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Examining School Discipline Under Restorative Justice: A sociological analysis of school disciplinary processes, disparities, and interventions.

DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

To my mother, family, and village.

I am because we are.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Examining School Discipline Under Restorative Justice: A sociological analysis of school disciplinary processes, disparities, and interventions.

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology
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Schools often adopt restorative justice programs in efforts to mitigate racial inequality in school discipline and to address growing concerns around the school-to-prison pipeline. While both the school-to-prison pipeline and restorative justice (RJ) programs have garnered attention, little is known about both the long-term impacts of experiencing school discipline and the extent to which interventions like RJ can mitigate these processes. Thus, this project draws on theoretical understandings of racial stratification and schools as organizations to investigate the long-term impacts of school discipline and examine restorative justice implementation in two school district contexts in the U.S. Drawing on unique data sources and utilizing inference-based statistical approaches, I investigate 1) how experiencing school discipline is associated with transition to adulthood outcomes 2) the extent to which RJ practices affect school discipline trends over time, and 3) how RJ effects may vary on the logic of adoption and implementation strategies. Analyses from my first empirical chapter link school discipline with young adult outcomes, finding that this linkage tends to be stronger for Black students. Subsequent chapters rely on inference-based statistical approaches to investigate how restorative interventions impacted school disciplinary disparities in two school districts and analyzes how the logic of both interventions led to a widening of racial disproportionality in one district and a narrowing disproportionality in the other. Taken together, this work provides a nuanced view of the structural conditions that surround school disciplinary disparities and the interventions that are often adopted to ameliorate them.

INTRODUCTION

School disciplinary practices have caught the attention of youth advocates and policymakers as a key area of concern in education. While the issue of disciplining students is not new (Raichle, 1978), the current concern is rooted in how disciplinary practices have taken a criminalizing and racially disparate turn in post-integration U.S. education. While violent practices such as corporal punishment may not be used as widely as they once were[1], the issue of how to discipline students became increasingly racial and institutional, culminating in schooling environments characterized by security practices, zero-tolerance mandates and in some cases police officers.

Particularly since the 1980s, schools have embraced these practices in the name of school safety, but there is limited evidence that these practices improve feelings of safety in school or bolster student achievement. While these strict disciplinary policies and security measures were meant to deter unwanted behavior, they promote suspension and expulsion practices that remove students from normal educational environments. Such exclusionary policies were initially aimed at preventing high-level offenses (like fighting or weapon possession), but quickly expanded to include minor offenses such as alcohol or tobacco possession, insubordination, and dress code violations (Kupchik 2010), such that maximal penalties are often applied for minor infractions (Weissmann, 2014)[2].

As these practices proliferated, a large body of research examined racial disproportionality in exposure to harsh disciplinary practices, finding that Black and Latinx

[1] Corporal punishment is allowable in 19 U.S. states as of 2022 and is largely a state regulated issue. While allowed in these states, the prevalence of use varies according to a 2016 study (see Gershoff and Font, 2016).

[2] While this project is focused on the racial disparities in school discipline and interventions, it is important to note that students with disabilities and with marginalized identities (such as LGBTQ youth) also experience school discipline at elevated rates (Camacho & Krezmien, 2020; Snapp et al., 2022). Although I do not discuss these intersectional disparities in detail, they are noteworthy and deserving of further research.

youth are more likely to be exposed to schools with punitive disciplinary cultures, and that Black students in particular are suspended at higher rates than their White peers (Anderson and Ritter, 2017; Fenning and Rose, 2007; Rios, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Given the link between school suspensions and juvenile justice contact (Fabelo et al., 2011), scholars have described punitive disciplinary environments as the school-to-prison pipeline, where Black and Latinx students are funneled into the criminal justice system as a result of school disciplinary practices (Wald & Losen, 2003; Hirschfield, 2009). While many have extended the interplay between schools and the carceral state beyond a "pipeline" (see Sojoyner 2013; Gilmore, 2007; Meiners, 2007), these processes are indicative of widespread inequitable schooling experiences that may exacerbate racial stratification in later life outcomes.

To address these problems, a growing number of school districts across the United States have adopted restorative justice programs. At their core, restorative justice practices promote equitable and relational learning environments through policies and practices that support students through conflicts in lieu of exclusionary disciplinary practices (e.g., suspension or expulsion). Restorative justice practices exhibit a continual community orientation that seeks to democratize school environments by equalizing the voices of students, educators, administrators, and staff in the school community (Winn, 2018; Zehr, 2002). Restorative justice has become popular in school districts across the U.S. over the last decade, and a joint 2014 report by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice touted the use of restorative justice as a viable intervention that would improve equity and address the school-to-prison pipeline.

Although a shift away from a punitive school discipline environment is theoretically promising, the transition to restorative justice is not necessarily linear. While schools may want

to completely replace their discipline policies with restorative justice, most schools integrate restorative practices within their existing standard practices and discipline policies. Therefore, rather than a completely new disciplinary system, restorative interventions become one among many options, and the outcomes associated with implementation are likely influenced by ongoing racial and organizational processes.

Thus, this project seeks to bolster understandings of school discipline and restorative justice by first documenting the long-term linkages of experiencing school discipline and then examine how school disciplinary outcomes shift throughout the implementation of restorative interventions in two school districts. Particularly, this project investigates 1) how experiencing school discipline is associated with transition to adulthood outcomes, 2) the extent to which RJ practices affect school discipline trends over time, and 3) how RJ effects may vary on the logic of adoption and implementation strategies. Taken together, this work provides a nuanced view of the structural conditions that surround school disciplinary disparities and the interventions that are often adopted to ameliorate them.

What is Restorative Justice?

The restorative justice philosophy gained prominence in the U.S. to improve responses to crimes in society. While the cultural origins of restorative justice have been linked to a variety of ancient societies, the restorative justice philosophy gained popularity amongst U.S. criminal justice reformers in the 1970s (McCold, 2007). In the U.S., restorative justice was primarily used as a mediation tool to address harm resulting from a crime and would aim to reduce carceral punishments—particularly for nonviolent offenses. Proponents of the restorative justice philosophy maintained that every crime created harm, and mediation between the victim and perpetrator of that crime was needed to repair that harm. They argued that traditional

punishments such as incarceration were ineffective for repairing harm to persons or communities and were not effective in reducing the likelihood that future crimes would be committed by the perpetrator (Braithwaite, 2000).

In the U.S. criminal justice system, restorative justice developed as a mediation process aimed at resolving conflicts between peers or communities. These mediations were often facilitated by trained personnel between all stakeholders of the crime or incident of interest. Restorative justice included a variety of mediations with different goals depending on the situation. Among the most popular are peer mediation for small groups of people, community mediation, and victim-offender reconciliation (McCold, 2007). In addition to direct mediations between multiple parties, restorative justice facilitators also use community circles as a way to collectively address a crime or incident of harm. In these circles, community members gather to discuss the harm done to the community, how to move forward from that harm, and potentially weigh in about recommended punishments for the offender (McCold, 2007). While designed to be healing tools for communities, the underlying goal of restorative circles are to develop relationships between community members to prevent further harm. At the culmination of mediations or restorative circles, the facilitator may work with stakeholders to develop a contractual agreement to ensure accountability and the prevention of further crimes.

As restorative justice practices have become increasingly prevalent, advocates have argued that many crimes (or harm) are rooted in societal injustices. As such, restorative justice is often used as a tool to intervene in issues of race, gender, and social class that underscore many personal and community conflicts (Strang and Braithwaite, 2002; van Wormer, 2009). Despite the application of restorative justice into social justice frameworks, using the philosophy does not necessarily include interrogation of social inequalities and could present new challenges.

Thus, a number of scholars have critiqued the restorative justice philosophy for widening the net of social control, trivializing crime (particularly against women and other vulnerable populations), failing to challenge power dynamics, and not affecting change on a systemic level (Morris, 2002). While these critiques will not be further investigated in this review, they highlight the potential complications with restorative justice practices and implies that restorative justice may not be the panacea that advocates suggest.

Restorative Justice in Schools

With the restorative justice philosophy gaining momentum as a criminal justice intervention, proponents began to advocate for adopting restorative justice in school communities. Advocates maintain that adopting restorative justice will help schools build, maintain, and repair relationships to form healthy, supportive and inclusive communities that will hopefully facilitate optimal learning environments (Zehr, 2002). Restorative justice practices aim to build and maintain positive relationships and seeks to increase investment in the school community. When situations or behaviors create harm in the classroom, or in the community, restorative justice practices provide opportunities for individuals and communities to come together to repair harm in lieu of traditional punishments or exclusions (Morrison, 2003). Through this relationally-oriented approach, schools hope that they can transition away from a punitively-oriented approach to schooling and create an environment where students can thrive (McCluskey, 2018; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

In schools, restorative justice practices usually follow three core principles. First, the schools hope to repair harm done between the perpetrator and the victim. Second, schools aim to build community and relationships between members of the community (i.e. school staff and students) to increase a feeling of responsibility for maintaining a positive environment. Third, schools

provide students with prosocial skills that will allow them to better their behavior (Gonzalez, 2015). The restorative justice model maintains that student misconduct cannot be fully restored if the wrongdoer is missing because of suspension, which means that students can be sent through within-school channels to restore positive behavior. Most schools adopt a continuum of practices that are not directly aimed at discipline but aim to build relationships and connection to the school community (Morrison et al., 2005). Therefore, restorative justice programs often utilize mediation, focus groups, and training sessions to encourage positive student behavior.

Restorative justice is a promising alternative to exclusionary discipline, but schools should be aware of several potential hurdles before they implement the practices. Although the core tenants of the programs are widely consistent, the specific implementation of restorative justice policies will vary between schools. More directly, schools integrate restorative justice into their practices as either an *alternative* to normative discipline policies or as a *replacement* for normative discipline policies (Gonzalez, 2012). This distinction is important because it impacts how schools can implement restorative justice in their building. Further, to completely integrate restorative justice within the core fabric of a school, implementors will need to engage multiple stakeholders from schools and their surrounding communities to facilitate the transformational environments for which they strive.

Thus, while schools may want to completely replace their discipline policies with restorative justice, most schools integrate restorative practices within their normative operations and discipline policies. Therefore, if schools approach restorative justice as an alternative to their current model of discipline, they should continually monitor how the remnants of their old system can continue to permeate through the new restorative justice practices. Integrating restorative practices is a nice option, but also increases opportunities for discretion to determine

the outcome of disciplinary cases and will likely challenge existing processes and power dynamics within a school. Rather than a completely new disciplinary system, restorative justice becomes one among many options, and school staff determine where, when, and with whom to utilize restorative justice based on their discretion and zero-tolerance mandates.

Moreover, local considerations are likely to affect the integration of Restorative Justice into school policies and procedures. Scholars have documented the challenges with implementing any type of intervention in schools, highlighting burdensome requirements, policy constraints and school cultural shifts that can hinder the implementation of outside programming (Jaycox et al., 2006). When it comes to restorative justice, schools will be tasked with changing practices that have likely existed for the lifetime of their entire school staff. These cultural changes mean that not every person will agree on what it truly means to be "restorative", and some staff members may reject the practices entirely (Karp & Breslin, 2001). Proponents of restorative justice are aware of these potential issues with implementation, and thus recommend a 3 to 5-year implementation window for the practices and cultural changes to fully be realized (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Morrison et al., 2005). These realities should not be understood as deterrents to implementing restorative justice, but do highlight the potential challenges that schools may navigate when adopting the programs.

Models of Restorative Justice

While restorative justice has a standard definition, schools have a variety of options in implementing restorative justice that can lead to a differing set of outcomes. In building on Morrison et al.'s concept of the continuum of restorative justice practices, I highlight several distinctions between different models of restorative justice. These distinctions have not been given much research attention, but they offer theoretical differences. As highlighted above,

schools can implement restorative justice solely as a policy or a procedural shift that places an emphasis on decreasing discipline rates and/or disparities. In this model of restorative justice, schools may employ personnel that are trained in restorative justice to handle disciplinary cases in lieu of suspension or may adopt other strategies to address the policy shift. This type of restorative justice is largely reactionary and is centered around improving responses to student misconduct. This approach assumes that suspensions or other exclusionary practices are structurally driving racial disproportionality and negative outcomes. As such, this model of restorative justice can be considered as a structural intervention that aims to achieve specific goals such as reducing suspension disparities.

In addition to restorative justice policy shifts, some have argued for school-wide adoption of broader Restorative Practices. Under this model, restorative justice practices are used primarily as a relational tool for teachers to improve their classroom management and student relationships (McCluskey; 2018; Gregory et al., 2014). In this model of restorative justice, schools hope to address student discipline and achievement disparities indirectly through building relationships. As such, schools will take a proactive approach in improving relationships and school climate, which proponents hope will lead to better outcomes for students. By emphasizing the cultural elements that lead to disparate outcomes, the school may run the risk of deemphasizing the structural contributors to inequality (McCluskey, 2008).

These differing models of restorative justice are likely to be nuanced in each school, as many schools are likely to adopt some combination of the two models. However, the different models are indicative of the differing goals and priorities of schools that choose to adopt restorative justice or restorative practices. Existing theoretical conceptualizations suggest that restorative justice and restorative practices are rooted in similar philosophical traditions, but how

schools conceptualize and integrate these philosophies into their existing practices is unclear. In the next section, I overview the social landscape that informs the adoption of restorative justice practices and situate these practices within an organizational framework.

Youth and Schools in the Mass Incarceration Era

Scholars have given much attention to the emergence of mass imprisonment—a term given to the drastic growth in the U.S. prison population after 1973 (Garland, 2001). While the process of mass incarceration is not the subject of this dissertation, understanding the landscape of how these processes have impacted communities and influenced schools is vital for situating school-based restorative justice as an intervention. To understand this phenomenon, scholars have investigated the policies, practices, and ideologies that resulted in the uptick in incarcerated Americans. In particular, scholars have posited that the rapid development of the criminal justice system in the 1970s and beyond was the result of state responses to Civil Rights era activism, concentration of poverty, fear of integration and efforts to control African Americans and other minority groups (Alexander, 2012; Muhammad, 2010; Camp, 2016; Wilson 1987).

The growth of the carceral state resulted in a legal era that is defined by tough-on-crime policies and the development of widespread criminal justice responses to behaviors that were previously less regulated by the state. Specifically during the Reagan era, the War on Drugs campaign played a vital role in highlighting the perceived dangers of drug use—particularly by Black Americans—and provided a deceptively justifiable reason to expand state and federal carceral systems (Alexander, 2012). With state and federal prison populations rising, so too did political rhetoric of safety and crime prevention. By the 1980s-1990s, states and the federal government began funding the expansion of prisons and the criminal justice system in ways that were previously unparalleled. As a result, the prison population grew five times larger, police

forces around the country expanded, and carceral responses to societal problems were increasingly used by states (Garland, 2001; Muhammad, 2010; Gilmore, 2007).

While the expansion of the criminal justice system impacted the social landscape of the entire country, it particularly devastated communities of color. Mass incarceration was particularly damaging to African American and Latinx communities, as they were disproportionately targeted and imprisoned despite little evidence of higher rates of committed crime. For example, although the majority of drug-users in America are White, 75% of people imprisoned for drug offenses are African American or Latinx (Alexander, 2012). Because of this disproportionality, the consequences of mass incarceration are racially-concentrated and include hampering social mobility for families, negative family health outcomes, and school underachievement (Western, 2002; Turney, 2014; Hagan and Foster, 2012).

Much attention has also been given to youth in the context of mass incarceration. Particularly, scholars have paid attention to racial disproportionality in juvenile justice contact, attitudes that drive juvenile justice policies and practices, and the punitive social contexts of youth in certain communities (Bridges & Steen, 1998; Ward et al., 2011; Shedd, 2015). Particularly, Rios (2011) describes the culmination of punitive policing against youth as a Youth Control Complex, through which the experiences of Black and Latinx youth become defined by their proximity to the juvenile justice system as they navigate their neighborhood and schools. While much of this work highlights processes that occur outside of school contexts, this literature suggests that the reach of punitive approaches to juvenile justice influenced school approaches to regulating students.

Schools as Punitive Spaces and the Consequences of Discipline Disparities

As the growth of the criminal justice system was happening on a state and national level, the ripple effects of carceral expansion reached other institutions—and schools in particular. To

describe this process, scholars have suggested that Black and Latinx students in the United States have been funneled into the criminal justice system through punitive school discipline practices, zero-tolerance policies, and security measures; operating from a framework of the "school-to-prison pipeline" (Wald & Losen 2003; Hirschfield 2009). Under this framework, many studies documented how schools increasingly relied on punitive logics to regulate student behavior that drew heavily from the tough-on-crime ethos of the War on Drugs era (Kupchik, 2010; Weissman, 2015). While schools did not incarcerate students directly, they did embrace exclusionary school discipline practices (i.e. suspension or expulsion) that pushed kids out of school. While initially reserved for extreme behaviors or violence, schools increasingly relied on exclusionary discipline to deter unwanted minor infractions like dress code violations, insubordination, or disruptive behavior (Glass, 2013; Blake et al., 2011; Wilson, 2014; Heitzeg, 2009).

As these punitive logics proliferated, the presence of security and law enforcement in schools increased. Schools commonly use methods such as security cameras, increased staff monitoring, metal detectors and housing a school police officer to deter student misconduct (Shedd 2015; Kupchik and Ward 2011). Combined with zero-tolerance policies, the introduction of law enforcement directly into the school creates an environment in which student contact with the criminal justice system is more likely (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2019; Fabelo et al., 2011). In a nationally representative study of school security practices, Kupchik and Ward (2011) found that school security is likely to be highest in schools that predominantly serve Black and Latinx students, even when controlling for socioeconomic status and neighborhood crime rates. These high-profile security practices have been shown to be an alienating force that is correlated with

negative academic outcomes, increased rates of suspension, and widening discipline disproportionality between Black and White students (Finn & Servoss, 2015).

As schools have increased security and law enforcement practices in schools, school use of discipline practices—such as suspensions and expulsions—has also risen. Skiba and colleagues (2002) show that the use of suspensions and expulsion practices have increased drastically since 1972. Similar to trends in incarceration, these rates are rising for the entire population, and racial disproportionality in exposure to punitive discipline practices widened. Between 1972-2007, suspension rates have almost doubled for White and Latinx students and have almost tripled for Black students (Skiba and Losen, 2010). Thus, racial disproportionality in school discipline between Black and White students is striking, with Black students three times as likely to be suspended as White students, despite limited evidence that Black students participate in more delinquent behavior (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014; Shollenberger, 2015) [3]. By contrast, research on Latinx student discipline has been less conclusive, finding that Latinx students are overrepresented in school suspensions in some contexts (Skiba et al., 2011) and potentially underrepresented in others (Anderson & Ritter, 2017).

Research has shown the pivotal role school discipline plays in shaping students' transitions to adulthood and long-term wellbeing. Students exposed to punitive discipline practices have a decreased likelihood of graduating from high school and college and are more likely to have contact with the criminal justice system (Bacher-Hicks et al. 2019). While the impacts of experiencing school discipline on academic outcomes have not been thoroughly investigated, existing work shows that that out-of-school suspensions are directly related to lower attendance

[3] There are also notable intersectional gender disparities in school discipline. In particular, Black girls experience discipline at rates far higher than their White female peers, and their behavior is more likely perceived as unruly or criminal. An emerging amount of work has unpacked how these perceptions are driven by notions and proximinities to White femininity (see Hines-Datiri & Andrews 2020; Blake et al., 2011).

rates, course failure and disengagement from the school environment (Balfanz, Byrnes and Fox, 2015). Qualitative studies however suggest that school disciplinary practices have a profound deleterious impact on how students can engage with academic material (Bell & Puckett, 2020). Academic disengagement is central to this process as it is a strong predictor of truancy, disciplinary referrals and homework completion, all of which effect academic performance (Toldson, McGee & Lemmons 2015). While existing research is limited, exposure to punitive school discipline has also been shown to have deleterious effects as youth transition to adulthood, influencing likelihood of dropping out, labor market earnings and civic engagement (Hirschfield, 2009; Marchbanks et al. 2015; Kupchick and Catlaw, 2014).

