able to make choices to implement RPs based on their own understanding and beliefs surrounding these practices. All participants express that they use RPs, themselves, but offered a variety of definitions and experiences that contributed to their understanding. Three school staff participants all work in the same school, School 3. Lisa is an Equity Coach, Stephen is a teacher, and Cameron is a dean of students. The three individuals differ in their choices to implement RPs, and their explanations of what drove those decisions. The practices that Lisa, Stephen, and Cameron implement—which they all identify as "restorative practices"—also differ. This means that each participant believes they are implementing RPs "with fidelity," but have different interpretations of what that means. In an effort to understand the discrepancies of how this policy is delivered to students, this section explores moments where each of these individuals discuss using RPs.

During Lisa's interview, she makes two things very clear. First, she is committed to implementing restorative practices at her school in collaboration with Trevor, the Umoja specialist in her building, describing him as her "best friend." Second, she is enthusiastic no

matter the topic, even in the middle of a long school day while working remotely. At one point, she describes a time when she used restorative practices, and transports me back to the scene:

> Part of my responsibility was to help monitor the hallways to get students into their classrooms. This young lady was walking playing music really, really loudly on her phone. And no phones were supposed to be out, and she just wouldn't go to class and I didn't know her name and so I just said, young lady I need you to go to class. And she yelled some things back at me, and I said I need you to go to class.

Lisa continually raises her voice as she tells this story, becoming animated as she acted out the hallway conversation with the student:

> And she kept yelling, you need to ask somebody about me, you don't know who I am, you better get out my face…And then I went there with her: no, I'm not getting out of your face until you go to class. I elevated my voice, she elevated her voice louder, she got louder than I got.

Right after this, Lisa switches her tone to reflect how she shifted her approach to this student:

> I realized, Lisa, you're talking to a Black girl that's sixteen, seventeen. You're gonna have to stop for a second. And culturally Black women don't want somebody in their face yelling at them, even if it's another Black woman. So I had to take a step back and realize in that situation, you are the adult and your goal here is to get this young lady to go to class. What you're doing right now is antagonizing her and she's not gonna do anything—and this is literally me having a self-talk with myself because restorative practice requires you to have that self-talk with yourself right there in real time. Knowing that every move you make is going to determine all of your subsequent interactions with that one student because students don't forget, and I knew I needed her to go to class. I wanted her to go not just today, but every time I asked her.

Lisa recognizes her identity as a Black woman to internally relate to the student and acknowledge significant interpersonal dynamics specific to cultural understandings of others. She identifies that Black women do not like to be yelled at, even if the person yelling is another Black woman, such as Lisa. So, she stops yelling. As a part of her unstructured learning, this understanding of her racial and gender identity proceeds her decision to use a restorative approach. She first draws on her own identity and experience to recognize why her initial punitive approach was not working in order to conclude that a restorative approach was more

appropriate. This restorative approach ultimately allows her to achieve her goal of getting the student to go to class:

> I changed my whole demeanor, said you know what clearly we're both upset. And I apologize for raising my voice at you, you did not deserve that and I'm so sorry. Is there something that that I can do? Or do you want me to go and let your teacher know that you're on your way? Do you need to go see your counselor? I just need to know what is keeping you from going to class. Come to find out she hates this class because she doesn't have a relationship with the teacher, and so she purposely takes her time going there. But imagine if I would have kept going the punitive route, I would have missed out on all that valuable information that this child opened up and shared with me and became vulnerable, just because I wanted in that moment to restore. I wanted to *not* punish. After that, she told her friends about me. So one time about a month after that, I was telling another young lady to go to class and she says to her, you heard what [Lisa] said, go to class. And the friend just went to class. So I've got this street cred because I chose to restore in that moment.

Lisa draws a through line between her choice to have a restorative conversation with the first student and her renewed "street cred" with subsequent students but left out a key part of the puzzle. Her identity as a Black woman, and therefore her ability to relate to the Black female student, both catalyzes her use of restorative practices and acts as the first step in the restorative practice. Lisa thought to pivot to restorative practices, specifically apologizing and taking responsibility for her actions, because she knows that yelling at another Black woman is not an effective method of getting the student to go to class.