Because these outcomes are disconcerting, researchers have sought to understand them through the analysis of school policy contexts (Camacho & Krezmien, 2020; Anderson & Ritter, 2020; Kupchick & Ward, 2011). In these studies, researchers examine how school and statewide policy contexts contribute to the use of exclusionary discipline policies. Taken together, they point to the organizational components that contribute to school discipline practices and disparities, focusing on how factors like schoolwide handbooks (Fenning et al., 2008), academic achievement (Skiba et al., 2014), retention rates (Christle et al., 2004), and teacher quality (Camacho & Krezmien, 2018) can impact the extent to which schools use punitive discipline. These studies point to the reality that the non-behavioral structural conditions of schools can impact how exclusionary discipline is utilized, but also that schools may have agency by embracing interventions that contribute to more optimal working and learning environments.

Other studies have sought to understand these disparities through a lens that investigates how racism and interpersonal bias contributes to school discipline disparities. Much qualitative work has long-observed the differential treatment that students of color experience in schools, often

finding that Black and Latinx students are targeted, criminalized and treated more harshly by educators and other school staff (Allen, 2017; Rios, 2011; Lewis & Diamond, 2016). This differential treatment is further documented in quantitative and experimental studies that show how educators are more likely to perceive Black student behavior as more problematic and deserving of more severe punishments (Gregory & Roberts, 2017; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). In addition to the policy environment, these studies point to the role of interpersonal racism in facilitating school disciplinary disparities.

When combined with the broader structural conditions that make Black students more likely to experience punitive schooling environments, these policy and interpersonal contexts mean that school disciplinary disparities are multifaceted and driven by macro-, meso- and micro-level factors. Thus, while the school-to-prison pipeline framework is useful in describing the patterns and implications of punitive school disciplinary policies, it is limited in that it does not provide an adequate framework for understanding the institutional and cultural mechanisms that drive the interplay between schools and the carceral state. More recently, scholars have understood this relationship as the school-to-prison nexus, which allows us to examine the interconnected web of policies, practices and ideologies that link schools and prisons (Meiners, 2007; Rodriguez, 2010; Goldman & Rodriquez, 2021; Sojoyner, 2016; Annamma, 2016).

This framework shift is imperative because it allows us to view this relationship not as a pipeline from one institution to another, but as an ecosystem through which racism and racial stratification proliferate. Through this ecosystem, we can understand how both school discipline practices are continually structured in-part by the school-to-prison nexus and its ideologies; which may mean that reform efforts will be impacted by structural, organizational, and interpersonal hurdles that could derail implementation or contribute to outcomes and practices

that reinforce the status quo (Payne, 2008; Shange; 2019). Nevertheless, further understanding the ecosystem of the school-to-prison nexus and interventions like restorative justice are crucial in understanding a key mechanism of racial stratification in educational attainment and subsequent life outcomes.

Understanding Restorative Justice in an Organizational Context

Scholars have posited that schools operate as organizations within particular policy and institutional contexts (Arum, 2000; Meyer, 1977). In particular, Weick (1976) conceptualized schools as being comprised of loosely coupled systems—two systems that are responsive to one another but maintain separate identities and functions. In schools, Weick imagined that the coupling within schools carries connotations of impermanence, and dissolvability—which helps bind the two systems together. Gamoran and Dreeben (1986) build on this concept by investigating the sources of coupling within schools. They argue that resource allotment is vital because it often reflects decisions made by administrators that effect how teachers can organize their classrooms. The authors show that the allotment of resources is tied together by linkages that span the entire hierarchy of the education system, providing both tight (time, personnel, curricular content etc.) and loose (quantity of material resources) links. This work is seminal in establishing that schools operate in systems of organizational relationships, where district-level policies are moderated by school-level acts before they impact classroom-level outcomes.

Understanding schools in this organizational context is important for conceptualizing the school discipline landscape and what to expect from school interventions. Prior to the advent of zero-tolerance policies, much attention was given to the legal landscape that impacted how schools were able to approach student discipline (Grant, 1988; Toby, 1980). Arum (2003) details how legal cases shaped school discipline practices through the pre-contestation era (pre-1965),

students' rights contestation era (1969-1975) and the pro-school, post-contestation period of 1975-1992. The authors argue that pro-student litigation efforts reduced the ability of schools to discipline students without fear of lawsuits, which reduced the moral authority of school actors. Over time, these legal changes resulted in schools creating procedural safeguards to protect themselves from legal violations.

The macro-level influence of legal decisions in schools is reflective of broader institutional coupling between the criminal justice and education systems. The school-to-prison nexus framework allows us to understand this coupling as a key connection in the ecosystem of carceral and educational institutions. This is important because this ecosystem informs and reinforces normative school policy (e.g. zero tolerance mandates, police presence in schools etc.) and will also permeate through interventions (like restorative justice) that seek to change the structure, actors and outcomes of this ecosystem. Because racism informs both schooling and criminal justice systems, resulting inequality is both precipitated by racialized processes and reinforced through the school-to-prison nexus. Therefore, inequality does not emerge solely in the coupling of these systems, but also in *how* schools and law enforcement agencies use racialized carceral logics to inform decision-making. This will remain relevant as schools will still be influenced and held accountable to the legal system even as they implement restorative justice.

Despite a predominant desire for a fair justice system and for schools to function as neutral spaces for students to learn, both systems are sites where racial inequality is reinforced through organizational practices (Acker, 2003; Wooten & Couloute,2017). Ray (2019) captures this with a theory of racialized organizations, whereby race is embedded in the foundations and hierarchies within organizations. Ray argues that racialized organizations have four tenants, they

1) enhance or diminish agency of racial groups, 2) legitimate an unequal allocation of resources, 3) establish (formally or informally) Whiteness is a credential and 4) decouple formal rules from organizational practice in a way that is racialized. Stewart and colleagues (2021) apply this theory to schools, showing how the organizational structure of schools would classify them as a racialized organization, and that diminishing racial inequalities will require a major shifts within schools.

Understanding the organizational structure of schools under the frameworks of the school-to-prison nexus and racialized organizations is important because how schools operate will determine the effectiveness and potential consequences of adopting restorative justice or other interventions. As previously mentioned, restorative justice programs are often adopted as an *alternative* to exclusionary discipline rather than a complete *replacement.* This means that it is quite possible (and potentially legally required) for schools to adopt restorative justice and maintain the same zero-tolerance policies, and criminal justice responses that were in place prior to adoption. The implication of this is that it is unclear if restorative justice programs result in the widespread school changes that advocates suggest. When implementing restorative justice, it may not always be clear to school staff how to utilize these alternatives to normative discipline, and may not have consensus on what it means to be "restorative" (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Edelman (1992) describes a similar process in which legal ambiguity can impact organizational compliance. Specifically, when organizations try to adhere to ambiguous laws or philosophies, Edelman posits that organizations may adopt procedures that minimally disrupt the status quo. In this sense, the philosophical ambiguity leaves the meaning of compliance open to organizational construction, resulting in the creation of symbolic structures that are seemingly compliant with the law or philosophy. Similarly, Dobbin et al. (1993) details how organizations

change their internal mechanisms to respond to external changes or pressures—noting that public policy creates broad rules and organizations experiment with solutions that withstand legal tests. These policies may create broad models of organizing, but they may not enforce a targeted range of practices that will result in systemic changes. Thus, although schools may adopt restorative justice because of external incentives to reduce exclusionary discipline, the ambiguity of restorative justice and how to implement it may result in varying organizational strategies that have varying success in ameliorating school discipline disparities or shifting school climates.

In a school context, scholars have understood the implementation of reforms as something that is heavily dependent on a school's organizational structure and capacity. Spillane (1999) posits the success of external reforms heavily depend on zones of enactment—spaces where reform efforts meet teaching or school practice. These enactment zones are influenced by both the type of reform and the capacity and will of school staff to change their practices. Coburn (2003) adds to this discussion by examining how interventions are scaled in schools, highlighting the multiplicative process of integrating successful reforms in schools. In doing so, Coburn posits that reform implementors navigate tensions of breadth and depth, which becomes increasingly relevant the more reform efforts diverge from normative practice. In the context of restorative justice, this work suggests that the ambitious philosophical shifts that embody restorative justice mean that the scaling process within schools will be more difficult.

Research on school interventions also suggests that the adoption of restorative justice programs may not be as immediately transformational as advocates hope. Jaycox et al. (2006) investigate the barriers to successful school interventions, noting that burdensome requirements, policy constraints, and school personnel shifts can hinder the success of outside programming. Further, research on the implementation of school discipline interventions such as PBIS have

shown that program fidelity can vary based on access to training, resources and school-specific goals (Bradshaw et al., 2008). Restorative justice programs are likely to face similar challenges, as integrating the philosophy into the organizational structure of schools is ambitious and dependent upon resources, concurrent policies, existing procedures and organizational relationships. It's clear that we can understand restorative justice as a potential reform, but it is unclear how schools will adopt the practices and if they will do so in a way that results in substantive changes (Payne, 2008).

Prior Research on Restorative Justice in Schools

Recent research on restorative justice in schools shows that the practices are promising for addressing disparities in school discipline. Suspension rates in Pittsburgh, Denver, San Francisco, and Oakland schools decreased after the implementation of restorative justice policies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Augustine et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2016). Whether the potential benefits of restorative justice are experienced equally by students from different racial groups and how restorative justice policies affect racial disproportionality in school discipline is inconclusive.

In the most rigorous experimental study of restorative justice practices, Augustine et al. (2018) randomly assigned restorative practices to 50% of Pittsburgh Public Schools. Examining a variety of student, teacher and school-level outcomes, Augustine et al. find that restorative practices boosted teacher reports of school climate, reduced overall rates of suspension, and reduced the Black-White suspension gap. Importantly, however, unlike many restorative justice implementations, the SaferSanerSchools Whole-School Change Program adopted in Pittsburgh implements restorative practices independent of the traditional school discipline process, so that offenses that would have received a suspension or expulsion prior to restorative justice should still receive a suspension or expulsion. As the program does not change the process once

disciplinary referrals occur, we infer that the reductions in suspension rates in schools using the SaferSanerSchools program are likely attributable either to a change in student behavior or how student behavior is perceived and categorized, so that fewer incidents escalated to the point of discipline referrals.

By contrast, Los Angeles Unified School District implemented restorative practices in conjunction with a suspension ban (which aimed to eliminate suspensions for low-level infractions) and other disciplinary reforms. Hashim et al. (2018) show that suspension rates in Los Angeles declined for all racial groups, but they also find that racial gaps in school suspensions persist despite these overall declines in suspension rates. Similarly, research on Denver, focusing on students who were referred for discipline, suggests that students of all racial groups who received a restorative intervention instead of going through the traditional disciplinary process were less likely to be involved in a disciplinary incident the following semester (Anyon et al. 2016). However, as in Los Angeles, Gregory et al. (2018) suggest that restorative interventions in Denver did little to close racial gaps in suspension rates.

In addition to school disciplinary outcomes, research has shown promising changes in non-discipline related student outcomes after the implementation of restorative justice. For students, restorative interventions have been associated with declines in fighting, skipping school, bullying, and attendance (McMorris et al., 2013; Baker, 2008; Acosta et al., 2019). Additional work has shown mixed results in the effectiveness of restorative justice in shifting perceptions of school climate and safety and broader academic outcomes, where student achievement and perceptions of climate have increased in some contexts but have remained unchanged in others (Augustine et al., 2018; McMorris et al., 2013; Acosta et al., 2019; Kerstetter, 2016). While research is mixed, these quantitative studies suggest that restorative

interventions can impact schooling beyond school discipline, but their impacts may vary between local contexts.

In sum, school discipline is a key axis of schooling that can be a catalyst for racial stratification within schools and in the long-term. Because of this, it is necessary to further understand the extent to which experiencing school discipline can contribute to inequality later in life. Through conceptual understandings of the school-to-prison nexus and racialized organizations, we can examine the mechanisms of school discipline inequality and restorative interventions. While restorative justice policies are promising, they are also ambitious and ambiguous, which means that their adoption could exacerbate or improve existing inequality. The remainder of this project addresses this tension by first examining the long-term impacts of experiencing school discipline before examining restorative justice interventions in two U.S. school districts.

CHAPTER 1: School Discipline and Racial Disparities in Early Adulthood.

Substantial research highlights that Black students are more likely to be suspended and expelled than their White classmates (see, e.g., Office for Civil Rights 2016), and scholars argue that these disparities in educational experiences exacerbate disparities in adult criminal justice contact (Wald and Losen 2003). The reliance on exclusionary discipline, policing, and harsh security measures creates school environments that criminalize youth of color (Kupchik & Ward 2010; Rios 2011), as the school-to-prison nexus brings carceral logics from the criminal justice system into schools and normalizes the control and monitoring of people of color (Becker et al. 2017; Sojoyner 2013). Although existing research underscores how school discipline contributes to racial inequities in shorter-term educational outcomes by constructing criminalized identities (e.g., Rios 2011), the degree to which such experiences shape later-life disadvantage and contribute to long-term disparities is not well established.

We utilize novel administrative data combining statewide education, criminal justice, and social safety net program participation data from Oregon with income information from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to elucidate the link between school discipline and key young adult outcomes. Specifically, we: 1) Describe the relationship between school discipline and young adult criminal justice contact, enrollment in post-secondary education and graduation from college, social safety net program utilization, and outcomes related to the labor market and poverty; 2) Examine whether the links between school discipline and these outcomes are particularly strong for Black and Hispanic students; and 3) Estimate the degree to which racial disparities in young adult criminal justice outcomes may be accounted for by differences in experiencing exclusionary school discipline.

In doing so, we provide high-quality descriptive evidence documenting the important link

between school discipline and young adult outcomes. This has been a surprisingly difficult task, as research typically relies on student self-reports (Rosenbaum 2020), and high-quality administrative data recording student discipline rarely contain information about students' later life outcomes. Recent working papers utilizing high-quality school discipline administrative records document how principals (Bacher-Hicks, Billings & Deming 2019; Sorensen, Bushway, & Gifford 2020), teachers (Rose, Schellenberg, & Shem-Tov 2019), and police officers in schools (Sorensen, Shen, & Bushway 2020) can shape students' adult contact with the criminal justice system. Our novel data allow us to provide the most comprehensive, overview of the link between school discipline and young adult inequality and to condition on a detailed set of controls, such as family income, not typically observed in other administrative data.

Just over one quarter of all students (27%) in our analytical sample were suspended or expelled while in high school, and the percent of students disciplined ranged from nearly half of Black and Latino boys to under ten percent of Asian girls (see Supplemental Table S1). Exclusionary discipline is viewed as particularly problematic when utilized as a response to insubordination offenses (Ritter & Anderson, 2018), and in our cohort, 5% of students received an out-of-school suspension for insubordination while in high school.

Our analyses utilize data from the Oregon Department of Education, Oregon court and Department of Correction records, Oregon Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the IRS. To link records across these files, the US Census Bureau assigned unique person identifiers (protected identification keys or PIKs) to all relevant datasets (Wagner & Layne 2014). Using personally identifiable information (e.g., social security number, name, date of birth, address, and sex) available in the source file, we were able to assign PIKS to roughly 95 percent of the educational records, 73 percent of the court records, 97 percent of SNAP records,

and nearly 99 percent of the IRS records.

Our education data contain detailed information about students' school discipline records, including in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, days disciplined, infraction type (e.g., insubordination, fighting), and any weapons that were involved (e.g., handguns, knives). The education data also include student demographic characteristics; indicators of student supplementary program participation (such as special education and English-language learner services); attendance; high school math, reading, writing, and science test scores; and higher education enrollment and degree data. We link these data with court records from Oregon containing information on arrest, conviction, and sentencing; information indicating Oregon SNAP receipt; and with IRS records containing information on employment status (i.e., the presence of a W2), earnings from employment (earnings summed across all W2's for an individual in the 2018 tax year), and a proxy for poverty status (whether household income as reported on IRS form 1040 in the 2019 tax year is below the federal poverty line). Income that is not reported to the IRS will not be included in these records. Likewise, contact with the criminal justice system or SNAP participation outside of the state of Oregon will not be included; as the likelihood of being present in Oregon post-high school does not vary significantly by exposure to discipline, we believe that this should not affect the results presented in Table 1. However, as Black students are five percentage points more likely than White students to leave Oregon post-high school (21 percent vs 16 percent can be identified as living out of Oregon in a given year post-high school), our estimates of racial disparities using outcome data from Oregon (i.e., criminal justice contact and SNAP participation) may be understated.

We use these data to estimate Ordinary Least Squares regression models (i.e., Linear Probability Models for our dichotomous outcomes) taking the following general form:

$$\text{Outcome}_i = \beta x_i + \theta_s + \varepsilon_i, \quad (1)$$

where x_i represents our independent variables, including receiving school discipline, gender, race, native language, economic disadvantage, attendance, gifted status, special education status, average standardized high school test scores (to avoid issues caused by incomplete data, we first standardized test scores within a given year, subject, and grade level, and then for each student we average all tests in a particular subject while they were in high school, and then average across their subject-specific average test scores), mid-year school change, and average IRS-reported household adjusted gross income during high school; θ_s are school fixed effects that index the high school in which students initially enrolled; and ε_i is an error term. As our models include school fixed effects, they can be interpreted as comparing students to their peers who began high school with them at the same school; estimates of the discipline penalties in Table 1 thus compare disciplined and non-disciplined students who began at the same high school, and the estimates of racial inequality depicted in Figure 1 compare students from different race groups to the White students with whom they started high school. We estimate heteroscedastic-robust standard errors that account for the clustering of students within schools.

In order to observe a wide range of students' young adult outcomes, we focus on members of the cohort beginning high school in the 2007-08 school year, the first year in which disciplinary data are available. To include students who may have moved to Oregon part way through high school, we include all 2007-08 ninth graders, 2008-09 tenth graders, 2009-10 11th

graders, and 2010-11 12th graders in our analytic sample. The most recent year our outcome data are available vary by source. Our data on higher education outcomes are available through 2016, allowing us to examine whether students ever enroll in post-secondary education, and whether they complete a college degree in their first five years out of high school. We use court records from the state of Oregon to create outcome variables indicating whether a student is charged with, convicted of, or incarcerated for a crime between June of 2011 and when they turned 22. Our SNAP data allow us to examine whether students lived in a household that received SNAP between 2012 and 2018 (when they were 26). We use W2 data from the IRS to provide information on students' employment status (indicated by the presence of a W2 form) and wages from employment (summed across all W2s for an individual, and transformed using the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation) in 2018, when students were 26. To calculate our proxy for poverty we use IRS 1040 data on adjusted gross income and the number of people in the tax unit in 2019 (when students were age 27).

Table 1.1 documents the strong link between experiencing school discipline and a variety of key early adult outcomes. We see in Panel A that, compared with non-disciplined students, high school students who were disciplined, which is defined as being suspended or expelled, are over twice as likely to be charged with a crime (15% vs. 6%), convicted of a crime (11% vs. 4%), and incarcerated (1.3% vs. 0.5%) by age 22; are approximately eleven percentage points more likely to have received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits by age 26 (59% vs. 48%), seven percentage points less likely to pursue higher education (61% vs. 68%) and three percentage points less likely to graduate from college (13% vs. 17%) by age 23; were less likely to be employed (84% vs. 85%), earned approximately $1,600 less at age 26, and were

five percentage points more likely to have household incomes that were below the federal poverty line (19% vs. 24%) at age 27.

Table 1.1. Differences in Early Adult Outcomes by Exposure to School Discipline

	Criminal Justice			Safety Net	Higher Education		Labor Market		
	Charged	Convicted	Incarcerated	SNAP	Enrolled	4yr degree	Employed	Earnings	Poverty
Panel A. Early Adult Outcomes by School Discipline									
Disciplined	0.146	0.110	0.013	0.590	0.614	0.134	0.835	$19,240	0.240
Not Disciplined	0.057	0.039	0.005	0.475	0.683	0.168	0.851	$20,790	0.187
Discipline Penalt'	0.089[a]	0.070[a]	0.007[a]	0.115[a]	-0.069[a]	-0.034[a]	-0.016[a]	-$1,551[a]	0.053[a]
Panel B. Men's Discipline Penalties by Race									
White	0.098[a]	0.081[a]	0.010[a]	0.136[a]	-0.080[a]	-0.050[a]	-0.024[a]	-$1,544[a]	0.042[a]
Black	0.169[ab]	0.130[a]	0.013	0.070[ab]	0.008	0.023	-0.047	-$3,329[a]	0.108[a]
Hispanic	0.127[ab]	0.103[a]	0.014[a]	0.088[ab]	-0.092a	-0.002	-0.007	$365	0.042[a]
AIAN	0.121[a]	0.094[a]	0.004	0.090[a]	-0.062	0.007	0.016	-$4,085	0.089
API	0.044[ab]	0.046[a]	0.006	0.043[b]	-0.098[a]	-0.094[a]	0.023	$2,229[b]	0.020
Panel C. Women's Discipline Penalties by Race									
White	0.060[a]	0.043[a]	0.001	0.133[a]	-0.070[a]	-0.050[a]	-0.016	-$2,985[a]	0.075[a]
Black	0.157[ab]	0.107[ab]	0.000	0.048[b]	0.033[b]	-0.007[b]	-0.046	-$6,133[ab]	0.188[ab]
Hispanic	0.029[ab]	0.028[a]	0.002	0.063[ab]	-0.054[a]	0.001b	0.011	$1,257b	0.059[a]
AIAN	0.119[a]	0.016	-0.001	0.030[b]	0.001	0.047[b]	0.028	-$3,784	-0.062[b]
API	0.055	0.044	-0.001	0.037	-0.147[a]	-0.131[ab]	0.022	$2,945[b]	-0.014

Note: Table 1.1 includes results from different Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression models. The columns represent different young adult outcomes for Oregon high school students in the cohort that began high school in the 2007-2008 school year. Superscripts "a" indicate that coefficients are statistically significantly different from zero ($p<.05$); Superscripts "b" (Panels B and C only) indicate that the coefficient is statistically significantly different from the analogous coefficient for White students in that panel ($p<.05$). Panel A reports the predicted probabilities for students who were not exposed to school discipline (row one), students who were exposed to school discipline (row two), and the difference between students who were and were not disciplined, which we refer to as the discipline penalty (row three). The predicted probabilities are obtained using the sample mean of the non-school discipline covariates. Panel B reports the coefficient on discipline penalty for different race/ethnicity groups for men (i.e., the difference between students of a particular group who were and were not disciplined, which is obtained by taking the sum of the coefficient for the main effect of discipline exposure and the relevant coefficient for the interaction between indicators for race/ethnicity and an indicator for school discipline. Panel C reports the same results as in panel B but for women instead of men. The criminal justice contact variables indicate any adult charge, conviction, or incarceration between the end of their senior year and age 21. The higher education variables indicate whether students ever enrolled in higher education and ever received a four-year college degree as of 2016 (five years post-high school). Social safety net outcomes provide information regarding whether the student lived in a household that received SNAP between 2012 and 2018. We use the presence of a W2 to indicate employment (measured in 2018), and sum earnings from employment across all W2s the individual received in 2018. Results for earnings were estimated on the inverse hyperbolic sine of earnings; we transform results back into dollars for reporting purposes. Our proxy for poverty status examines whether IRS-reported household income for 2019 was below the federal poverty level. The above results are based on 40,000 students in the cohort that began high school in the 2007-08 school year. All models include controls for average IRS-reported household adjusted gross income during high school, average standardized test scores, special education status, gifted status, economic disadvantage status, native language, absences, mid-year school changes, and cohort; models reported in Panel A additionally include controls for race and gender.

Panels B and C report the differences between disciplined and non-disciplined high school students by race and gender, allowing us to examine whether the link between school discipline and young adult outcomes is particularly salient for some groups of students. We find evidence that the link between school discipline and transition to adulthood outcomes varies significantly by race and gender. Of particular note, we find that the link between school discipline and criminal justice contact is strongest for Black students.

Figure 1.1 examines the degree to which racial disparities in young adult outcomes can be linked to differences in school discipline. We report racial disparities for men and women separately, first controlling only for background characteristics (e.g., native language, household income during high school; labeled "Baseline"), then holding constant only out-of-school suspensions for insubordination, and finally accounting for a broad array of school discipline measures. Comparing racial disparities with and without accounting for these factors provides an indication of the degree to which racial disparities in, for example, the probability of being charged with a crime as a young adult can be traced back to differences in school discipline (see Supplement Tables S2 and S3 for model coefficients). As we are interested in understanding how disadvantages relative to White young adults may be traced back to school discipline differences (and not whether, for example, advantages in Asian students' degree attainment is attributable to school discipline), when a racial group does better on average on a particular outcome than Whites, we place the markers for this contrast at zero on the x-axis. To facilitate comparisons across our wide range of outcomes, Figure 1.1 divides the race gaps by the standard deviation of the relevant outcome.

Figure 1.1 Title: Racial disparities in young adult outcomes (standardized), for men and women.

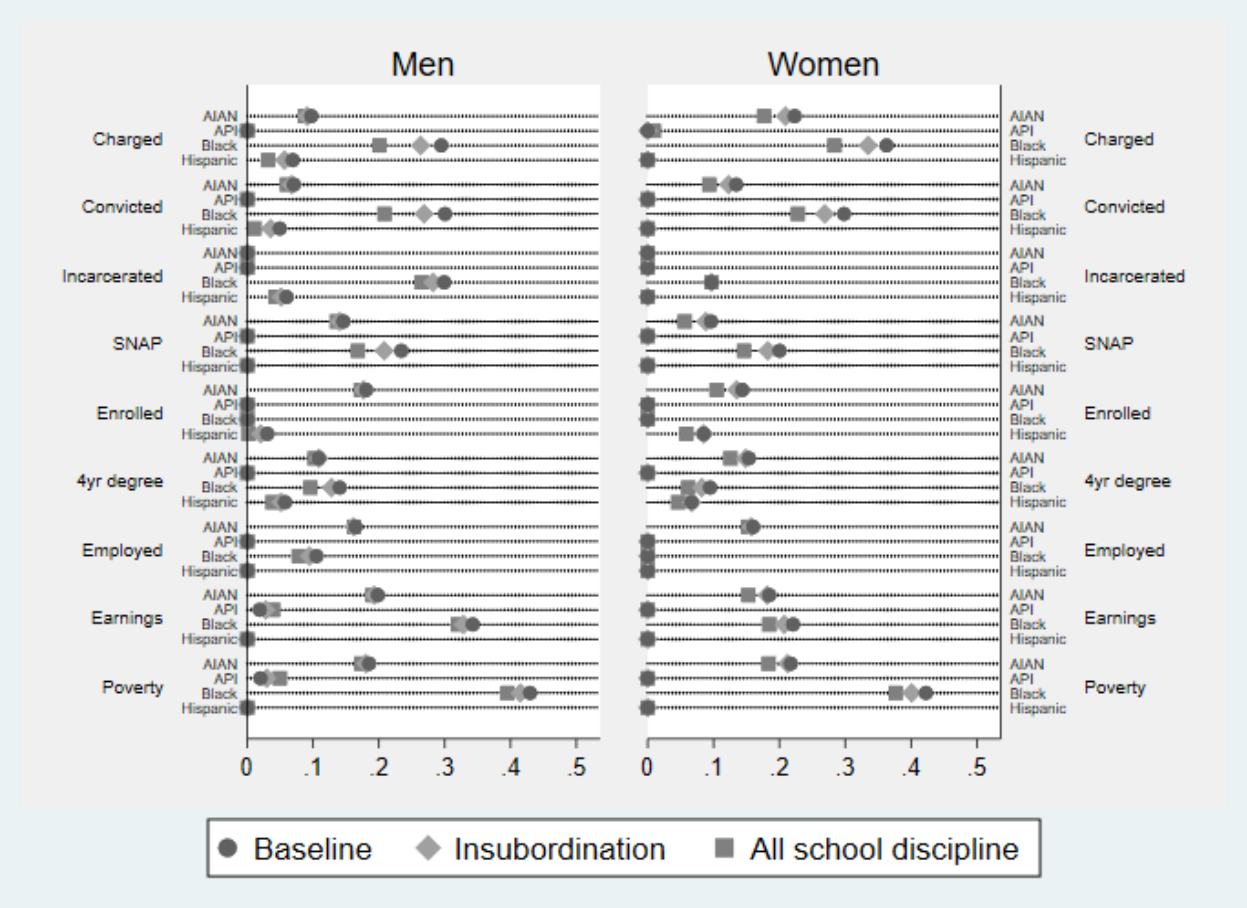


Figure 1 note: Figure 1 presents information on racial differences in young adult outcomes (relative to White students), separately for women and men. Each row reports the coefficients on different race/ethnicity indicators for different outcomes; to facilitate interpretation on a common scale we divide coefficient by the sex-specific standard deviation of the outcome variable. To enhance legibility, we report all outcomes with the same directionality (i.e., higher Black criminal justice contact and lower Black employment are both reported as being in the same direction), and as we are interested in understanding how the disadvantages experienced relative to White young adults may be traced to school discipline differences (and not whether, for example, advantages in Asian students' college degree attainment are attributable to school discipline), when a racial group does better on average on a particular outcome than Whites, we place the markers for this contrast at zero on the x-axis. The "Baseline" model (represented by circles) includes only controls for average IRS-reported household adjusted gross income during high school, native language, and school-reported economic disadvantage. The "Insubordination" models (represented by diamonds) add a control for out of school suspensions for insubordination. The "All school discipline" models (represented by squares) control for indicators of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, offense type, and weapons involved. Coefficients from models are reported in Tables S1 (men) and S2 (women); the above results are based on 40,000 students from the cohort entering high school in 2007-08.

Results presented in Figure 1.1 highlight that Black young adults experience the largest disparities. We find that approximately 30 percent of the gap between Black and White young adult criminal justice outcomes, SNAP participation, and BA receipt can be traced back to inequalities in school discipline, and that just accounting for out-of-school suspensions for insubordination reduces the Black-White disparity by approximately 10 percent. Although we find substantial inequality in young adult labor market outcomes, disparities in exposure to school discipline appear to be less relevant for understanding racial differences in this domain. This suggests that other factors are likely to be particularly important for understanding racial inequality in the labor market, and that to the degree that school discipline contributes to labor market disparities, it does so because the discipline penalty for Black students reported in Table 1 is particularly severe.

Taken together, our results highlight the important link between exposure to school discipline and a healthy transition to adulthood, while also underscoring that simply addressing school discipline gaps without attending to broader structural considerations reinforcing racial inequality outside of schools is insufficient for ameliorating racial disparities in adulthood.

APPENDIX 1

Supplemental Table S1. Percent of Students Disciplined during High School

	Disciplined	Out-of-School Suspension for Insubordination
Full Sample	27%	5%
Boys by race		
White	32%	6%
Black	48%	14%
Hispanic	46%	10%
AIAN	41%	7%
API	20%	2%
Girls by race		
White	17%	3%
Black	30%	9%
Hispanic	29%	3%
AIAN	30%	6%
API	9%	1%

Notes: Table S1 reports the proportion of people who were ever disciplined (expelled, out-of-school suspensions, and in-school-suspension) and ever out-of-school suspended for insubordination during their high school years. Percentages reported in the gender by race rows are based on the cell's subsample. For example, of the White male students, 30% were ever disciplined. The above results are based on 40,000 students in the cohort that began high school in the 2007-08 school year. AIAN = American Indian or Alaskan Native; API = Asian or Pacific Islander.

Supplemental Table S2. Differences in Early Adult Outcomes for Men by Exposure to School Discipline

	Criminal Justice			Safety Net	Higher Education		Labor Market		
	Charged	Convicted	Incarcerated	SNAP	Enrolled	4yr degree	Employed	Earnings	Poverty
	SD=.319	SD=.283	SD=.117	SD=.500	SD=.493	SD=.313	SD=.371	SD=1.179	SD=.405
Panel A. Racial Disparities without Accounting for School Discipline									
Black	0.094[a]	0.085[a]	0.035[a]	0.117[a]	0.039[a]	-0.044[a]	-0.039[a]	-0.404[a]	0.174[a]
Hispanic	0.022[a]	0.014	0.007	-0.040[a]	-0.015	-0.018[a]	0.057[a]	0.051	-0.020
AIAN	0.031	0.020	-0.009	0.073[a]	-0.089[a]	-0.034[a]	-0.061[a]	-0.234[a]	0.075[a]
API	-0.059[a]	-0.047[a]	-0.005[a]	-0.116[a]	0.171[a]	0.105[a]	0.03[a]	-0.022	0.008
Panel B. Racial Disparities after Accounting for Out-of-School Suspensions for Insubordination									
Black	0.084[ab]	0.076[ab]	0.033[ab]	0.104[ab]	0.052[ab]	-0.040[ab]	-0.035[ab]	-0.387[ab]	0.168[ab]
Hispanic	0.018[ab]	0.010[b]	0.006[b]	-0.045[ab]	-0.010[b]	-0.016[ab]	0.059[ab]	0.059[b]	-0.022[ab]
AIAN	0.029	0.019	-0.009	0.070[a]	-0.087[a]	-0.034[a]	-0.060[a]	-0.227[a]	0.073[a]
API	-0.052[a]	-0.041[ab]	-0.004[b]	-0.108[ab]	0.163[ab]	0.103[ab]	0.028[b]	-0.033[b]	0.012[b]
Panel C. Racial Disparities after Accounting for School Discipline									
Black	0.064[ab]	0.059[ab]	0.031[ab]	0.084[ab]	0.071[ab]	-0.030[ab]	-0.029[ab]	-0.377[ab]	0.160[ab]
Hispanic	0.010[b]	0.003[b]	0.005[b]	-0.055[ab]	-0.001[b]	-0.012[ab]	0.060[ab]	0.065[ab]	-0.025[ab]
AIAN	0.028	0.017	-0.009	0.068[a]	-0.085[a]	-0.032[a]	-0.060[a]	-0.224[a]	0.070[a]
API	-0.038[ab]	-0.029[ab]	-0.002[b]	-0.089[ab]	0.148[ab]	0.095[ab]	0.024[b]	-0.046[b]	0.020[b]

Note: Table S2 includes results from different Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression models. The columns represent different outcomes of interest. The rows report the coefficients on different race/ethnicity indicators (the omitted category is White). Superscripts "a" indicate that coefficients are statistically significantly different from zero ($p<.05$); Superscripts "b" (Panels B and C only) indicate that the coefficient is statistically significantly different from the analogous coefficient in Panel A ($p<.05$). The OLS specifications in all panels include controls that account for average IRS-reported household adjusted gross income during high school, native language, and economic disadvantage. Panel A reports the coefficients on different race/ethnicity indicators without controlling for school discipline exposure, Panel B reports estimates from modes that account for out of school suspensions for insubordination, and Panel C reports estimates from models that account for a broader set school discipline exposure measures (indicators of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, offense type, weapons involved. Results for earnings were estimated on the inverse hyperbolic sine of earnings. The above results are based on roughly 25,500 men from the cohort entering high school in 2007-08; as Black students are five percentage points more likely than White students to leave Oregon post-high school (21 percent vs 16 percent can be identified as living out of Oregon in a given year post-high school), our estimates of racial disparities using outcome data from Oregon (i.e., criminal justice contact and SNAP participation) may be understated.

Supplemental Table S3. Differences in Early Adult Outcomes for Women by Exposure to School Discipline

	Criminal Justice			Safety Net	Higher Education		Labor Market		
	Charged	Convicted	Incarcerated	SNAP	Enrolled	4yr degree	Employed	Earnings	Poverty
	SD=.215	SD=.171	SD=.031	SD=.499	SD=.459	SD=.390	SD=.381	SD=1.191	SD=.414
Panel A. Racial Disparities without Accounting for School Discipline									
Black	0.078[a]	0.051[a]	0.003	0.100a	0.007	-0.037[a]	0.001	-0.263[a]	0.175[a]
Hispanic	-0.002	-0.006	0.000	-0.028[a]	-0.039[a]	-0.026[a]	0.078[a]	0.070[a]	-0.055[a]
AIAN	0.048[a]	0.023[a]	-0.001[a]	0.048[a]	-0.066[a]	-0.060[a]	-0.061[a]	-0.220[a]	0.090[a]
API	-0.003	-0.005	-0.001[a]	-0.129[a]	0.089[a]	0.144[a]	0.039[a]	0.091	-0.025
Panel B. Racial Disparities after Accounting for Out-of-School Suspensions for Insubordination									
Black	0.072[ab]	0.046[ab]	0.003	0.091[ab]	0.016[b]	-0.032[ab]	0.004[b]	-0.247[ab]	0.166[ab]
Hispanic	-0.002	-0.007	0.000	-0.028[a]	-0.039[a]	-0.026[a]	0.078[a]	0.071[a]	-0.054[a]
AIAN	0.045[a]	0.021	-0.001[a]	0.044[a]	-0.062[a]	-0.058[a]	-0.060[a]	-0.216[a]	0.088[a]
API	-0.002[b]	-0.004[b]	-0.001[a]	-0.127[ab]	0.087[ab]	0.143[ab]	0.039[a]	0.088[b]	-0.023[b]
Panel C. Racial Disparities after Accounting for School Discipline									
Black	0.061[ab]	0.039[ab]	0.003	0.073[ab]	0.032[b]	-0.024[b]	0.009[b]	-0.220[ab]	0.156[ab]
Hispanic	-0.008[b]	-0.010[ab]	-0.001	-0.043[ab]	-0.027[ab]	-0.018[ab]	0.079[a]	0.085[ab]	-0.063[ab]
AIAN	0.038[ab]	0.016[b]	-0.002[a]	0.028[b]	-0.048[b]	-0.049[ab]	-0.058[ab]	-0.182[ab]	0.076[ab]
API	0.002[b]	-0.001[b]	-0.001[a]	-0.119[ab]	0.081[ab]	0.138[ab]	0.036[ab]	0.079[b]	-0.017[b]

Note: Table S3 includes results from different Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression models. The columns represent different outcomes of interest. The rows report the coefficients on different race/ethnicity indicators (the omitted category is White). Superscripts "a" indicate that coefficients are statistically significantly different from zero ($p<.05$); Superscripts "b" (Panels B and C only) indicate that the coefficient is statistically significantly different from the analogous coefficient in Panel A ($p<.05$). The OLS specifications in all panels include controls that account for average IRS-reported household adjusted gross income during high school, native language, and economic disadvantage. Panel A reports the coefficients on different race/ethnicity indicators without controlling for school discipline exposure, Panel B reports estimates from modes that account for out of school suspensions for insubordination, and Panel C reports estimates from models that account for a broader set school discipline exposure measures (indicators of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, offense type, weapons involved. Results for earnings were estimated on the inverse hyperbolic sine of earnings. The above results are based on roughly 23,500 women from the cohort entering high school in 2007-08; as Black students are five percentage points more likely than White students to leave Oregon post-high school (21 percent vs 16 percent can be identified as living out of Oregon in a given year post-high school), our estimates of racial disparities using outcome data from Oregon (i.e., criminal justice contact and SNAP participation) may be understated.

CHAPTER 2: Restorative for all? Racial Disproportionality and School Discipline Under Restorative Justice.