Lisa uses both her definition and learning of RPs when implementing these practices, culminating in an intended outcome — the first student went to class and encouraged other students to go to class on a subsequent occasion. This contextualizes Lisa's openness and enthusiasm for restorative practices reflected throughout her interview. She understands restorative practices as a mechanism to create effective, long-term behavioral changes in students through interpersonal connections based on identity. Her definition of restorative justice acts as a presupposition to this event; she uses words like "love, caring, nurturing, restoring." Meanwhile

her internal reflection on identity is directly related to her thoughts on unstructured learning. She learned about RPs as a product of being a Black woman who recognizes the importance of being heard, respected, and valued in school. Her decision to implement these practices with lasting effects are indicative of her understanding that RPs must be a fundamental shift in the culture at a school.

Lisa's personal and reflective implementation process is not reflected by all her colleagues. Stephen is a young white teacher, who does continually reflect on his upbringing in a low-income area to relate to his students. He views RPs very differently from Lisa. He defines RPs as an alternative to punitive discipline and implements his version of RPs to directly address disruptions. This definition leads him to implement RPs within the context of school discipline with the function of creating order: "You can walk into one classroom like mine where it's, 'Sit down,' but it's still restorative." He elaborates on the idea of using rigid power dynamics—what he continues to label as RPs—to create a safe environment:

> There's two ways to create the safe environment. There's a more soft, namby-pamby, if you will. And then there's you know exactly what to expect when you walk in. You know who's in charge. You know what's going to happen when you're here. You know what's too far. In my experience, kids have been way more comfortable with that than anything else. So if things are getting wild or whatever, I can be like, "No. Quiet." Because I don't do the student-led classroom, that stuff as much, especially because they don't know half the stuff they need to do that yet. It's my job to give them that knowledge. I can keep it as a safe, healthy environment because instead of trying to force this always doing collaboration work even if they don't have the context or student-led picked stuff, I give them the opportunity to do that and then gauge it based off their maturity and everything else how we do it. But at the end of the day, it's my classroom. You guys know what to expect and what's too far and what's not.

Stephen implements RPs by creating a structured environment in his classroom. Through this implementation, he maintains a power hierarchy in his relationship with students. He does not

allow students to assume the same level of power as himself and reinforces his own classroom norms through direct orders.

Stephen implements a set of practices that he believes to be restorative. In this way, his practices are decoupled from the policies set forth by the district, as he implements "with fidelity," but towards a more punitive vision of classroom culture. The practices that Stephen implements are built upon his definition of RPs as practices that create order in a classroom. Stephen's remark also indicates a lack of facilitated learning to create a unified understanding of RPs across the building. When I asked if he communicates with the Umoja specialist at his school, Stephen responds, "I really honestly haven't used him because that's how I try to run my class anyway." The voluntary nature of learning opportunities ensure that Stephen continues to construct a personal understanding of RPs. His implementation of these practices moves away from the ideals of RJ but is in line with this understanding, as is evident by the alignment with his definition. He is able to carry out these practices under the name of RPs due to the silo-ed nature of implementation.

Cameron, a dean at School 3, similarly relies on his understanding of RPs as he implements them. His definition of RPs centers students' needs, while he utilizes structured learning to gain a better understanding of how these practices address those needs through restorative conversations. When he discusses instances of implementing RPs, he combines these two ideas to discuss how he coaches students in instances of harm:

> Immediately it starts with a restorative conversation. For example, if a kid is just put out of a classroom, security will get them first. If security wasn't able to rectify the situation by having a restorative conversation with them and the teacher, then it'd be sent to me, and then I can sit down and figure out what's going on and figure out what's the underlying issue. Because a majority of the time with the student it could be something that happened with the teacher a month ago, a week ago, a day ago, and the teacher might be over it, but the student is not over it.

Cameron understands RPs as they relate to his role as a dean. Because his job deals directly with behavior management, he understands RPs as a mechanism to address issues that arise in relation to this. His description of implementation offers a restorative approach within a continuation of a punitive framework. A student was still removed from class. This framework is opposed even by participants that define RPs in relation to punitive practices.