School discipline practices became increasingly harsh in the 1980s as schools embraced exclusionary discipline (i.e., suspension and expulsion), zero tolerance policies, and security measures (Skiba et al., 2002; Kupchik and Ward, 2014). As these practices proliferated, a large body of research examined racial disproportionality in exposure to harsh disciplinary practices, finding that Black and Latinx youth are more likely to be exposed to schools with punitive disciplinary cultures, and that Black students in particular are suspended at higher rates than their White peers (Anderson and Ritter, 2017; Fenning and Rose, 2007; Rios, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Given the link between school suspensions and juvenile justice contact (Fabelo et al., 2011), scholars have described punitive disciplinary environments as the school-to-prison pipeline, where Black and Latinx students are funneled into the criminal justice system as a result of school disciplinary practices (Wald & Losen, 2003; Hirschfield, 2009).

To address these problems, a growing number of school districts across the United States have adopted restorative justice programs. At their core, restorative justice practices promote equitable and relational learning environments through policies and practices that support students through conflicts in lieu of exclusionary disciplinary practices (e.g., suspension or expulsion). Restorative justice practices exhibit a continual community orientation that seeks to democratize school environments by equalizing the voices of students, educators, administrators, and staff in the school community (Winn, 2018; Zehr, 2002). Restorative justice has become popular in school districts across the U.S. over the last decade, and a joint 2014 report by the

U.S. Departments of Education and Justice touted the use of restorative justice as a viable intervention that would improve equity and address the school-to-prison pipeline.

Despite the descriptive promise of restorative justice, existing research on restorative justice in schools finds that this practice may reduce disciplinary inequity in some contexts (Augustine et al., 2018) but unintentionally exacerbate it in others (Hashim et al., 2018). Because restorative justice programs often coincide with normative disciplinary practices and do not completely replace them (Ispa-Landa, 2017), variation in the social contexts that surround the adoption of such programs may lead to a variety of outcomes that may reduce or exacerbate racial disparities. Moreover, recent work has shown the importance of allowing schools time to implement these programs, as fully transitioning to restorative justice is likely to take a minimum of three to five years (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2018).

This study thus adds to a growing body of literature by examining the use of restorative justice practices in Meadowview Public Schools[4] from 2008 to 2017, investigating whether the implementation of restorative justice was associated with changes in both overall and race-specific discipline rates over time. Relying on administrative records from a large urban school district, this study addresses the following questions: 1) Does the implementation of restorative justice practices in schools change exclusionary discipline outcomes? and 2) Does the use of restorative justice change racial disproportionality in exclusionary discipline? In contrast to earlier work, we capitalize on a unique rollout of restorative justice to focus explicitly on how the efficacy of restorative justice might change as programs mature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Further, we highlight the potential pitfalls of layering restorative justice programs on top

[4] Meadowview is a large urban school district in the Western United States. We use pseudonyms throughout the paper.

of traditional discipline policies, suggesting that increasing the opportunities for educator discretion without also addressing anti-Blackness may contribute to racially divergent outcomes that change over time (cf. Gavrieldes, 2014).

Consistent with prior studies, our difference-in-difference estimates show that restorative justice practices reduced overall discipline and suspension rates in the district. However, the benefits of restorative justice in Meadowview do not materialize immediately and do not benefit all students, as disciplinary outcomes improved for White, Latinx, and Asian students and remained largely unchanged for Black students. While the overall effects of restorative justice in Meadowview are promising, the adoption of these practices unintentionally widened the racial disproportionality in school discipline they were instituted to mitigate. These findings bolster those from prior studies that have demonstrated both the promise and the potential challenges in implementing school-based restorative justice programs and provide a deeper understanding of when (and for whom) restorative justice practices are effective in changing student discipline. Further, our findings suggest that the promise of restorative justice programs should not be considered separately from the racialized contexts that govern their adoption.

Schools as Punitive Spaces

Restorative justice practices in schools are often adopted in response to concerns about the punitive nature and racially disparate outcomes in exclusionary school discipline practices. As the U.S. adopted tough-on-crime policies during the War on Drugs era, school districts across the U.S. began to implement zero-tolerance policies, mandating harsh, unrelenting consequences for violation of certain school policies (Kupchik, 2010; Weissman, 2015). Although these policies were putatively adopted for safety, they were developed in the wake of racial integration and fundamentally driven by anti-Black sentiment (Dumas, 2016). The zero-tolerance era also brought attention to stark racial disparities in school discipline, as Black and Latinx students

were more likely to attend schools with the harshest practices and security measures (Fenning and Rose, 2007; Rios, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Thus, racial disproportionality in school discipline between Black and White students is striking, with Black students three times as likely to be suspended as White students, despite limited evidence that Black students participate in more delinquent behavior (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014; Shollenberger, 2015). By contrast, research on Latinx student discipline has been less conclusive, finding that Latinx students are overrepresented in school suspensions in some contexts (Skiba et al., 2011) and potentially underrepresented in others (Anderson & Ritter, 2017).

The punitive disciplinary environments of the zero-tolerance era have been characterized as an axis of social control that heightens racial inequalities in schools—particularly for Black students. Researchers have consistently found that exclusionary disciplinary practices negatively affect school climate, student engagement, mobility, and academic performance (Welsh & Little, 2018; Anderson, Ritter, & Zamarro, 2019; Gregory et al., 2010). These practices are also linked to negative out-of-school outcomes, being associated with a higher risk of drop-out (Lee et al., 2011), decrease in civic participation (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2014), and increased contact with the criminal justice system (Mittleman, 2018). Because of these outcomes, Wald and Losen (2003) characterized these school environments as part of the school-to-prison pipeline, where punitive disciplinary environments make juvenile justice contact more likely than college graduation for Black and Latinx youth. While the school-to-prison pipeline framework has not been universally accepted (see Sojoyner, 2013), there is a general consensus among scholars of race in education that exclusionary disciplinary practices are inherently rooted in anti-Blackness and are thus ineffective and ultimately exacerbate racial inequality (Fronius et al., 2019).

Restorative Justice as a Response to Discipline Disparities

In contrast to zero-tolerance policies, school-based restorative justice practices seek to build, maintain, and repair relationships to form healthy, supportive, and inclusive communities that facilitate optimal learning environments (Zehr, 2002). When conflicts arise in the classroom or in the community, restorative justice practices provide opportunities for individuals and communities to come together to repair harm in lieu of traditional punishments like suspension or expulsion (Morrison, 2003). Thus, restorative justice programs promote relationship building and rely on different forms of mediation, focus groups, and restorative circle processes to address conflicts or behavioral infractions. Along with facilitating relationship building, restorative justice programs are based on equity and social justice principles that encourage educators to address inequities and ultimately move towards transforming educational environments into democratic spaces that equalize voices of students, educators, and staff (Winn, 2018).

Because a core tenet of restorative justice programs is being responsive to the goals and needs of the local community, their operations differ between school districts and in some cases between schools within one district. While diverting students away from exclusionary discipline is a key component of many restorative justice programs, it is notably just one facet of restorative justice. Most schools adopt a continuum of practices, many of which are not directly aimed at discipline but instead towards facilitating relational and inclusive school environments (Gonzalez, 2015). In addition to specific restorative practices, schools often adopt disciplinary policy and procedural changes, and researchers have yet to disentangle the effectiveness of the individual practices, policies, and trainings associated with restorative justice. As restorative justice programs have gained traction, school districts have relied on internal workshops, community organizations, and national conferences for assistance in designing and training educators to use restorative practices in schools (Gonzalez, 2016).

While restorative justice practices have been used in schools for decades, the practices were seldomly used in schools that served high proportions of Black and Latinx students (Payne & Welch, 2015). Recently, however, many racially diverse urban school districts have embraced restorative justice practices as school districts seek interventions to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline (Gonzalez, 2016). This recent widespread trend towards utilizing restorative justice practices in diverse urban school districts provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of how school-based restorative justice programs can interrupt existing processes and racial disparities in schools. Winn (2018) highlights restorative justice as a promising approach for schools to achieve equitable and transformational change. Organizational transformation, however, is rarely straightforward and attempts may encounter structural barriers that hinder seamless implementation. Evans and Lester (2013) suggest that restorative justice practices may not impact observable student outcomes early in the implementation process, and that it may take three to five years for schools to fully transition to a restorative-oriented school culture.

Importantly, schools that integrate restorative justice into their practices typically do so as an *alternative* that exists alongside normative discipline policies, rather than as a complete *replacement* for normative discipline policies (Gonzalez, 2012). This distinction is important because integrating restorative practices within the traditional disciplinary system increases opportunities for discretion to determine the outcome of disciplinary cases. Rather than the completely new disciplinary system based on restorative principals that proponents advocate, restorative justice becomes one among many options, and school staff determine where, when, and with whom to utilize restorative justice based on their discretion and zero-tolerance mandates. This increased discretion potentially leads to challenges, as both discretion and

subjectivity contribute to racial disproportionality in school discipline and may not result in a decrease in the use of exclusionary discipline (Skiba et al., 2002; Steinberg & Locoe, 2018).

Despite this increased discretion, recent research on restorative justice in schools shows that the practices are promising for addressing disparities in school discipline. Suspension rates in Pittsburgh, Denver, San Francisco, and Oakland schools decreased after the implementation of restorative justice policies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Augustine et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2016). Whether the potential benefits of restorative justice are experienced equally by students from different racial groups and how restorative justice policies affect racial disproportionality in school discipline is inconclusive.

In the most rigorous experimental study of restorative justice practices, Augustine et al. (2018) randomly assigned restorative practices to 50% of Pittsburgh Public Schools. Examining a variety of student, teacher and school-level outcomes, Augustine et al. find that restorative practices boosted teacher reports of school climate, reduced overall rates of suspension, and reduced the Black-White suspension gap. Importantly, however, unlike many restorative justice implementations, the SaferSanerSchools Whole-School Change Program adopted in Pittsburgh implements restorative practices independent of the traditional school discipline process, so that offenses that would have received a suspension or expulsion prior to restorative justice should still receive a suspension or expulsion. As the program does not change the process once disciplinary referrals occur, we infer that the reductions in suspension rates in schools using the SaferSanerSchools program are likely attributable either to a change in student behavior or how student behavior is perceived and categorized, so that fewer incidents escalated to the point of discipline referrals.

By contrast, Los Angeles Unified School District implemented restorative practices in conjunction with a suspension ban (which aimed to eliminate suspensions for low-level infractions) and other disciplinary reforms. Hashim et al. (2018) show that suspension rates in Los Angeles declined for all racial groups, but they also find that racial gaps in school suspensions persist despite these overall declines in suspension rates. Similarly, research on Denver, focusing on students who were referred for discipline, suggests that students of all racial groups who received a restorative intervention instead of going through the traditional disciplinary process were less likely to be involved in a disciplinary incident the following semester (Anyon et al. 2016). However, as in Los Angeles, Gregory et al. (2018) suggest that restorative interventions in Denver did little to close racial gaps in suspension rates.

Despite the centrality of mitigating racial disparities in school discipline through restorative justice, existing research on restorative justice in schools thus offers conflicting insight on this question. Although restorative justice practices show promise (Gregory et al., 2016; Lewis, 2009), the extent to which they ameliorate school discipline disparities may be contextually dependent and may take time to realize. Particularly because restorative justice practices are often layered on top of other policies and may not drastically interrupt existing practice, how implementers negotiate between restorative and traditional disciplinary options can determine subsequent outcomes (Ispa-Landa, 2017). Further, as punitive discipline practices continue to operate alongside restorative justice, racialized decision-making and discretion remain pertinent – and perhaps increase in importance – in these contexts.

Although restorative justice programs are often positioned as a tool to reduce racial disparities in school discipline, it is unclear if they are ultimately successful in addressing the racialized and anti-Black processes that lead to these disparities. As educators seek to reconcile

traditional disciplinary and restorative justice logics, we might expect that creating a restorative school culture will take additional time in contexts where both are operating. We thus build on prior studies by examining the effects of restorative justice on student discipline over a five-year implementation period, paying close attention to how suspension rates shift for different racial groups over this period.

Restorative Justice in Meadowview

Meadowview Public Schools (MPS) is a large urban school district that first implemented restorative justice programs in 2008 after citywide concerns about discipline disparities became a priority for local schools. Black MPS students were suspended at rates that were more than two times that of White students and were more likely to be disciplined for disruptive offenses. In addition to districtwide goals to deemphasize suspensions, restorative justice practices were implemented to reduce the total number of exclusions (through suspension or expulsion) and reduce the number of police and juvenile justice incidents.

The restorative justice programs operate through the Alliance for Restorative Communities (ARC), a non-profit organization that employs a restorative justice coordinator to help implement restorative justice practices in schools. The restorative justice coordinators are a diverse group of non-profit staff who are extensively trained in areas such as conflict mediation, addressing inequalities in the workplace, and developing restorative justice practices for students. Coordinators also assist schools with developing an implementation plan that fit their school needs, and the specific restorative practices implemented at each school are described in the Appendix. Schools typically utilize a combination of restorative circles, training sessions for teachers and students, and in-class coaching, with elementary schools relying more heavily on relationship-building between educators and students, while middle and high schools focused

more on student voice and empowerment. The variety of practices is not uncommon, as schools often create mechanisms to promote restorative justice that administrators feel will fit the school's context and student developmental needs (Gonzalez, 2012).

Despite these differences, all restorative justice schools in MPS used restorative practices as an alternative to traditional disciplinary punishment. Typically, schools developed procedural guidelines that integrated restorative justice and relied on restorative justice coordinators to handle some disciplinary cases, with the goal of resolving issues through a restorative process before considering traditional disciplinary action. Despite the presence of restorative justice, school administrators maintained some autonomy in determining which student discipline cases were referred to restorative justice and which cases were sent through traditional disciplinary processes. In this way, restorative justice operated as a selectively applied filter in a school's disciplinary process, aimed at avoiding exclusionary student discipline while providing additional services that would facilitate relationship building and student support. The success of this filter, however, depended on the discretion of school staff referring students to restorative justice, the caseload of the restorative justice coordinator, and the willing participation of students and staff.

ARC worked with school district administrators to select schools for initial restorative justice implementation. The schools that were selected by the district were those that district officials deemed in need of restorative justice practices based on the prevalence of exclusionary discipline and racial disproportionality in those schools. The pilot restorative justice program began at a middle school during the 2008-2009 academic year, with substantial resources allocated to the development of restorative practices in the school. Based on reported success of the pilot, ARC received a grant to pilot restorative justice programs in other schools in MPS. One

K-8 school began adopting restorative justice policies mid-year during the 2010-2011 school year, with two high schools and a middle school beginning restorative justice practices at the start of the 2011-2012 academic year, and a third high school adopting restorative practices prior to the 2013-2014 school year.[5] Importantly for our purposes, the staggered rollout of the program did not depend on factors that are likely to influence the effectiveness of the program (e.g., school-specific incidents or perceptions of the program's expected effectiveness). Although we are unaware of any contemporaneous policies that would bias our results (e.g., district policy shifts targeting specific schools), as with all observational studies of educational policies, we cannot definitively rule out alternative explanations.

Data and Methods

Data

Our study uses administrative records containing student disciplinary information in MPS from the 2007-08 to 2016-2017 school years. The student-level data include demographic and academic information that are linked with school identifiers, allowing for the comparison of students in schools (and years) with and without restorative justice programs. Additionally, the discipline data include specific information about each student disciplinary incident. Within each disciplinary incident, the data include identifiers for the involved students, the type of infraction (e.g., attendance violation, fighting, behavioral issues), the type of punishment (e.g., in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension) and the length of punishment (calculated in days missing from school).

[5] Two of these schools (a middle school and a high school) later abandoned their restorative justice programs in the fall of the 2015-2016 school year. We drop observations from the years after restorative justice was discontinued in these schools. Models including these years as non-restorative justice observations yield similar findings.

To facilitate comparisons between Meadowview schools that did and did not use restorative justice practices, we drop all schools that were specialization schools (e.g., alternative schools and learning centers) or served less than two hundred students. For the purpose of this study, we only classify schools as "restorative justice" when they employ a restorative justice coordinator, received funding for restorative justice implementation, and made changes to student discipline policies. We exclude eight schools with limited restorative justice activity (i.e., they used some restorative justice practices without having an official restorative justice coordinator or policies) from our analytic sample, though supplemental analyses including these schools as non-restorative justice schools yield similar results.

*Dependent Variable*s. Our primary outcome measure is a dichotomous variable indicating whether a student was suspended in a given year.[6] We also estimate models that focus specifically on whether a student was suspended for a low-level behavioral infraction (e.g., insubordination, defiance, disruptive behavior), as previous research suggests that educator discretion may play a particularly prominent role in these suspensions (Skiba et al., 2002).

Independent Variables. Our key independent variable is the number of years that a particular school has been implementing restorative justice, which we measure using a series of dummy variables. Students in schools that never implement restorative justice are coded as zero, as are

[6] We also estimate supplemental models reported as Appendix tables in which we predict whether students: 1) received an in-school suspension (vs. those who received no suspension); and 2) received an out-of-school suspension (vs. those who received no suspension). We do not estimate models for expulsions because there were only 45 expulsions across the ten years of our study. In supplemental models (available upon request) we also examine the number of days a student was suspended and the number of times a student was suspended, in order to ensure that disproportionality in these measures follows a similar pattern. As the results are similar, we focus on whether or not a student had at least one suspension as our primary dependent variable.

students in schools that eventually implement restorative justice, but have not done so yet.[7] Although one school was in its ninth year of restorative justice by the end of our study period, we focus on the first five years of restorative justice implementation, as we have five years of implementation data in all of the schools that implemented restorative justice (coefficients for all years of implementation are reported in our Appendix tables).

As restorative justice programs were implemented in MPS to address racial disparities in school discipline between White, Hispanic,[8] and Black students, we estimate models that interact our restorative justice indicators with dummy variables for race. These models allow us to test whether restorative justice significantly reduced suspension rates for different race groups, and whether the reductions for non-White groups were different from those experienced by their White classmates. Our models include controls for student gender, socioeconomic status (as measured through free and reduced lunch status), grade level (a series of dummy variables), and special education status. As we discuss below, all models also include school fixed effects and year fixed effects. These fixed effects account for time invariant characteristics of schools, as well as districtwide year-to-year changes. Taken together, these fixed effects allow us to compare the changes in disciplinary outcomes that occur within a given school (we compare schools to themselves in years with and without restorative justice) while accounting for shared temporal fluctuations.

Table 2.1 reports demographic statistics from the 2007-08 school year separately for schools that did and did not eventually implement restorative justice programs. Table 2.1 also

[7] See Appendix materials for more details on the rollout of the program.
[8] The racial identifiers (e.g., Hispanic) were self-identified students and are based on demographic information collected by schools. The racial categories used in this paper are reflective of those in schools' administrative records.

reports the suspension rates among different groups of students in each set of schools. The data suggest that the schools that implemented restorative justice had higher proportions of Black and Hispanic students and experienced higher rates of suspensions, relative to other Meadowview schools.

Table 2.1 : ***Demographic Information and Suspension Rates in 2007-08***

	% of student body	**Suspension Rate (%)**
Panel A: Restorative Justice Schools Prior to Program Implementation		
White	53.1	10.7
Hispanic	15.4	18.3
Black	14.6	20.4
Asian	13.5	7.0
Other	3.4	16.4
Male	50.3	17.7
Female	49.7	7.4
Free/reduced price lunch	52.7	16.9
Special education student	11.0	23.3
N (students)	7,282	918
N (schools)	6	6
Panel B: Schools that Did Not Implement Restorative Justice		
White	64.9	3.9
Hispanic	16.7	4.9
Black	12.5	13.2
Asian	12.3	2.3
Other	5.9	5.9
Male	50.4	7.3
Female	49.6	2.6
Free/reduced price lunch	41.7	7.9
Special education student	12.5	10.1
N (students)	35,778	1,774
N (schools)	74	74

Note: Table displays descriptive information on students in Meadowview Schools prior to restorative justice implementation. Panel A displays students in schools that used restorative justice in those years. Panel B displays schools that never used restorative justice at any point. While these tables include information for Asian and Other race students, subsequent analyses focus on outcomes for White, Black, and Hispanic students as the program focused primarily on these groups.

Methods

We use a multivariate difference-in-difference approach to test for changes in student discipline as a school implements restorative justice practices. Intuitively, this analysis examines the difference in student suspension rates before and after the implementation of restorative justice and compares this difference with the differences in suspension rates observed in schools that did not implement restorative justice over the same period. As we note above, we focus on how suspension rates change over the first five years of restorative justice implementation, and as such, our model does not assume that restorative justice programs at different points in their implementation have similar effects. Because of the emphasis on decreasing suspension rates in Meadowview, suspension rates may have decreased during this time even if schools did not use restorative justice. Our difference-in-difference approach allows us to account for any trends as well as year-specific fluctuations that affect all schools in that year. Further, because our estimates compare students within the same school before and after implementation, they also account for stable, unmeasured characteristics of the school. To estimate the effects of restorative justice, we estimate a series of linear probability models that take the following general form:

$$Y_{ist} = \beta X_{ist} + \gamma_s + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{ist} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{ist} represents a series of binary indicators for different disciplinary outcomes for individual i in school s at time t, X_{ist} are our independent variables, including a series of dummy variables indicating the number of years a restorative justice program had been implemented at school s in time t (schools and years without restorative justice programs serve as the omitted category), as well as the control variables described above, γ_s represent fixed effects for school s, δ_t represent fixed effects for year t, and ε_{ist} is an error term. In models estimating the differential effects of restorative justice by race, X_{ist} includes interactions of our indicators for restorative

justice and race variables. Our difference-in-differences approach estimates an average treatment effect for the treated schools, which is sometimes referred to as treatment on the treated. As such, results should be interpreted as providing information about the treated schools, rather than implying that untreated schools would experience similar declines.

Statistical significance. We use randomization inference to calculate whether differences are statistically significant (Heß, 2017). Education researchers have long recognized the importance of correcting standard errors to account for the non-independence of students in schools. However, the standard cluster-robust estimators generally employed may not be well-suited for difference-in-difference estimators, particularly when the number of treated clusters is small compared to the total number of clusters (Young, 2017). Likewise, in some contexts wild bootstrapping requires sub-cluster resampling to obtain consistent estimates (Roodman 2018). By contrast, randomization inference works well in such contexts, allowing us to randomly re-assign the treatment (i.e., restorative justice programs) to different cases (i.e., schools) and to compute the probability of obtaining the observed results if restorative justice had no effect on student outcomes. Utilizing this approach allows us to estimate rigorous *p*-values that account for the clustering of students within schools as well as the other complexities of our case.

Limitations. Although this study provides novel and important insights into racial disproportionality under restorative justice, it also has several limitations. First, beyond descriptive accounts of restorative justice activity in each school contained in the Appendix, we cannot account for variation in school-level implementation fidelity. This limitation is important because even though we can use fixed effects to compare schools to themselves pre- and post-implementation, we are unable to evaluate differences in how—and to what extent—schools are engaged and integrating restorative justice into their practices, and how this might affect outcomes. Likewise, it is unclear which students received restorative justice interventions and the

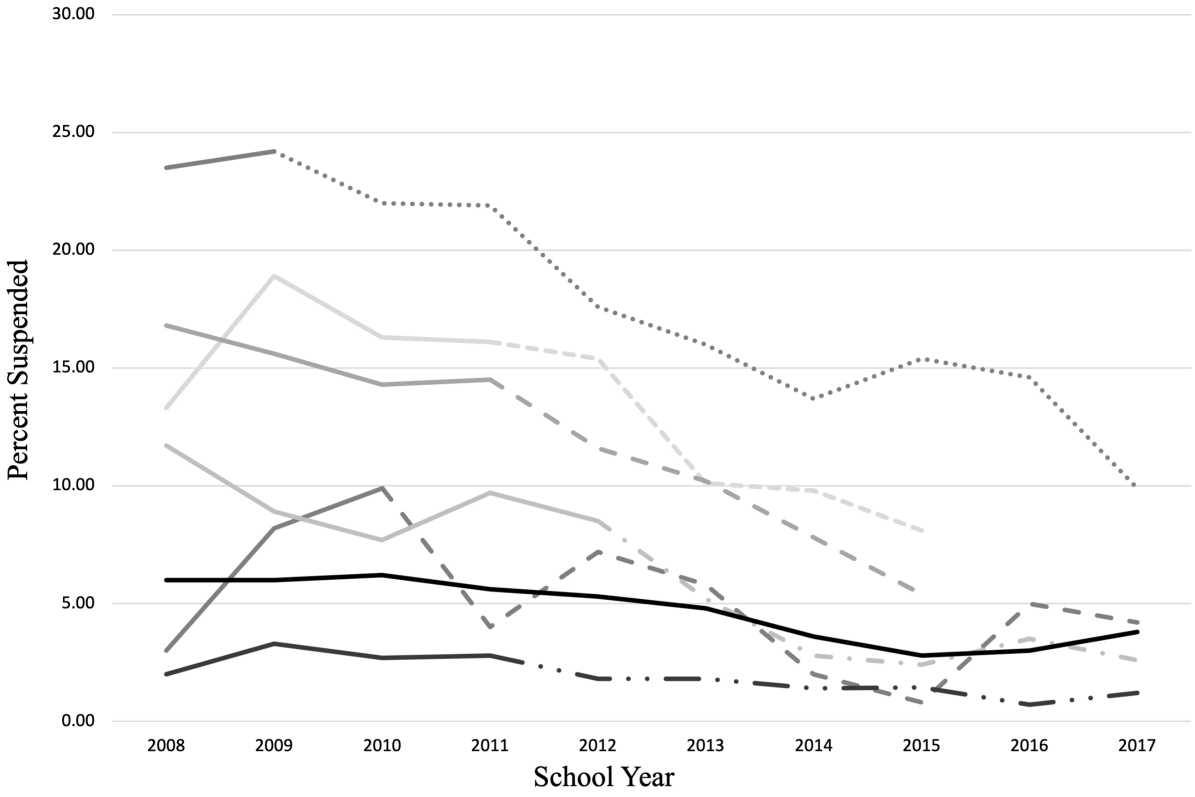
extent of the interventions they received. If collected, this data would likely provide nuance and specificity to the patterns that we find in Meadowview. Finally, while we have no reason to believe that our results are particularly idiosyncratic, as with all case studies it is unclear how broadly generalizable our findings are. Given the focus on being responsive to local contexts in restorative justice programs, and the case-to-case variation that this implies, understanding how the processes described here play out in other settings is an important avenue for future research.

Results

Figure 2.1 displays suspension rates in each restorative justice school before and after program implementation, as well as the average suspension rate for schools that did not implement restorative justice during the period covered by our data. Each gray line represents a single school, with the solid gray lines representing the pre-restorative justice observations for that school, and the dashed gray lines representing post-restorative justice suspension rates. The solid black line represents the average suspension rate across schools that did not implement restorative justice between 2008 and 2017. As is evident in Figure 2.1, we see a relatively uniform decrease in suspension rates across the schools that implement restorative justice, suggesting that suspension rate declines under restorative justice in Meadowview are not unique to specific schools.

Figure 2.1

Suspension Rates Before and After Restorative Justice Implementation



Note: Solid gray lines represent schools in years without restorative justice practices, while dashed lines represent years with restorative justice practices. The solid black line represents Meadowview schools that never implemented restorative justice.

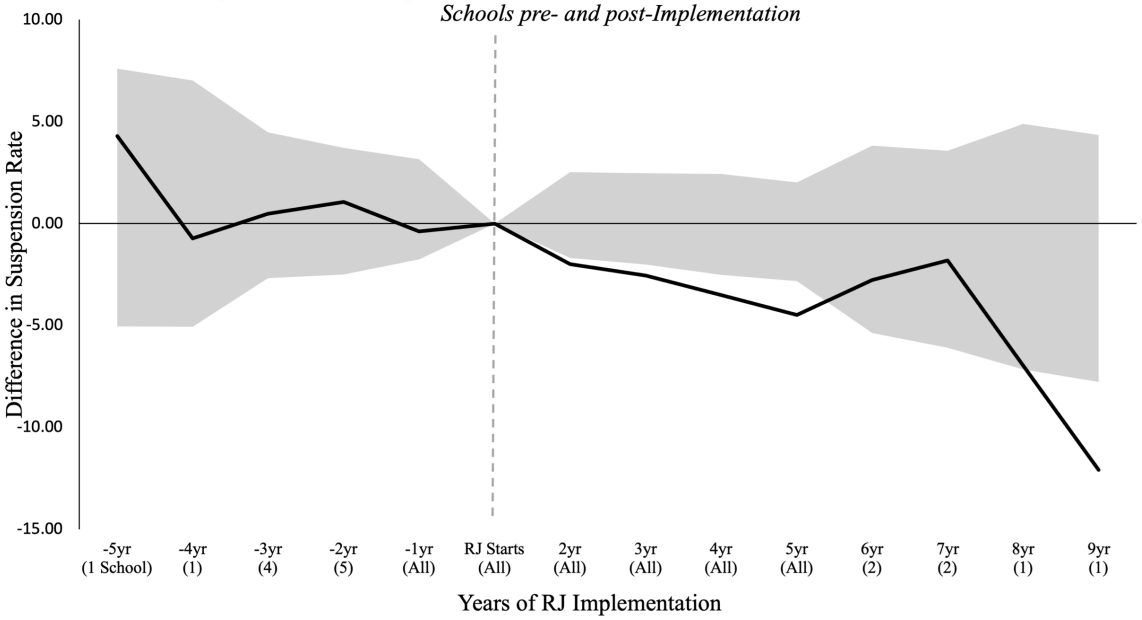
It is important to ensure that the results from our difference-in-difference models that follow do not simply reflect the fact that schools that eventually adopt restorative justice differ from the schools that do not, even before the eventual restorative justice adopters begin implementation. Figure 2.2 thus presents the results from an event study model based on our difference-in-difference specification, which allows us to compare the pre-restorative justice suspension rates in schools that eventually adopted restorative justice with the suspension rates in schools that did not adopt restorative justice. The y-axis indexes the coefficient from our event study model, which represents the degree to which the schools that eventually adopt restorative justice differ from those who never do so (see Appendix Table A1 for full model results). The x-axis indexes the year, relative to the implementation of restorative justice.

Because the six schools that implemented restorative justice did so at different points in time, we have different numbers of pre- and post-implementation years (e.g., only one school had more than three pre-implementation years, and only two schools had more than five post-implementation years); we thus include the number of restorative justice schools represented by each estimate along the x-axis. The solid black line represents the coefficient from our event study model, and the grey shaded region represents the region between the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles of the null distribution. Coefficients that fall outside this region represent differences that are statistically significant (i.e., the coefficients diverge from what one would expect if restorative justice had no effect). The results presented in Figure 2.2 suggest that pre-implementation differences are unlikely to be driving our results, as conditional suspension rates in restorative justice schools prior to implementation are not statistically significantly different from schools that never implement restorative justice, and suspension rates only begin to diverge after program implementation.[9]

[9] The lack of significant differences in the event study results reported in Figure 2.2 suggests that our modeling approach appropriately accounts for any baseline differences in suspension rates. Supplemental analyses also confirm that restorative justice is not associated with the rates at which students change schools (p=0.91).

Figure 2.2

Average Difference in Suspension Rates Between Restorative Justice and non-Restorative Justice Schools pre- and post-Implementation



Note: Figure 2 displays results from an event study model of restorative justice implementation. The solid black line represents model coefficients (i.e., the average difference between schools that did and did not implement restorative justice) and the grey-shaded region represents the region between the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles of the null distribution. Coefficients that fall outside this region are indicative of differences that are statistically significant (i.e., the coefficients diverge from what one would expect if restorative justice had no effect).

Our results in Figures 2.3-2.5 build on Figures 2.1 and 2.2 by examining how suspension rates changed in the first five years of a school's restorative justice implementation. These figures display predicted suspension rates based on our models; the corresponding model coefficients are reported in Appendix Tables A2-A4, which also contain the results from analogous models that separate in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions.[10]

Figure 3 depicts predicted probabilities from a model that estimates how suspension rates changed over time following the implementation of restorative justice programs. Specifically, the

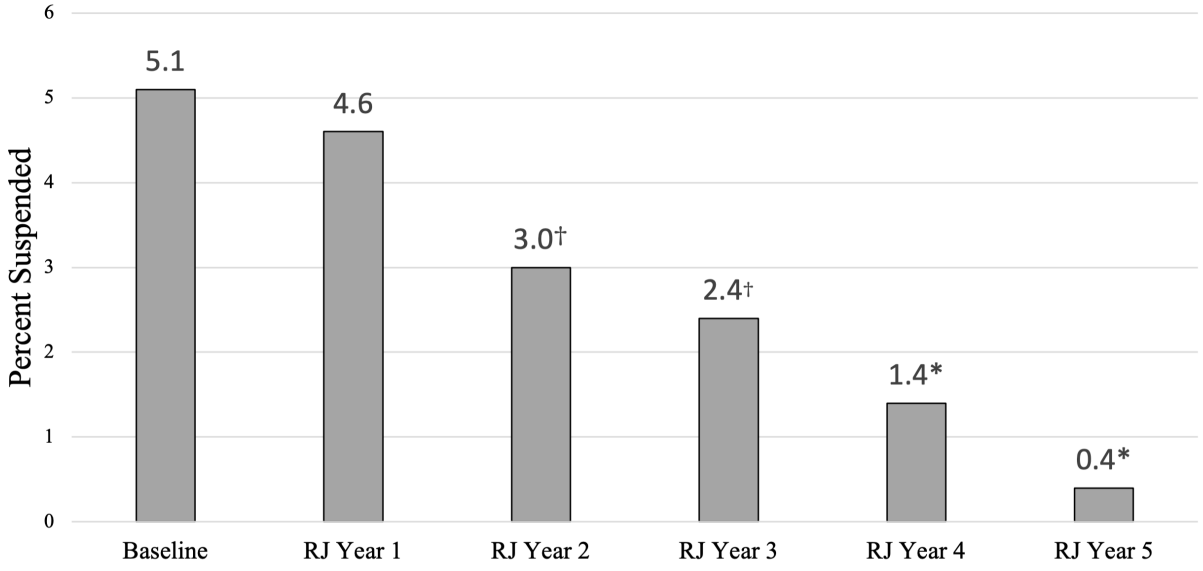
[10] We display results from the combined in-school and out-of-school suspension variable as it is indicative of total time removed from a classroom due to a disciplinary infraction. As there is more variation in in-school suspension rates, our results are mostly driven by differences in in-school suspensions.

first bar reports the percentage of students who were suspended in schools where restorative justice was not in place, and each subsequent bar reports the predicted suspension rate when restorative justice had been in place for one, two, three, four, and five years. In schools without restorative justice, 5.1% of students were suspended in any given year. We see a similar suspension rate of 4.6% in schools that are in their first year of implementation. In the second and third years of implementation, by contrast, we find suspension rates of 3% and 2.4%; the differences between these suspension rates and the suspension rates of schools without restorative justice are marginally significant ($p<.10$), suggesting that restorative justice begins to lower suspension rates in its second and third years. The final two bars indicate that suspension rates continue to decline in the fourth and fifth year of restorative justice programs, and these suspension rates are significantly different from the suspension rates in schools without restorative justice programs ($p<.05$). Our results thus suggest that restorative justice programs do not immediately lower suspension rates, but that over a period of several years, restorative justice programs can result in profound reductions in the suspension rate.[11]

[11] To ensure that our results looking at schools with established restorative justice programs or students with longer exposure to restorative justice are not being driven by a single school, we conduct supplementary analyses in which we omit each of the schools in turn and re-estimate our results. While the point estimates change slightly, this exercise confirms that our results are not driven by a single idiosyncratic school.

Figure 2.3

Suspension Rates by Length of Restorative Justice Implementation



Note: Figure 3 displays predicted suspension rates for schools in different years of restorative justice implementation. The predicted probabilities are based on model results reported in Online Appendix Table S2 and control for student socioeconomic status, gender, special education status, grade-level fixed effects, year fixed effects, and school fixed effects. Statistical significance is calculated using randomization inference. * $p<0.05$, † $p<0.10$

Figure 2.4 reports analogous findings for models predicting race-specific changes in suspension rates. Presenting race-specific results allows us to examine: 1) whether restorative justice realizes its intended benefits across different groups, and 2) whether the suspension rate reductions associated with restorative justice vary by race. Figure 2.4 thus reports two sets of significance tests, with an "A" denoting suspension rates that are significantly lower than for same-race students in schools without restorative justice programs, and a "B" denoting that the reduction in suspension rates achieved in a particular year of implementation differs from the reduction for White students in that year. We use lowercase letters to denote marginal statistically significant differences ($p<.10$). Our results for White students largely follow those observed in Figure 2.3, with the notable difference that White students' suspension rates exhibit

a marginally significant decline even when schools are in their first year of restorative justice implementation. We see a qualitatively similar pattern for Hispanic students, although the effects of restorative justice for Hispanic students are not statistically significant until years four and five of implementation. Among Asian students, by contrast, we find that suspension rates fell to zero early in the implementation of restorative justice. Thus, although the precise pattern of year-to-year reductions in suspension rates that accompanied the implementation of restorative justice varies across White, Hispanic, and Asian students, suspension rates for these students under restorative justice were substantially (and significantly) reduced from their baseline rates, and suspension rates for these students were near zero by the fifth year of restorative justice implementation.

The results for Black students diverge markedly from those observed for other groups. Notably, although concerns regarding the disproportionate suspension of Black students motivated the adoption of restorative justice programs, we find little evidence that they had their intended effect among Black students. In contrast to other groups, we find that suspension rates for Black students are not statistically significantly different from their baseline levels within the first five years of restorative justice implementation. Indeed, suspension rates for Black students in schools that were in the first three years of implementing a restorative justice program were, if anything, higher than the suspension rates for Black students in schools without restorative justice. As Black students' suspension rates in the fourth and fifth year of restorative justice implementation are lower (though the difference is again not statistically significant) than in the first three years, it is plausible that Black students may eventually realize statistically significant reductions in suspension rates as restorative justice programs mature. Nonetheless, our results

suggest that unlike their White, Hispanic, and Asian classmates, Black students in schools with restorative justice programs do not experience dramatic reductions in their suspension rates.[12] Indeed, it is noteworthy that the expected suspension rate for Black students in a school in its fifth year of restorative justice implementation (6.1%) is still slightly higher than the baseline suspension rates of White (4.6%) and Hispanic (4.9%) students.

If we conceptualize racial disproportionality as the ratio of Black and White suspension rates (i.e., relative risk), we find significant and stark differences. That is, although the five percentage point difference in the suspension rates for White (4.6) and Black (9.6) students at baseline is similar to the 5.9 percentage point gap at schools in their fifth year of implementing a restorative justice program (0.2 vs. 6.1), [13] the changes in the relative risks of suspension are substantial and statistically significant. Although Black students are just over twice as likely as White students to be suspended at baseline (9.6/4.6), in schools in their fifth year of restorative justice implementation, Black students were approximately 30 times more likely to be suspended than White students (6.1/0.2). We use randomization inference to conduct supplemental tests of

[12] Although Black students do not experience a reduction in their suspension rate, while White, Asian, and Hispanic students do, it is important to note that in most years our model coefficients for Black students are not significantly different from our coefficients for other groups. The exceptions are in year three, where the coefficient for Black students differs from the coefficients for White students (p=.061) and Asian students (p=.042).