The three different interpretations of RPs of participants in the same school indicate that implementation relies heavily on individual understandings of the practices. In School 3, this implementation process continues to allow a punitive framework to persist. Lisa describes the outcome of this persistence as a continuation of disproportionality in discipline data:

> And it stopped for a while. But when there was no accountability, it just started right back up, because I've never seen any consequences for teachers for historically racist behavior and ideas and bigotry and all those things. There's never a consequence for teachers. Teachers have called children, "You monkeys," students have recorded on their phones, and still nothing. Those teachers are still teaching, they still have their jobs.

Due to the silo-ed nature of implementation and low levels of oversight, school staff in School 3 continue to implement their version of RPs. This variability allows for harmful understandings of students, specifically Black and brown students, to continue within a punitive framework, but under the new language of "restorative practices." As Lisa indicates, this means that there is not a standardized version of implementation with fidelity, leading to a decoupling of practices in School 3 and the district policy. RPs are implemented with specific and personal mindsets imposed upon the policy.

The continuation of disproportionality in discipline and harmful perceptions of students of color under the guise of RPs indicates that these practices are not implemented with fidelity. CPS began implementing RPs in response to disproportionality in discipline data, thereby

signaling the importance to address these harmful impacts. By allowing disproportionality to continue through the variability of mindsets and subsequent implementation decisions, individuals are not adhering to the directives provided by the district. Consequently, the continuation of disproportionality indicates that the implementation of RPs does not address the harmful impacts of the school prison nexus. Individuals optimize on their understanding of RPs as disciplinary practices, continuing to serve the purpose of creating obedience and reinforcing hierarchies. RPs as a policy re-form the same structures of school discipline.

## Policy Recommendations

*Recommendations for School Staff Outside Specialists: Peer-Learning Models*

Based on my findings, I recommend that learning opportunities are altered to capture greater numbers of school staff with various mindsets. Participants in this project that work as RJ specialists agree in how they operate in their partner schools. They first observe the common practices across the school. Then, they administer professional developments and offer learning opportunities through direct intervention. School staff participants were less unified in their understanding of RJ specialists and responsibility to implement RPs. While some school staff assume responsibility to implement RPs, others deferred to an RJ specialist. As explained by outside specialists and school staff alike, the current model of structured learning often encourages adults that are predisposed to restorative practices based on their personal mindsets. This model is less effective at encouraging the described "haters."

In order to establish greater accountability and providing learning opportunities oriented towards changing adult mindsets, schools and outside specialists should create teacher-peer learning models. As explained by many participants, teachers want to be treated as experts of their own classrooms. This can cause friction between school staff and outside specialists,

especially when structured learning is met with frustration over policy churn. Mac proposes a teacher-peer learning model that utilizes aspects of informal friendship networks and centers a school's unique culture. In her interview, Mac explains that the teacher-led group in her school observes colleagues' classrooms, provides feedback without the pressure of hierarchies, and, in her own experience, leads to greater buy-in to RPs:

> That's important to really make sure that adults who are investing in their professional learning development, who are on a path towards leadership, however way that lands for them, they're able to see the value of having a space, how to craft it, how to create it where it's inclusive, where it's brave, where it's pushing collaboration, and it's creative…You see how you feel when you're in this space with just your peers as educators or department leads.

Mac currently leads such a team at her partner school. The school staff on this team provide feedback to their colleagues based on norms they create and supplemented by Mac's professional developments. In this way, the school staff at Mac's partner school are able to take ownership of their structured learning experiences. This ensures that the structured learning is more a personal process, which I found to have a more significant impact in implementation decisions.

Abraham outlines a slightly more informal model in his interview. In his school, teachers and staff often trade best practices and provide instructional feedback in the lunchroom, during meetings, or within grade groups. He explains that this helps him improve his own teaching and relationships with specific students. Utilizing relationships between adults in schools serves to align structured learning with the ethos of RJ. As explained in the findings section, structured learning is often voluntary because RJ requires self-motivated participation. Capitalizing on school staffs' expertise and existing friendships would encourage voluntary participation, while also creating a more unified understanding of RPs during implementation.