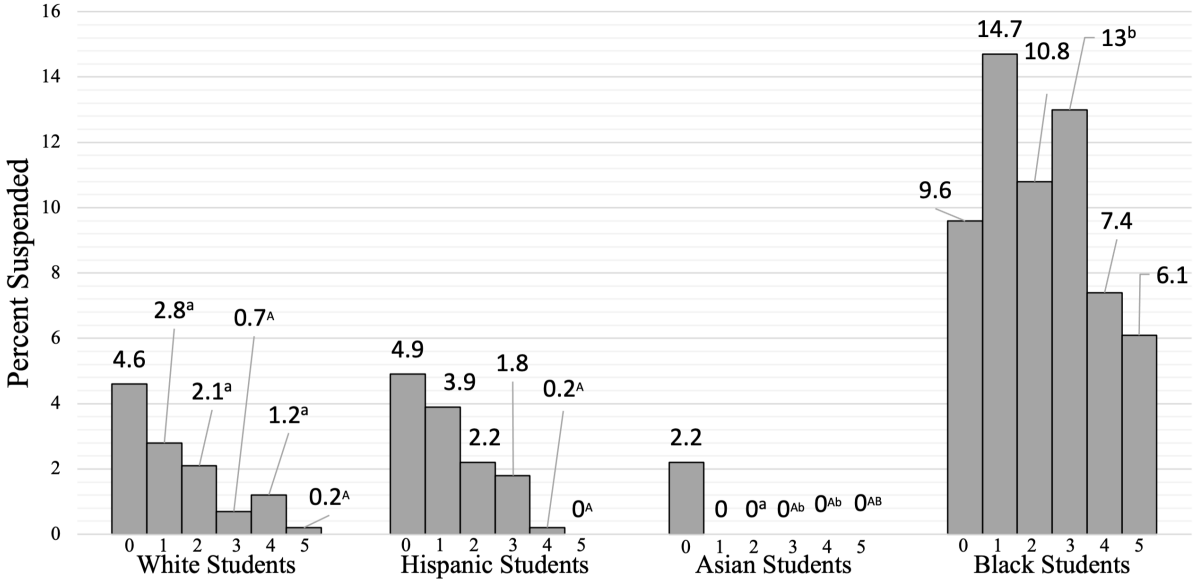
[13] Likewise, the percentage point changes in suspension rates for White and Black students are also similar and not statistically significantly different from each other. That is, the 4.4 percentage point difference between the suspension rates of White students in schools in the fifth year of implementing a restorative justice program (0.2%) and at baseline (4.6%) is similar to the percentage point change for Black students (a 3.5 percentage point decline from 9.6% at baseline to 6.1% in the fifth year of restorative justice).

these relative risk ratios, finding that Black-White disproportionality is significantly higher than one would expect in schools that have had a restorative justice program for three or more years. Likewise, the growth in disproportionality (comparing the relative risk in a given year of restorative justice implementation to the relative risk at baseline) is also statistically significant for schools that have had a restorative justice program for three or more years. These differences are driven by the decreases in the White suspension rate, which means that even if Black students are suspended at lower rates than they are at baseline, the vast majority of suspended students in the schools in their fifth year of restorative justice implementation are Black.

As we elaborate in our discussion, we interpret these results as underscoring the importance of how restorative justice is implemented. In Meadowview schools, restorative justice was implemented as a parallel disciplinary track, which introduced the potential for educator discretion in choosing who was referred to restorative justice. Although it is promising that restorative justice lowers the suspension rates of non-Black students and may eventually begin to lower Black students' suspension rates, we suspect that because incorporating restorative pathways into an existing discipline system increases the potential for educator discretion, it is unlikely to realize significant gains for Black students. Rather, as we discuss below, we believe that restorative justice is most likely to achieve its transformative potential when implemented as a replacement to the traditional ethos and practice of discipline, rather than as a supplement.

Figure 2.4

Suspension Rates by Length of Restorative Justice Implementation, Separately by Race

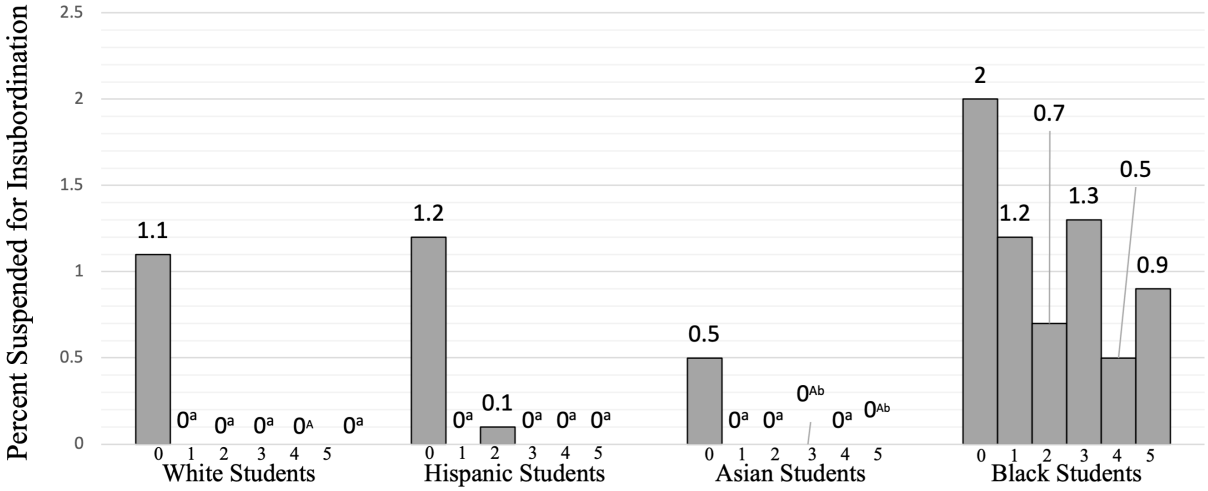


Note: Figure 4 displays predicted suspension rates by race for schools in different years of restorative justice implementation. The predicted probabilities are based on model results reported in Online Appendix Table S3, and control for student socioeconomic status, gender, special education status, grade-level fixed effects, year fixed effects, and school fixed effects. Statistical significance is calculated using randomization inference. An uppercase "A" indicates that the difference between the baseline suspension rate (year 0) for a particular race group and their suspension rate in a given year of restorative justice implementation is statistically significant (p<.05). An uppercase "B" indicates that the difference between the baseline suspension rate and the suspension rate in a given year of restorative justice implementation for a particular race group is significantly different (p<.05) from the analogous difference for White students (i.e., the interaction effect in Online Table S3 is statistically significant). Lowercase letters denote marginally significant differences (p<.10).

We build on the results presented in Figure 2.4 by examining whether we find similar patterns for offenses related to insubordination (e.g., defiance and other non-violent behavioral infractions). Although we would expect restorative justice programs to reduce all types of disciplinary incidents, reductions might be most readily apparent in incidents without zero-tolerance mandates where teacher and administrator discretion regarding discipline are greater (cf. Steinberg and Lacoe, 2018). These discretionary incidents are also important given racial disparities in these incidents and concerns that these offenses might contribute to later racial disparities (Fabelo et al., 2011). Figure 2.5 thus replicates the analyses presented in Figure 2.4, but focuses specifically on suspensions for insubordination.

Figure 2.5

Insubordination Rates by Length of Restorative Justice Implementation, Separately by Race



Note: Figure 5 displays predicted suspension rates for insubordination by race for schools in different years of restorative justice implementation. The predicted probabilities are based on model results reported in Online Appendix Table S4, and control for student socioeconomic status, gender, special education status, grade-level fixed effects, year fixed effects, and school fixed effects. Statistical significance is calculated using randomization inference. An uppercase "A" indicates that the difference between the baseline suspension rate (year 0) for a particular race group and their suspension rate in a given year of restorative justice implementation is statistically significant ($p<.05$). An uppercase "B" indicates that the difference between the baseline suspension rate and the suspension rate in a given year of restorative justice implementation for a particular race group is significantly different ($p<.05$) from the analogous difference for White students (i.e., the interaction effect in Online Table S4 is statistically significant). Lowercase letters denote marginally significant differences ($p<.10$).

We find that White, Hispanic, and Asian students' suspension rates for insubordination drop under restorative justice implementation, and that these reductions are visible already in the first year of implementation (though for all three groups this reduction is initially only marginally significant). For these students, we see that restorative justice programs eliminate suspensions for insubordination. This suggests that for non-Black students, restorative justice programs can help eliminate suspensions by changing the way that educators use their discretion for lower-level disciplinary incidents.

For Black students, by contrast, we do not observe statistically significant reductions in suspension rates for insubordination. Interestingly, although Figure 2.4 showed that the initial years of restorative justice implementation were characterized by overall suspensions rates that were if anything higher than baseline (though not significantly so), we see no evidence for an initial rise in insubordination suspensions in Figure 2.5. Although the reductions for Black students are not statistically different than those observed for White students, it is noteworthy

that Black students are the only group that does not experience a statistically significant decrease in insubordination suspensions and are the only group that continues to be suspended for insubordination in schools with restorative justice programs. Thus, while the results for insubordination suspensions are more encouraging than the results for suspensions writ large, particularly in the initial years of restorative justice implementation, they nonetheless suggest that Black students did not realize the benefits of restorative justice programs in Meadowview schools.

Discussion

From one perspective, the restorative justice practices implemented in MPS were successful: schools that implemented restorative justice saw marked decreases in their suspension rates. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Anyon et al., 2016; Augustine et al. 2019; Hashim et al., 2018) and suggest that restorative justice practices in MPS grew more effective as the programs matured. Despite the overall reduction of exclusionary discipline under restorative justice, however, the pattern of reductions observed across racial groups are striking. Although the restorative justice policies were implemented to improve disciplinary practices that were disproportionately harming Black and Latinx students, it failed to significantly reduce exclusionary discipline for Black students. By reducing exclusionary discipline for White but not Black students, restorative justice significantly increased disproportionality. While we cannot test our explanation, informal discussions with ARC staff suggest that the racial equity facet of restorative justice was slower to gain traction in Meadowview schools, which may contribute to the racial disparities we observe.

This pattern of results is perhaps attributable to two key facets of how restorative justice operated in Meadowview schools.[14] First, the autonomy of school administrators to dictate implementation may have introduced an element of discretion that may have led schools to embrace certain facets of restorative justice and not others. While allowing the school community to play an active role in determining how restorative justice will operate in their schools is common (Gonzalez, 2012), this collaborative flexibility might lead to a disconnect between the priorities and capabilities of school administrators and the restorative justice philosophy. For example, restorative justice was instituted in MPS for race-specific reasons, but informal conversations with ARC staff and a review of the district's restorative justice handbook reveals that the policies included minimal race-specific material. Thus, the extent to which a school engaged with the racial equity components of restorative justice largely depended on the willingness and discretion of school staff.

Though unintentional, using language that is race-neutral and colorblind makes it difficult for schools to implement restorative practices in ways that target the specific needs of the populations that they are being implemented to help. While racial equity was a primary goal of ARC implementors, it is possible that those messages were diluted in the policies and practices that schools embraced. Lewis (2003) details the role of colorblind ideology in furthering the advantage of White students even in schools that claimed to be racially progressive. The

[14] Symbolic compliance represents potential third explanation for our results. As with other reforms and policies, the potential for schools to symbolically adopt restorative justice while making minimal systemic changes increases when restorative practices are implemented by appending them to a traditional disciplinary system (Payne, 2008; Edelman, 1992; Dobbin et al., 1993). Given our conversations with ARC staff, and the overall suspension reductions we observe, we do not believe that this explains our results in Meadowview.

extension of advantage is far from intentional in these spaces, but the absence of race-specific language in schools results in a perpetuation of racially disparate treatment and discipline practices (Lewis and Diamond, 2016). Research in other spheres finds that identity-conscious structures — and not identity-blind structures — were positively associated with employment outcomes for people of color (Konrad and Linnehan, 1995).

The framing of restorative justice may have contributed to the structural operation of restorative justice practices in Meadowview. Karp and Breslin (2001) find that schools integrating restorative justice have different languages for restorative practices, with some that even omit the word "justice." They also found that schools often experience external and internal resistance to restorative justice, leading to substantial variation in implementation (c.f., Dusenbury et al., 2003). Moreover, the relationship between restorative justice consultants (i.e., organizations like ARC) and school implementers should be examined in future research, as the differing goals of these schools and restorative justice organizations may impact successful implementation of restorative justice programs (Song and Swearer, 2016). It is possible that the social justice frameworks typically used by restorative justice advocates like ARC might be misinterpreted, selectively used, or even rejected as schools attempt to integrate restorative justice into their existing processes and culture.

Such selective implementation may result in schools implementing restorative justice practices that differ from the original restorative justice philosophy, or that merely focus on a narrow subset of the broader goals of restorative justice. For example, a school might seek to: 1) reduce exclusionary discipline practices and supplement them with restorative practices; 2) reduce racial disproportionality in discipline and achievement outcomes; and/or 3) improve

social relationships and build community through restorative practices. While each of these three goals derive from the restorative justice philosophy, they likely require different strategies, and some goals may be easier to reach than others (e.g., reducing suspensions but not reducing racial disproportionality). As Mcluskey and colleagues (2008) show, variability in restorative justice adoption is possible, as teachers and administrators may vary in their perceptions of what it means to be "restorative."

In contexts where there is a lack of consensus about the goals of adopting restorative justice, school staff may embrace a variety of approaches that although well-meaning, do not drastically interrupt the systemic racialized processes that produce disproportionality in school disciplinary outcomes. Because anti-Black attitudes in school environments influence disparities in Black student discipline (Chin et al., 2020), taking an indirect approach to addressing racial disparities may continue to reinforce the subordination of Black students. Moreover, while restorative justice is not new, the racial equity components of restorative justice are a relatively new integration into the philosophy. This can result in what has been described as the paradox of restorative justice, whereby aracial approaches may be used in response to race-specific problems (Gavrielides, 2014). Given the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness and its role in shaping educator attitudes and racial disparities in student outcomes (Turetsky et al., 2021), it is likely that interventions such as restorative justice will struggle to help Black students if they do not directly address both systemic and interpersonal anti-Blackness.

A second factor that might help explain the racial disproportionality we observe is the implementation of restorative justice *within* the existing disciplinary system. Rather than establishing restorative justice as a system that consists of an autonomous set of norms regarding

school discipline, restorative justice practices in Meadowview are embedded within the traditional disciplinary system and are likely subject to the same processes that lead to racially disparate school discipline outcomes. The implementation of restorative justice as an appendage to the traditional disciplinary system suggests that in these schools, restorative justice is unlikely to be able to fundamentally transform disciplinary structures. Ispa-Landa (2017) highlights that restorative justice programs often coexist with other initiatives, and among them are normative disciplinary practices, zero-tolerance mandates, and increased police presence. In such contexts, it is possible that restorative justice practices become an alternative disciplinary trajectory, and that who is placed on that trajectory is informed by educator discretion in disciplinary cases.

Introducing restorative justice practices as an alternative disciplinary track likely increases the opportunities for educator discretion. For example, a restorative process discipline chart from an MPS school (see Appendix Figure 1) shows that it is still possible for students to be referred back into the traditional disciplinary system at each step of the restorative process. As increasing opportunities for discretion have been shown to increase Black-White gaps in the criminal justice system (Yang, 2015), it is likely that discretion plays a role in the outcomes that we observe. Even if this restorative disciplinary track functions optimally, the role of individual discretion remains pertinent in the initial referral to the restorative justice process. While restorative justice is a promising alternative to exclusionary discipline, personnel in restorative justice schools are not exempt from the implicit biases, differential perceived threat, and cultural dissonance that all lead to race-based disciplinary disparities in schools and elsewhere (Eberhardt et al., 2004; Levinson, 2007; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Turetsky et al., 2021).

To this end, it is noteworthy that our findings suggest that the effects of restorative justice programs change over time. While proponents of restorative justice have described the philosophy as a transformational and slow-moving process, much of the research has focused on pre/post implementation differences and examined outcomes within the first three years of implementation. Such approaches may be suitable for other school policies, but they likely do not allow schools enough time to realize the full impacts of transitioning to restorative justice programs.

In this vein, it is perhaps promising that Black students begin to experience notable, though statistically insignificant, reductions in suspension rates beginning in the fourth year of implementation. This may suggest that restorative justice practices are slower to reach Black students, but that longer-term implementations may mitigate discrepancies as schools become more familiar with restorative justice.[15] If equity-focused work manifests at a slower pace than school procedural shifts, it is possible that the final effects of restorative justice on racial disproportionality may lag for a number of years after initial implementation. As Asian and White students experienced the quickest reduction in suspension rates under restorative justice, the potential for restorative justice to mitigate discipline disproportionality in contexts like

[15] Although we want to be careful not to place undue weight on findings that are not statistically significant, the increase in the Black suspension rates in schools in their first three years of restorative justice implementation is noteworthy, and future work might examine whether it occurs elsewhere. To the degree that it is also found in other contexts, this uptick could be due to factors like implicit biases among teachers becoming more freely expressed in contexts where they believe institutional racism has been addressed (c.f., Bobo and Kluegel, 1993).

Meadowview, where implementation increased discretion, may require a longer time horizon than is typical adopted. This echoes work examining school turnaround efforts which indicates that whole-scale changes to school culture and support emerge gradually and take three or more years before improvements are fully realized (Sun, Penner, & Loeb, 2017).

Restorative justice implementers face the challenge of interrupting the decades-long organizational processes that created the school-to-prison pipeline. Any conclusions about the effectiveness of restorative justice practices in schools should thus be considered alongside the malleability of the existing racial structures both within schools and in society more broadly. Further, restorative justice was originally conceptualized as a replacement for existing punitive disciplinary practices, and as such, implementing restorative justice by layering restorative processes alongside a punitive disciplinary structure is likely to pose substantial challenges and yield unintended consequences. Particularly in policy contexts characterized by a legacy of anti-Blackness, incorporating restorative justice interventions into a disciplinary system governed by a willfully colorblind logic (or racial apathy) may struggle to improve outcomes for Black students (Mueller, 2017).

Restorative justice in MPS operated like a filter that was successful in diverting many students away from exclusionary discipline; however, the filter was not successful in transforming the underlying racial logics of punishment and anti-Blackness that place Black students at heightened risk of experiencing exclusionary discipline. While we do not attribute these trends to the core tenants of restorative justice, they are noteworthy in light of recent qualitative work that highlights the harm Black students may experience under seemingly progressive school policies (Shange, 2019). Future work should consider the ways in which

restorative justice programs are integrated into the organizational processes that are already at play in schools, as these processes are racialized and may drive inequality with or without interventions (Ray, 2019).

Conclusion

Our findings show that while the overall effects of restorative justice are promising for lowering suspension rates, they were not particularly effective in ameliorating persistent racial discipline gaps in Meadowview, and thus served to increase disproportionality. We interpret these findings not as an indictment of the restorative justice philosophy, but rather as highlighting the challenges of addressing systematic and multi-layered racialized inequalities in school discipline, even when using promising policies. The persistence of racial disproportionality under restorative justice points to the need for further evaluation of how organizational practices can influence both the structural and individual conditions under which reform efforts such as restorative justice operate. As the restorative justice framework is broadly focused on inclusion, implementers should be intentional about maintaining and emphasizing the equity components of the philosophy at the structural level. Our findings thus underscore both the promise of restorative justice practices in schools, as well as the possibility that the racial equity intentions of restorative justice can be diluted as schools integrate restorative justice into the colorblind logics that often govern their day-to-day operations.