*Recommendations for Schools: Collective Accountability*

I recommend that schools create mechanisms of accountability such that school staff both understand why and how they are expected to implement restorative practices. School staff indicate that they make policy decisions in isolation within their classrooms or designated roles. I found that school staff choose to implement or not implement RPs based on individual mindsets drawn from understandings of RJ, district policies, school culture, and student needs. This creates wide variability in implementation. The high level of autonomy that adults experience in schools is at odds with accountability mechanisms. As my findings show, the lack of accountability and high levels of autonomy allows implementation to take a variety of forms and harmful discipline practices to persist. To circumvent this problem, I suggest schools focus on building strong accountability mechanisms for the policies.

To increase accountability, I suggest schools begin by communicating the process of addressing harm more explicitly. Participants indicated confusion over the specifics and purpose of RPs. To address this issue, schools should work on setting norms with school staff. Rae discusses this in her interview, suggesting that school staff at her partner school could work on norm setting:

> Everyone talking about their values. Everyone agreeing to the norms. Everyone being a part of the conversation, as far as how we're going to live, move and breathe when we're in this environment together. Because if you come up with them, you own them. This not, these are my list of rules you need to follow. This is what we have agreed to, and we all hold each other accountable to those things all of the time.

Rae's suggestion of setting clearer norms directly addresses accountability by involving community members in the process of creating the policies. This conception of accountability ties into a restorative understanding of accountability. Community members are incorporated in

the process of creating accountability mechanisms and thereby build relationships with one another during the process of implementation.

*Recommendations for the District: Aligning Restorative Practices with Restorative Justice*

The aforementioned recommendations would exist within the context of CPS's policies; therefore, I recommend that CPS acknowledge the legacy of punitive and disproportional discipline to authentically moving forward with RPs. The district should recount harm that continues to occur through punitive discipline practices contributing to the school prison nexus (Mieners, 2007). By acknowledging harm, the district would engage in restorative justice and create an environment better suited for RPs. This would also hopefully divorce the idea of RJ from punitive discipline. Right now, the concepts are often understood in comparison to one another and as a replacement of each other. As my findings have shown, this understanding is often coupled with a desire for punitive consequences. If the district understands restorative practices as a paradigm shift in school reform, it can potentially transform school culture, not just one aspect of school discipline.

CPS currently uses language that acknowledges the importance of shifting cultures within schools but does not extend this same principal to creating a restorative culture across the district. The *Restorative Practices Guide and Toolkit* states that, "Rather than a separate program, Restorative Practices at CPS are underlying mindsets, practices, and simply 'how we do business' in schools" (Chicago Public School). While this is not realized even at the school level, there is also a lack of foundational work at the district level. A key principle of restorative justice is accounting for harm within a community (Zehr, 2015). Disproportionality in punitive discipline practices continue to harm students of color; therefore, the district must address this harm in order to move towards a "how we do business" model within schools.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, I analyze how school staff understand restorative practices (RPs) in Chicago Public Schools by interviewing school staff members, restorative justice (RJ) specialists, and district officials. District language around RPs and the push from the Chicago Teacher's Union for restorative justice specialists in schools signal a focus on the implementation of such practices. This focus requires understanding how those charged with implementation think about RPs. In articulating these understandings, researchers can begin to identify if such practices are pushing again the legacy of punitive discipline. I found that adults in schools understand RPs as a function of their definition and learning experiences, both rooted in existing mindsets. Participants apply their understanding to policy implementation by exercising discretion; in this way, mindsets inform implementation. Low levels of oversight and high levels of autonomy allow participants to enact their versions of RPs in silos. The resulting variability in practices ensures the continuation of harmful school discipline legacies. Although the district calls for implementation with fidelity, I found that fidelity is often not realized, even when school staff and other actors believe they are acting in a restorative way.

In displaying participants' various understandings and mindsets that influence implementation, I describe the "silo phenomenon," using language Rae provides in her interview. This phenomenon is reflected in the literature. Street level bureaucrats implement policies with high levels of autonomy, allowing them to form policies through their decisions (Lipsky, 2010). As they implement policies, individuals often make sense of policies based on "prior knowledge, beliefs, and values" (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010, p. 156). Thus, school staff create and transform the policy into something that makes sense based on their own definition and learning of these practices. By operating within the preexisting system of punitive discipline,

this fails to address the school prison nexus, decrease or eradicate disproportionality, or change the culture in schools such that individuals move away from punitive mindsets. It is a prime example of the expansion of school staff's discretion and autonomy within the practices in schools, and the continuation of a process in which formal rules are decoupled from organizational practices (Meyer, 1977). The practices implemented by participants do not reflect a standardized understanding of implementation "with fidelity," as is hoped by the district (Chicago Public Schools, 2017).

District language creates a place for restorative practices, as a set of policies, within the structure of school discipline. In defining restorative practices, many participants aligned their responses to the district's policies. Even when offering definitions that spoke to relationship building and reframing harm, participants relied on the comparison between punitive discipline and restorative practices outlined in district policies. When it came time to implement restorative practices, these same participants understood this process to be a response to behavioral issues and/or used in moments of disruption. Restorative practices continue to operate within the disciplinary framework of schools, as they are understood a set of intervention tools. As Amanda explains, she is continually looking for "places to plug in restorative practices." Ultimately, restorative practices do not currently challenge the school prison nexus but rather are adopted in settings that continue to mandate order; like their precursors, they continue to disproportionately harm Black and brown students.

Throughout this project, some participants offered critiques to this interventionist understanding of restorative practices. RPs must go beyond addressing individual moments of harm to instead create a culture that reorients understandings of harm to become seen as a breakdown of relationships. Walter provides an analogy to explain this distinction:

> [Restorative practices are] not the frosting on top of the cake. It is not the cherry on top of the cake. In fact, it is part of the cake. It is like the eggs. It is an essential part of the cake. In fact, one might say it is the cake. We don't want our teachers, our participants, to think that restorative practices are an afterthought. It can't be. It has to be baked into the cake. It is essential to it. It is what you're supposed to know, understand and be able to do.

RPs must be foundational to operation of schools. Instead of placing RPs on top of existing discipline practices, Walter argues that RPs must shape the way adults think about their jobs. This understanding of RPs calls upon school staff and outside specialists to take contradictory and confusing district language and craft policies into a cohesive school culture. It pushes policy makers and street-level bureaucrats alike to carve out a more distinctive place for RPs that moves beyond moments of harm-intervention and towards a relationship-oriented culture of harm-prevention. This undertaking will be resource- and time- consuming but is necessary to address the issues that RPs purport to resolve.

The findings of my project are limited by their external validity and their application to all stakeholders involved in restorative practices. I interviewed participants working in Chicago public high schools. Much like earlier studies on the use of RPs in schools, my findings would not necessarily hold in another district. I also only interviewed adults and their perceptions of RPs. I am unable to analyze how students understand these practices, yet they participate and carry out RPs in schools. Students engage in restorative conversations and peace circles, making them equally important in the implementation of such practices. Therefore, it is crucial to have a good understanding of how they respond to RPs before proceeding with evaluations of the policy. I hope future studies will be able to analyze student perceptions of restorative practices.

The findings presented in this project are not exhaustive, and I hope future research on RPs in CPS builds upon my preliminary work relating to adult mindsets. In defining RPs and describing their learning experiences with such practices, participants articulated ideas of

responsibility. I encourage future studies to focus on the root of this responsibility to examine how school staff understand policies and implement practices. Notions of responsibility directly connects to ideas of accountability. Certain participants noted a lack of accountability to implement RPs, yet they implemented such practices within their domain. Others did not consider themselves to be the people responsible for implementation, and therefore did not sense a lack of accountability. Both of these perceptions can be attributed to the high levels of autonomy that street-level bureaucrats possess as they create and enact policies (Lipsky, 2010). At the same time, this sense of responsibility seems to exist beyond organizational environments and connect heavily to personal mindsets. I hope future research can articulate the link between such mindsets, perceptions of responsibility in relation to policy implementation, and organizational environments.