APPENDIX 2

Table A1: Pre-trends Test for Estimates of Restorative Justice Effects

	All Suspensions
5 Years Before RJ	0.0428
4 Years Before RJ	-0.0074
3 Years Before RJ	0.0048
2 Years Before RJ	0.0105
1 Year Before RJ	-0.0038
RJ Starts	Omitted
2nd RJ Year	-0.0199
3rd RJ Year	-0.0256**
4th RJ Year	-0.0351**
5th RJ Year	-0.0448**
6th RJ Year	-0.0278
7th RJ Year	-0.0182
8th RJ Year	-0.0698*
9th RJ Year	-0.1209**
Free and reduced lunch	0.0233
Female	-0.0440
Special education student	0.0571
School Fixed Effects	Y
Grade Fixed Effects	Y
Year Fixed Effects	Y
Constant	0.0392
Observations	419956
R-squared	0.072

Note: Coefficients represent differences in student suspension rates (measured as the proportion of students who were suspended in a particular year). Statistical significance was calculated using randomization inference with 1,000 permutations of restorative justice adoption; as such we only report significance for restorative justice coefficients.
**p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10

Table A2: Difference-in-Difference Estimates of Restorative Justice Effects through Years of Implementation

	All suspensions	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension
1st RJ Year	-0.0051	-0.0074	0.0024
2nd RJ Year	-0.0213†	-0.0252*	0.0036
3rd RJ Year	-0.0275†	-0.0324*	0.0040
4th RJ Year	-0.0369*	-0.0432*	0.0047
5th RJ Year	-0.0471*	-0.0524*	0.0034
6th RJ Year	-0.0356	-0.0402†	0.0035
7th RJ Year	-0.0264	-0.0331*	0.0053
8th RJ Year	-0.0642*	-0.0762*	0.0072
9th RJ Year	-0.1152**	-0.1194**	-0.0044
Free and reduced lunch	0.0233	0.0078	0.0162
Female	-0.0440	-0.0185	-0.0269
Special education student	0.0571	0.0177	0.0420
School Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Grade Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Year Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Constant	0.0413	0.0163	0.0253
Observations	419956	407576	419956
R-squared	0.071	0.055	0.036

Note: Coefficients represent differences in student suspension rates (measured as the proportion of students who were suspended in a particular year). Statistical significance was calculated using randomization inference with 1,000 permutations of restorative justice adoption; as such we only report significance for restorative justice coefficients.
**p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10

Table A3: Difference-in-Difference Estimates of Restorative Justice Effects by Race through Years of Implementation

	All suspensions	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension
Hispanic	0.0031	0.0016	0.0018
Black	0.0511	0.0185	0.0350
Asian	-0.0235	-0.0096	-0.0145
Other Race	0.0009	-0.0004	0.0014
1st Year of RJ	-0.0178†	-0.0155	-0.0034
2nd Year of RJ	-0.0246†	-0.0307*	0.0056
3rd Year of RJ	-0.0380*	-0.0397*	0.0003
4th Year of RJ	-0.0338†	-0.0452*	0.0099
5th Year of RJ	-0.0434*	-0.0526*	0.0074
6th Year of RJ	-0.0464	-0.0628*	0.0137
7th Year of RJ	-0.0342	-0.0439†	0.0068
8th Year of RJ	-0.0464	-0.0791†	0.0276
9th Year of RJ	-0.0602	-0.0807†	0.0145
Hispanic X 1st Year of RJ	0.0079	0.0079	0.0011
Hispanic X 2nd Year of RJ	-0.0019	0.0091	-0.0111
Hispanic X 3rd Year of RJ	0.0068	0.0128	-0.0061
Hispanic X 4th Year of RJ	-0.0123	-0.0000	-0.0136
Hispanic X 5th Year of RJ	-0.0117	-0.0050	-0.0071
Hispanic X 6th Year of RJ	0.0290	0.0327*	-0.0008
Hispanic X 7th Year of RJ	0.0218	0.0128	0.0114
Hispanic X 8th Year of RJ	0.0032	0.0268	-0.0233
Hispanic X 9th Year of RJ	-0.0588	-0.0323	-0.0301
Black X 1st Year of RJ	0.0679	0.0472	0.0287
Black X 2nd Year of RJ	0.0360	0.0262	0.0139
Black X 3rd Year of RJ	0.0714†	0.0374	0.0418
Black X 4th Year of RJ	0.0108	0.0094	0.0033

Black X 5th Year of RJ	0.0080	0.0146	-0.0053
Black X 6th Year of RJ	0.0196	0.0403†	-0.0188
Black X 7th Year of RJ	0.0144	0.0268	-0.0091
Black X 8th Year of RJ	-0.0422	-0.0265	-0.0169
Black X 9th Year of RJ	-0.0686	-0.0604†	-0.0126
Asian X 1st Year of RJ	-0.0198	-0.0183†	-0.0026
Asian X 2nd Year of RJ	-0.0352	-0.0173	-0.0201
Asian X 3rd Year of RJ	-0.0393†	-0.0274†	-0.0145
Asian X 4th Year of RJ	-0.0467†	-0.0243†	-0.0253†
Asian X 5th Year of RJ	-0.0441*	-0.0280†	-0.0184†
Asian X 6th Year of RJ	-0.0956*	-0.0696*	-0.0334
Asian X 7th Year of RJ	-0.0664*	-0.0516*	-0.0209
Asian X 8th Year of RJ	0.1184†	0.0789†	0.0534
Asian X 9th Year of RJ	-0.0572	-0.0064	-0.0555
Other Race X 1st Year of RJ	0.0640**	0.0379*	0.0312*
Other Race X 2nd Year of RJ	0.0044	0.0018	0.0017
Other Race X 3rd Year of RJ	0.0375*	0.0222†	0.0173
Other Race X 4th Year of RJ	0.0084	0.0100	-0.0007
Other Race X 5th Year of RJ	0.0090	0.0036	0.0067
Other Race X 6th Year of RJ	0.0495	0.0475†	0.0062
Other Race X 7th Year of RJ	0.0424	0.0409†	0.0040
Other Race X 8th Year of RJ	-0.1061†	-0.0347	-0.0773
Other Race X 9th Year of RJ	-0.1152†	-0.0757†	-0.0450
Free and reduced lunch	0.0174	0.0056	0.0124
Female	-0.0448	-0.0189	-0.0274
Special education student	0.0546	0.0166	0.0406
School Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Grade Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y

Year Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Constant	0.0392	0.0157	0.0235
Observations	409687	397481	409687
R-squared	0.082	0.060	0.043

Note: Coefficients represent differences in student suspension rates (measured as the proportion of students who were suspended in a particular year). Statistical significance was calculated using randomization inference with 1,000 permutations of restorative justice adoption; as such we only report significance for restorative justice coefficients.
**p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10

Table A4: Difference-in-Difference Estimates of Restorative Justice Effects on Insubordination by Race through Years of Implementation

	All suspensions
Hispanic	0.0012
Black	0.0099
Asian	-0.0055
Other Race	0.0011
1st Year of RJ	-0.0160†
2nd Year of RJ	-0.0181†
3rd Year of RJ	-0.0186†
4th Year of RJ	-0.0249*
5th Year of RJ	-0.0248†
6th Year of RJ	-0.0244
7th Year of RJ	-0.0170
8th Year of RJ	-0.0395†
9th Year of RJ	-0.0219
Hispanic X 1st Year of RJ	-0.0019
Hispanic X 2nd Year of RJ	0.0081
Hispanic X 3rd Year of RJ	0.0016
Hispanic X 4th Year of RJ	-0.0015
Hispanic X 5th Year of RJ	0.0013
Hispanic X 6th Year of RJ	0.0092
Hispanic X 7th Year of RJ	0.0009
Hispanic X 8th Year of RJ	0.0368*
Hispanic X 9th Year of RJ	-0.0110
Black X 1st Year of RJ	0.0078
Black X 2nd Year of RJ	0.0049
Black X 3rd Year of RJ	0.0116
Black X 4th Year of RJ	0.0096

Black X 5th Year of RJ	0.0138
Black X 6th Year of RJ	0.0027
Black X 7th Year of RJ	0.0005
Black X 8th Year of RJ	-0.0002
Black X 9th Year of RJ	-0.0132
Asian X 1st Year of RJ	-0.0128
Asian X 2nd Year of RJ	-0.0078
Asian X 3rd Year of RJ	-0.0135†
Asian X 4th Year of RJ	-0.0057
Asian X 5th Year of RJ	-0.0115†
Asian X 6th Year of RJ	-0.0139
Asian X 7th Year of RJ	-0.0189*
Asian X 8th Year of RJ	0.0669*
Asian X 9th Year of RJ	-0.0124
Other Race X 1st Year of RJ	0.0091
Other Race X 2nd Year of RJ	0.0052
Other Race X 3rd Year of RJ	0.0016
Other Race X 4th Year of RJ	0.0012
Other Race X 5th Year of RJ	0.0055
Other Race X 6th Year of RJ	0.0147
Other Race X 7th Year of RJ	0.0191
Other Race X 8th Year of RJ	0.0083
Other Race X 9th Year of RJ	-0.0201
Free and reduced lunch	0.0035
Female	-0.0087
Special education student	0.0112
School Fixed Effects	Y
Grade Fixed Effects	Y

Year Fixed Effects	Y
Constant	0.0164
Observations	409725
R-squared	0.022

Note: Coefficients represent differences in student suspension rates (measured as the proportion of students who were suspended in a particular year). Statistical significance was calculated using randomization inference with 1,000 permutations of restorative justice adoption; as such we only report significance for restorative justice coefficients.
**p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10

Description of Restorative Justice Programs and Rollout in Meadowview

Restorative justice programs were first implemented in Meadowview in the 2008-09 school year, after citywide concerns about racial disproportionality in school discipline became a top priority for local schools. School district officials selected schools for initial restorative justice implementation, with each school using unique strategies to integrate restorative justice into their existing disciplinary processes. Schools were selected based on a variety of criteria, including district and community concerns about racial disproportionality in school discipline outcomes, schools with a history of serving higher proportions of minority and low-income students, and schools that were perceived (by district officials) to have the greatest need for climate improvement. Once selected, schools received personnel support from a local non-profit, who helped train teachers in restorative justice practices, provided ongoing teacher and administrative coaching, and provided support for student behavioral cases (including but not limited to: discipline, chronic absenteeism, and trauma-related support).

The pilot restorative justice program began at Peabody Middle School during the 2008-2009 academic year, with substantial resources allocated to the development of restorative practices in the school. Based on reported success at Peabody Middle School, the Alliance for Restorative Communities (ARC), a local non-profit engaged in restorative justice in the broader community, received a grant to begin piloting restorative justice programs in other schools in the Meadowview metropolitan area. The Ridgecrest School began adopting restorative justice policies mid-year during the 2010-2011 school year; Davenport High School, Forrest Heights Middle School, and Grotto Springs High School began restorative justice practices at the start of the 2011-2012 academic year; and Meadowview High School adopted restorative practices prior to the 2013-2014 school year. While the restorative justice practices were used as an alternative to traditional school disciplinary actions, traditional disciplinary action was still an option in each

school. Therefore, schools maintained autonomy in determining which student discipline cases to refer to restorative justice and which cases were sent through traditional disciplinary processes that include suspension and expulsion.

Although the implementation of restorative justice often varies between schools, informal interviews with ARC staff indicate that all schools followed a similar process. Schools that chose to adopt restorative justice practices first sent a select group of school staff to an introductory restorative justice training. At this two-day training, participants received an introduction to the restorative justice philosophy and also received introductory training in utilizing restorative practices to build relationships and respond to discipline cases in a non-punitive way. The trainings emphasize the use of restorative circles—an activity that can be used to build relationships in the classroom or to resolve conflicts. Participants of the training also receive a restorative justice manual that has a variety of resources for participants, including lists of restorative practices, examples of restorative discipline procedures, and a glossary for restorative justice language. Beyond this initial training, participants were encouraged (but not always required) to attend advanced trainings for specific aspects of restorative practices such as mediation, managing restorative circles, and racial equity.

Schools then worked closely with ARC staff to develop restorative justice teams in each school, tasked with integrating restorative justice into school practices and creating an implementation plan. To assist with implementation and ongoing training, ARC staff served as restorative justice coordinators in each school. Once schools established a plan of implementation, they maintained autonomy in determining how to integrate restorative justice in their schools. All schools integrated the use of restorative circles in some capacity and used the restorative justice coordinator as an additional resource in school discipline cases. Some schools

chose to create a restorative justice procedural guide (example below), which assisted school staff in decision-making in disciplinary cases. While not all schools formally drafted a restorative justice procedural guide, the restorative justice coordinators were included in the discipline process (to some degree) at each school. Further, while restorative justice coordinators were given contracts with each school, the degree to which they were able to integrate or focus on particular facets of restorative justice (e.g., relationship building, racial equity) were largely dependent on the goals and priorities of school administrators.

In addition to commonalities noted above (e.g., restorative justice coordinators who provided a restorative track for disciplinary cases), restorative justice coordinators also engaged in other school-specific restorative activities. We describe these below, along with other information relevant to understanding the restorative justice implementation at each school. To allow interested readers to link the descriptions provided below to the suspension rate trajectories reported in Figure 1, schools are listed below in descending order of their 2007-08 suspension rate.

- Davenport Middle School: RJ implemented in 2008-2009
    - First to implement RJ and received the most resources. City/county funds RJ program. They have a full-time ARC RJ coordinator at their school. Admin staff, one teacher, and one counselor have extensive RJ training.
    - RJ services include one-on-one meetings, teacher-family-administrator meetings, community service for students.
- Peabody High School: RJ Implemented in 2011-2012
    - RJ training included three staff members (Assistant Principle, attendance coordinator, counselor) who received four days of training. ARC RJ coordinator provided two meetings with Freshman teachers to discuss RJ, development of a holiday newsletter, two-day training for selected freshman students, weekly after school meetings with RJ student team, consulting with administration about RJ and discipline.
    - School ceased RJ practices in the 2015-2016 academic year.
- Meadowview Middle School: RJ Implemented in 2011-2012
    - RJ support for the school was intermittent, including ARC RJ coordinator who was $1/6^{th}$ of an FTE; three staff members attended four days of RJ training (counselor, vice principal, and security person).

    - RJ coordinator (on 1/6th assignment) provided weekly meetings with student advisory committee, on-call status, available to administrators and counseling staff one day a week. Full implementation was not reached despite strong interest from a small group of teachers.
    - School ceased RJ practices in the 2015-2016 academic year.
- Forrestview High School: RJ Implemented in 2011-2012
    - Support for RJ was limited, including ARC RJ coordinator who was 1/6 of an FTE; four staff members (vice principal, counselor, campus monitor) attended a four-day training.
    - RJ coordinator assigned to Forrestview (1/6th time) and attended weekly security meetings, on call for escalated issues, meetings with counselors, consulting with teachers, administrators, counselors, RJ-staff leader, and RJ student team.
- Evergreen School (k-8): RJ Implemented Mid-Year 2010-2011
    - RJ trainings included a four-day training for vice principal and counselor, one to twohours for teachers, professional development, some limited in class coaching.
    - RJ services include a full-time RJ specialist, 1-1 student meetings, peer mediation, teacher-student, family-administrator, and teacher-administrator meetings, classroom circles, and listening nights for parents.
    - The school decided to cancel RJ training for one year in the 2014-15 year. However, after lobbying from parents and community members, resumed RJ programming in the 2015-16 year. We treat 2014-15 as an RJ year in our models.
- Meadowview High School: RJ Implemented in 2013-14
    - RJ trainings included a four-day training for the principal, 2 vice principals, dean, and social services coordinator and yearly professional development trainings provided by the RJ coordinator.
    - RJ services include a full-time RJ coordinator from ARC, RJ teacher team, RJ newsletter and an RJ climate team.

Description of ARC and RJ Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

The Alliance for Restorative Communities (ARC) is a non-profit organization that specializes in restorative justice, conflict resolution, and racial equity. While the focus of their work in this paper is on school-based restorative justice, the organization has long served Meadowview through providing restorative support for the criminal justice system and victims of domestic violence, providing conflict resolution for community stakeholders, and offering equity training to corporations and public organizations. With a core mission of equity and social justice, the organization offers a breadth of services that aim to reach members of marginalized communities. As such, ARC employs a staff that is diverse along multiple dimensions, including race, gender, sexual orientation, educational attainment, ability and more. School-based RJ

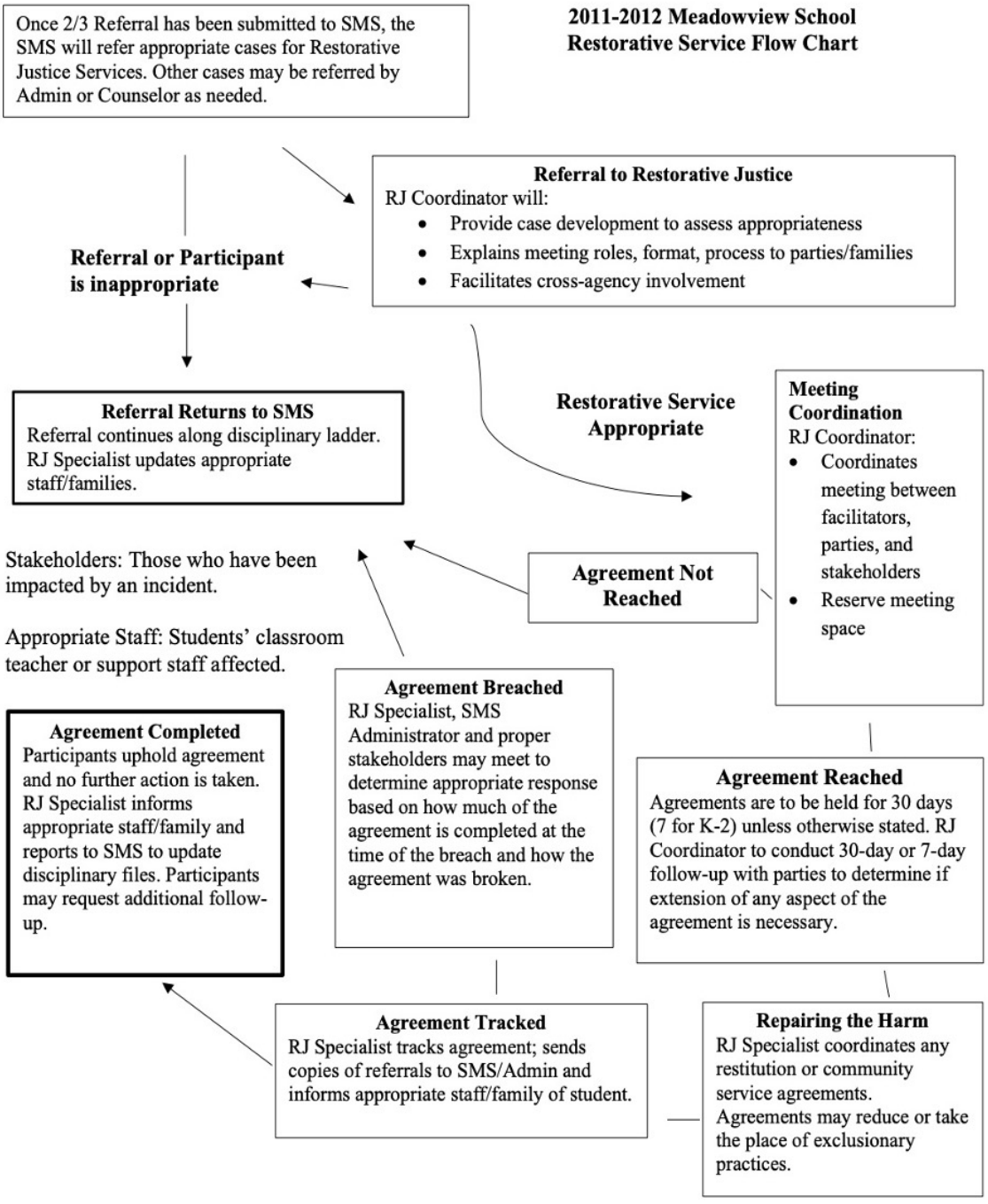
coordinators were thus comprised of a diverse group of individuals who were thoroughly trained in RJ practices, coaching, racial equity, conflict resolution, trauma-informed practices, and community building.

As mentioned above, the roles of the RJ coordinators varied between schools. Informal interviews with ARC staff indicate that RJ coordinators also provide support that falls outside of their contractual obligations. For many RJ coordinators, this included holding after-school meetings with teachers who wanted to learn more about how to incorporate RJ into their classrooms, meeting with students to address their individual needs, making family calls to check-in on absent students, and more. In this way, each coordinator served as an advocate and safe space for those most at-risk in the school community. Many of them worked far beyond their contracted hours to implement restorative justice and respond to the unique needs of each school, and often described instances where they challenged cases of bias or inequity.