My findings can serve Chicago Public Schools as they continue to charge school staff and outside specialists with implementing RPs. By obtaining a greater understanding of how adults enact these policies, the district can begin to evaluate their own directives and language. In recognizing that a majority of participants drew a direct comparison to punitive practices, the district should evaluate the relative harm such comparisons create. RPs continue to exist within the framework of obedience and school discipline. Therefore, implementation does not mitigate or eradicate the harmful impacts of punitive discipline, but rather continues them. My findings provide a framework to begin evaluating the impacts of such policies. Recognizing variability in mindsets will allow evaluators to create rubrics that account for such discrepancies in implementation. It is my hope that my project acts as a beginning to the continued growth of restorative practices in Chicago Public Schools.

## Appendix

*Appendix 1: Participant Table*

| Pseudonym | Title | Organization Affiliation | School Number | Race | Gender | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kate | RJ specialist | Umoja (former) | School 1 | White | Woman | 10/19/2020 |
| Trevor | RJ specialist | Umoja | School 2 | White | Man | 10/26/30 |
| Rae | RJ specialist | Umoja | School 3 | Black | Woman | 10/30/2020 |
| Amanda | RJ specialist | Umoja | School 4 | White | Woman | 10/30/2020 |
| Lisa | Equity coach | CPS | School 2 | Black, Latinx | Woman | 11/05/2020 |
| Mac | RJ specialist | Umoja | School 5 | Black | Woman | 11/06/2020 |
| Abraham | Math and science teacher | CPS | School 6 | White | Man | 11/09/2020 |
| Cameron | Dean of students | CPS | School 2 | Black | Man | 11/10/2020 |
| Lucy | Social science teacher | CPS | School 7 (select enrollment) | White | Woman | 11/16/2020 |
| Billy | Librarian | CPS | School 7 (select enrollment) | White | Man | 11/19/2020 |
| Amber | History teacher | CPS | School 3 | Black | Woman | 12/03/2020 |
| Michael | RJ specialist; Professional Development Facilitator | Alternatives Inc. (former); Chicago Teachers Union | School 9 (former) | White | Man | 12/04/2020<br><br>Follow up: 12/16/2020 |
| Stephen | History teacher | CPS | School 2 | White | Man | 12/04/2020 |

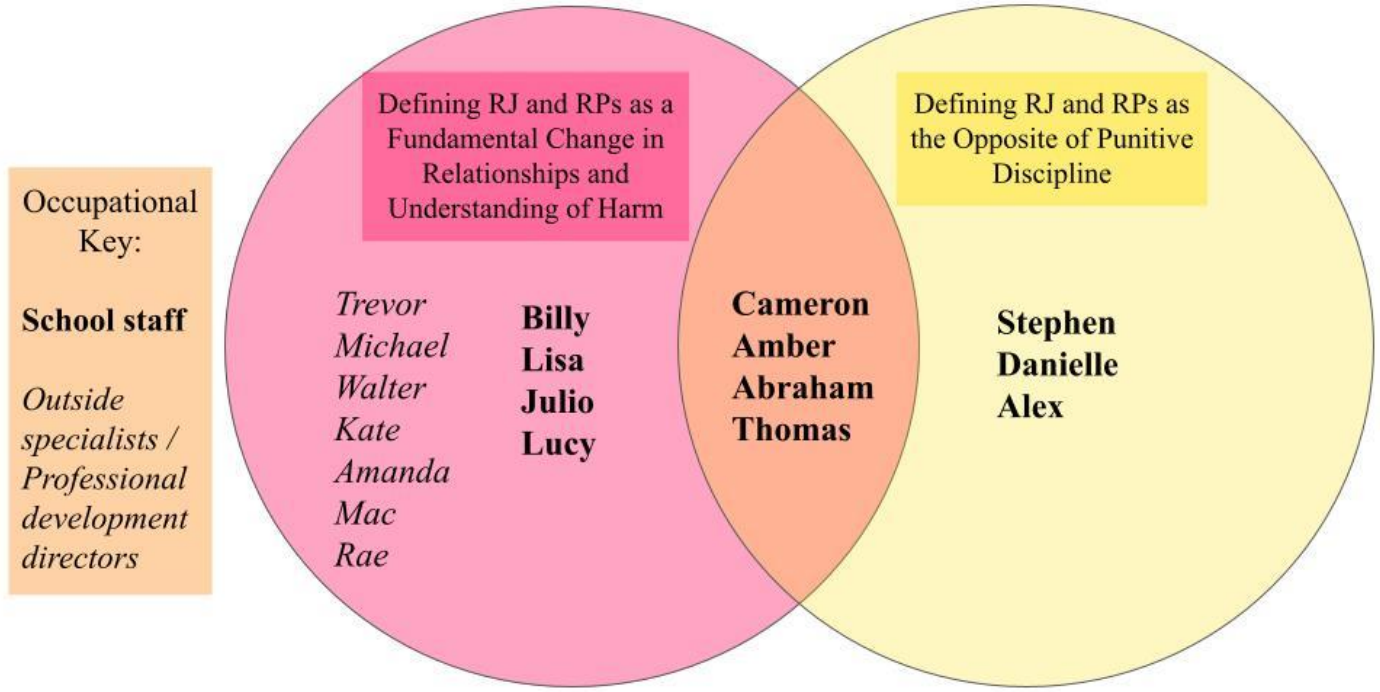
| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alex | History teacher | CPS | School 3 | White | Man | 12/07/2020 |
| Thomas | Science teacher | CPS | School 8 (select enrollment) | White | Man | 12/09/2020 |
| Julio | Music teacher | CPS | School 8 (select enrollment) | Latinx | Man | 12/15/2020 |
| Danielle | Science teacher | CPS | School 3 | White | Woman | 12/22/2020 |
| Walter | Professional development director | Chicago Teachers Union | - | Black | Man | 01/14/2021 |
| Ben | Manager of Student Discipline Support | CPS District Office | - | White | Man | 02/09/2021 |

*Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Guide*

1. Can you tell me about the role you serve in at your school or organization?
    a. How do you understand this role within the context of your school and/or school's community?
2. How do you define restorative justice?
3. How do you define restorative practices?
    a. Do you think these are different? If yes, how so?
4. How would you describe your school culture and/or workplace environment?
    a. What is your relationship with your colleagues—other teachers, outside specialists, etc.—like?
5. If you are struggling with something in your classroom, how do you usually handle it?
    a. Are there specific resources or practices your school encourages you to use when you are unsure or struggling?
6. What does the training structure at your school look like for restorative practices?
    a. [For school staff] What training, if any, were you offered on restorative practices?
    b. [For outside specialists] What trainings, if any, did you administer to other teachers on restorative practices?
    c. What did you learn during these trainings?
    d. How did you feel during and after these trainings?
    e. How, if at all, is race acknowledged during these trainings?
7. What practices do you use in your classroom to manage behavior or discipline students?
    a. Are these practices made explicit by the school?
    b. Are students receptive to these practices and/or do students use the resources?
8. Can you tell me a story about using restorative practices in your classroom and/or school?

9. Have you ever felt uncomfortable using restorative practices in your classroom and/or school?
    a. Would you share that story?
    b. What resources would have made you feel comfortable?
10. Do you believe there are limitations to using restorative practices in a classroom or school?
    a. If yes, what are these limitations?
11. When, if ever, has race played a part in disciplining a student or using restorative practices?
12. Do you remember the discipline practices used in the schools you attended?
    a. What was your opinion on those practices?
    b. How did you feel when you were disciplined in school as a child?
13. Has your opinion on school discipline changes since you became a teacher?
    a. If yes, how so?
14. In learning about restorative practices, has your opinion on school discipline changed?
    a. If yes, how so?
    b. If no, what has remained consistent?

*Appendix 3: Venn Diagram of Participants' Definitions*



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