Example of Restorative Justice Procedural Chart

The following chart is an example of restorative justice disciplinary procedures in one of the schools. Each school followed similar procedures, with slight changes to fit school-specific needs. Although disciplinary cases were funneled into the restorative track, they could be returned to the traditional disciplinary system at each step in the process.

Appendix Figure A1: School Restorative Justice Procedural Chart
Note: Chart is recreated to protect the identity of the school and organization.



CHAPTER 3: Restorative Practices as an Educator-Focused Intervention: Implications for Implementation and Racial Disproportionality in Student Discipline.

Introduction

Restorative Practices (RP) have become more prominent in US schools over the past decade in hopes of improving school climate and addressing school disciplinary disparities. At their core, RP programs promote equitable and relational learning environments through policies and practices that support students through conflicts in lieu of traditional disciplinary responses (i.e. suspension or expulsion). As RP programs have gained prominence, an increasing amount of research has shown that they are associated with promising impacts on school disciplinary outcomes and school climate (Augustine et al., 2019; Fronius et al.; 2019). Thus, RP programs have been increasingly adopted in recent years by a wide range of school districts and have been embraced as a potential intervention for the school-to-prison nexus.

While RP programs show promise, researchers have noted the varying impact that the programs have had on racial disparities in schools—particularly for Black students (Davison et al., 2021; Hashim et al., 2018). Because RP programs often coincide with normative school policies and do not completely replace them (Ispa-Landa, 2018), variation in the social contexts and implementation strategies that surround the adoption of RP may lead to a variety of outcomes that may reduce or exacerbate racial disparities. Particularly in schools where Black students are at extreme risk for experiencing exclusionary discipline, the success of an RP program will likely depend on the extent to which RP becomes embedded in the normalized culture, practices and policies in a school.

This study thus adds to a growing body of literature by examining the use of RP in Oakwood Public Schools (OPS)[16], a large urban school district in the midwestern United States from 2016-2020, investigating how the programs impacted the disciplinary experiences of Black students. Relying on administrative and RP implementation records, this study addresses the following questions 1) Did the implementation of RP change disciplinary outcomes for Black students? and 2) If so, are these disciplinary changes associated with certain facets of RP implementation? Building on earlier work that highlighted the potential pitfalls of layering RJ programs on top of traditional anti-Black discipline policies (see Davison et al., 2021), we capitalize on an educator-focused rollout of RP that focused on addressing relational and equity issues (including anti-Blackness) in their implementation rather than explicitly focusing on lowering suspension rates.

Our difference-in-difference estimates show that while RP has yet to change overall discipline rates in OPS, they have reduced the use of exclusionary discipline in response to insubordination offenses for Black students. While Black students remained at higher risk for exclusionary discipline than their classmates, supplementary analyses show that these reductions for Black students are strongest in schools that provided higher amounts of equity-focused student programming, youth leadership activities and were engaged with student families. These findings contrast to prior studies in that we do not see broader changes in student discipline rates under RP, but we do observe a reduction in racial disproportionality for insubordination offenses—which is a key contributor to racial disproportionality in student discipline (Ritter & Anderson, 2018). Furthermore, our results suggest that varying models of RP implementation

[16] We use pseudonyms throughout this paper. Oakwood Public Schools is a diverse large urban school district in the Midwestern United States.

may yield varying results that impact both the prevalence and disproportionality in school discipline.

The Racial Landscape of Restorative Practices in Schools

Restorative practices (RP) are often adopted in response to concerns about the punitive nature and racially disparate outcomes in exclusionary school discipline practices. In these environments, schools commonly rely on zero-tolerance policies that mandate harsh consequences or removal from school for violating school policies (Kupchik, 2010; Weissman, 2015). Although these policies were putatively adopted for safety, they were developed in the wake of racial integration and fundamentally driven by anti-Black sentiment (Dumas, 2016). As a result, a disproportionate number of Black youth have schooling experiences where discipline and surveillance are predominant (Fenning and Rose, 2007; Rios,2011; Shedd,2015). In these environments, Black students are at heightened risk of being punished for minor infractions and experience more severe punishments for behavior violations such as defying authority or disrupting instruction (Okonofua and Eberhardt, 2015; Blake et al., 2011).

Thus, racial disproportionality in school discipline between Black and White students is striking, with Black students three times as likely to be suspended as White students, despite a lack of evidence that Black students participate in more delinquent behavior (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014; Shollenberger, 2015). These disparities not only cause academic harm, but exacerbate inequality in later life outcomes as exposure to school discipline is associated with decreased civic engagement, increased criminal justice contact, lower earnings and are less likely to complete college (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Davison et al., 2021).

Because these structural and interpersonal processes are counterintuitive to supportive educational environments, many school districts have adopted restorative practices in hopes of

improving school climate and ameliorating racial disparities in student outcomes. In contrast to zero-tolerance policies, schools that adopt restorative practices (RP) seek to build, maintain, and repair relationships to form healthy, supportive, and inclusive communities that facilitate optimal learning environments (Zehr, 2002). When conflicts arise in the classroom or in the community, RP provide opportunities for individuals and communities to come together to repair harm in lieu of traditional punishments like suspension or expulsion (Morrison, 2003). Thus, restorative practices promote relationship building and rely on different forms of mediation, focus groups, and restorative circle processes to address conflicts or behavioral infractions. Along with facilitating relationship building, restorative justice programs are based on equity and social justice principles that encourage educators to address inequities and ultimately move towards transforming educational environments into democratic spaces that equalize voices of students, educators, and staff (Winn, 2018).

Because a core tenet of restorative practices is being responsive to the goals and needs of the local community, their operations differ between school districts and in some cases between schools within one district. While diverting students away from exclusionary discipline is a key component of many programs, it is notably just one facet of RP. Most schools adopt a continuum of practices, many of which are not directly aimed at discipline but instead towards facilitating relational and inclusive school environments (Gonzalez, 2015). In addition to specific restorative practices, schools often adopt disciplinary policy and procedural changes, and researchers have yet to disentangle the effectiveness of the individual practices, policies, and trainings associated with RP. As RP programs have gained traction, school districts have relied on internal workshops, community organizations, and national conferences for assistance in designing and training educators to use restorative practices in schools (Gonzalez, 2016).

While RP programs have been used in schools for decades, the practices were seldomly used in schools that served high proportions of Black and Latinx students (Payne & Welch, 2015). Recently, however, many racially diverse urban school districts have embraced restorative justice practices as school districts seek interventions to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline (Gonzalez, 2016). This recent widespread trend towards utilizing restorative justice practices in diverse urban school districts provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of how school-based restorative justice programs can interrupt existing processes and racial disparities in schools. Winn (2018) highlights RP as a promising approach for schools to achieve equitable and transformational change. Organizational transformation, however, is rarely straightforward and attempts may encounter structural barriers that hinder seamless implementation. Thus, Evans and Lester (2013) suggest that RP programs may not impact observable student outcomes early in the implementation process, and that it may take three to five years for schools to fully transition to a restorative-oriented school culture.

The potentially non-linear process of implementing RP is particularly relevant because schools typically integrate restorative practices into their existing practices—meaning that they must coexist with punitive practices (e.g. exclusionary discipline) and rarely, if ever, completely replace them (Gonzalez, 2012). This distinction is important because integrating RP within the traditional disciplinary system poses potential challenges that could impact the outcome of discipline cases. Rather than a completely new environment, RP can become one among many options, and school staff determine, where, when and with whom to utilize RP based on their discretion and zero-tolerance mandates. Because of this, it is important to not only consider *if* a school district is implementing RP but *how,* as variation in implementation strategies and local context could lead to a variety of outcomes.

Recent research on RP is both promising and reflective of the importance of local context in evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention. Suspension rates in Pittsburgh, Denver, San Francisco, and Oakland schools decreased after the implementation of restorative justice policies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Augustine et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2016). While these benefits are positive, recent studies suggest that the impact of RP on racial disparities may be contextually dependent as the findings vary and at times conflict.

In the most rigorous experimental study of restorative justice practices, Augustine et al. (2018) randomly assigned restorative practices to 50% of Pittsburgh Public Schools. Examining a variety of student, teacher and school-level outcomes, Augustine et al. find that restorative practices boosted teacher reports of school climate, reduced overall rates of suspension, and reduced the Black-White suspension gap. Importantly, however, unlike many restorative justice implementations, the SaferSanerSchools Whole-School Change Program adopted in Pittsburgh implements restorative practices independent of the traditional school discipline process, so that offenses that would have received a suspension or expulsion prior to restorative justice should still receive a suspension or expulsion. As the program does not change the process once disciplinary referrals occur, we infer that the reductions in suspension rates in schools using the SaferSanerSchools program are likely attributable either to a change in student behavior or how student behavior is perceived and categorized, so that fewer incidents escalated to the point of discipline referrals.

By contrast, Davison, Penner & Penner (2021) show that restorative justice practices drastically decreased suspension rates for non-Black students, but had virtually no impact on disciplinary outcomes for Black students which resulted in an increase in racial disproportionality under restorative justice programs. Similarly, Hashim et al. (2018) show that

suspension rates in Los Angeles declined for all racial groups, but they also find that racial gaps in school suspensions persist despite these overall declines in suspension rates. Research on Denver, focusing on students who were referred for discipline, suggests that students of all racial groups who received a restorative intervention instead of going through the traditional disciplinary process were less likely to be involved in a disciplinary incident the following semester (Anyon et al. 2016). However, as in Los Angeles, Gregory et al. (2018) suggest that restorative interventions in Denver did little to close racial gaps in suspension rates.

These studies all reflect the current landscape of RP in schools. While it is becoming abundantly clear that RP programs show potential to shift school disciplinary outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), the variation in impact on racial disparities suggests that the particular content and strategies that districts use in RP implementation matter. Particularly because RP programs are often layered on top of other policies and initiatives, how implementors negotiate between restorative and traditional disciplinary options can determine subsequent outcomes (Ispa-Landa, 2017). Further, as punitive discipline practices continue to operate alongside restorative justice, racialized decision-making and discretion remain pertinent – and perhaps increase in importance – in these contexts.

Because of this discretion, the particular focus of RP interventions in each context is deserving of further attention. While school districts may adopt RP with similar goals and philosophical principles, the target of RP implementation can vary, and this variation may dictate which outcomes are impacted by RP. For example, some school districts implement RP and focus specifically on changing school policies, some focus on changing student behavior, while others target educator behavior or a combination of all three. As a result, how school districts implement RP becomes vitally important for understanding what happened in practice and which

subsequent outcomes we should examine to evaluate RP in that context. In certain environments that focus on shifting discipline policy, it is perhaps unsurprising that restorative interventions are associated with declines in suspension rates but may struggle to reduce racial disproportionality; as racial disparities are exacerbated by—not conflated with—punitive discipline practices. Particularly because schools are racialized organizations (Stewart, Garcia & Peterson, 2021; Ray 2019), how school districts approach RP implementation and who the interventions target (e.g. educator, student or community behavior) likely has major implications for how racial disparities shift (or do not shift) after RP implementation.

Our study builds on previous research by examining how Black students experienced school discipline under an RP program that was implemented as an educator-focused intervention. In doing so, we pay particular attention to the implementation goals and practices of this RP program to make sense of subsequent outcomes. We focus on the outcomes of Black students because existing research has shown that this group is most at-risk for continuing to experience heightened discipline even after the implementation of RP or other school disciplinary interventions. Further, we specifically examine how the use of RP impacted how Black students experienced exclusionary discipline for defying authority, a behavioral infraction that is not enforced by zero-tolerance mandates but instead mostly by educator discretion. These cases provide a unique opportunity to examine how RP impacts these inherently racial processes, as educator bias and perceptions have been shown to impact how they interpret Black student "misbehavior" (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Liiv, 2015; Glass, 2013).

Restorative Practices in Oakwood

Oakwood Public Schools (OPS) is a diverse large urban school district in the Midwestern United States. The decision to pilot RP resulted from negotiations to establish a 2015-17 contract

between the educators' union and the school district. At the time, school climate and discipline were a key priority of both groups, driven primarily by ongoing racial disparities in disciplinary responses, unsuccessful district-mandated attempts to reduce the number of suspensions, and a few serious behavioral incidents that had received extensive press coverage.

The district and the teacher's union agreed to jointly convene a steering committee of local community-based restorative practitioners and district and union representatives and provide funding for a RP coordinator to support efforts among the pilot sites through professional development and technical assistance. Second, the district agreed to financially support RP pilots in six schools, with up to $150,000 for each of three years (beginning in 2016-17) to create and implement site-based RP plans. Schools applied to participate and were selected to be pilot schools based on: a) commitment to RP principles; b) 75% educator approval; and c) commitment to RP implementation, with shared focus on community building and repair of harm[17]. At the time of this analysis, six schools had completed the initial three years of pilot program funding to implement RP[18].

The district also embraced a version of RP that was focused on integrating RP into the entirety of the school environment. In this model, known as Whole School Restorative Practices, schools aim to transform their environments to be relationally-oriented rather than punitively-oriented (McCluskey, 2018; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). To do so, implementors wanted to

[17] Repair of harm refers to practices that are designed to address any ongoing community or interpersonal issues that may cause issues in the classrooms or school writ large. This can mean disagreements amongst staff and students, student disciplinary cases, or providing opportunities for atonement if a member of the community is harmed by someone's actions.

[18] One school was initially selected for RP implementation but later largely ceased the practices. As such, we drop this school from our core analyses. Supplemental analyses show that this school did not observe the same impacts as the remaining 5 schools that continually implemented RP.

focus-first on educators and the systems that govern their responsibilities rather than on changing student outcomes. In this way, implementors relied on a systems change model that maintained that if the system and educators within that system could embrace restorative practices, it would facilitate an environment through which student behavior and achievement could change.

In practice, RP implementation varied between schools. This variation depended on the developmental needs of students, the malleability of existing practices (e.g. the ability to integrate RP programming into the school schedule or requirements), training needs for educators and other student needs. For example, one elementary school utilized daily restorative circles and a Cool Down Room, where students could go to complete activities and speak with a staff member should they not be able to participate in class. One middle school focused on leading community and content circles during homeroom periods and focused on repair of harm activities should students get into trouble. While one high school prioritized student-led restorative circles that provided students with leadership opportunities and the ability to play an active role in the school community. Additionally, each school worked with district officials to develop an implementation plan for the integration of RP practices in school disciplinary cases, and developed a training schedule for educators. Lastly, each school designated an existing teacher to serve as an RP Coordinator, who would be tasked with meeting the implementation, training, and student intervention needs in their building.

In contrast to other restorative justice initiatives, RP implementation did not include formal disciplinary policy changes or procedures that were consistent between schools. While the RP coordinator was responsible for responding to student disciplinary cases as-needed, schools hoped to integrate RP within their standard practices rather than requiring the RP Coordinator to serve as another mode of discipline within the school. In this way, RP may not

have impacted the number of students that were referred to the office, but hopefully provided administrators with other tools and strategies to address student behavioral cases. Because of this, implementors viewed student discipline as one of many key areas of focus in the day-to-day implementation of RP and thus observed patterns may not be fully reflective of the impact of the programming[19].

Data and Methods

Our study primarily uses administrative records containing student disciplinary information in OPS from the 2012-13 to 2019-2020 school years. The student-level data include demographic and academic information that are linked with school identifiers, allowing for the comparison of students in schools (and years) with and without RP programs. The discipline data include specific information about each disciplinary incident, with identifiers for the involved students, type of infraction (e.g., defiant behavior, fighting), type of punishment (e.g., dismissal, suspension) and the length of punishment (calculated in days missing from school).

In addition to the disciplinary records, we also utilize implementation scores that were collected each year of RP implementation[20]. While not direct measures of program fidelity, these scores, which range from 1 to 4 (with 4 being the highest rating) were collected to get a sense of how each school was progressing in certain areas of their plan for RP implementation. The scores were collected with four key components in mind; leadership, culture, relational learning and relational accountability. The leadership score was an assessment of the extent to which RP implementation was supported by school administrators and was calculated based on both

[19] See Appendix materials for more details on program activities and implementation components.

[20] See Appendix materials for more details on Implementation Scores and criteria.

advocacy and structural supports for RP, as well as stability (e.g., administrator turnover). The culture score is determined by a school's integration of RP into their normative principles and paradigms (e.g., staff buy-in to RP, administrative support, trainings etc.).

Relational learning scores were calculated based on a school's adherence to implementing the facets of RP that were designed to shift school culture such as the prevalence of community building circles, circles that addressed critical content (e.g., issues within the community or school), youth engagement (e.g., providing opportunities for student leadership and expression) and family engagement activities. Finally, relational accountability scores were determined based on how RP was utilized to handle disciplinary cases, which take form in restorative impulse (e.g., the extent to which a school responds to infractions with RP) and repair of harm processes (e.g., opportunities for atonement and reintegration into the classroom). While we do not use these scores as measures of program fidelity, the variation allows us to examine if certain facets of RP implementation were associated with the overall program effects that we observe.

For the purpose of our study, we give the RP classification to schools that were selected for RP implementation, given the funding to implement the program and were successful in integrating RP within their day-to-day operations. We exclude one school that was selected for RP implementation but was unable to successfully integrate the program (and subsequently did not continue to receive funding), and supplemental analyses including this school as a non-RP school yield similar results. To facilitate comparisons between schools that did and did not implement RP, we worked with district officials to select a subset of schools that were similar both demographically (i.e. served similar racial, language and socioeconomic compositions) and

in school disciplinary outcomes (i.e. had similar office referral and suspension rates) prior to RP implementation.

Dependent Variables

Our primary outcome measures are a series of dichotomous variables indicating whether a student was dismissed (e.g., sent home from school for 1 day or less) or suspended in a given year. We also estimate models that focus specifically on whether a student experienced dismissal or suspension for defying authority and other low-level behavioral infractions (e.g., insubordination, disruptive behavior), as previous research suggests that Black students are particularly at-risk of being removed from school for these infractions (Skiba et. al, 2002). In OPS, about 2.6 of every 4 students (65%) dismissed for defiance of authority were Black in the year preceding RP implementation. As such, we pay particularly close attention to Black student experiences under RP by estimating each model with Black students as the reference group.

Independent Variables

Our key independent variable is a dichotomous indicator indicating that a school was using RP in a given year. Students in comparison schools that never implemented RP are coded as zero, as are students in schools that eventually implement RP but have not done so yet. As RP programs were implemented in OPS in-part to address the overrepresentation of Black students in school discipline, we estimate models that interact our RP indicators with dummy variables for race. These models allow us to test whether RJ significantly reduced discipline rates for different race groups, and specifically examine if Black students continued to experience school discipline at higher rates than their peers. In subsequent models, we replace the dichotomous RP variable with a variable for implementation scores. For each implementation variable, students in

comparison schools are coded as 0, while students in RP schools are coded from 1 to 4 based on the score that a school received in a given year.

Our models include controls for student gender, special education status, English language learner status, and school-wide percent free and reduced lunch status. We also include school fixed effects and term (measured in semesters) fixed effects. These fixed effects account for time invariant characteristics of schools—particularly relevant in 2020 because of the transition to virtual learning at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic[21]—as well as districtwide year-to-year changes. Taken together, these fixed effects allow us to compare the changes in disciplinary outcomes that occur within a given school (we compare schools with themselves in years with and without RP) while accounting for shared temporal fluctuations.

Table 3.1 reports demographic statistics from the 2015-2016 school year separately for schools that did and did not eventually implement RP programs. Table 3.1 also reports the dismissal rates among different groups of students in each set of schools. The data suggest that the schools that implemented RP had very similar racial compositions and dismissal rates as the comparison schools—with Black students being overrepresented in dismissals.

[21] Because of the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, we measure time in terms (Fall and Spring for each year) to account for disruptions caused by the onset of virtual learning in the final year of the study period. While additional models indicate that these findings do vary by effect size and statistical significance between terms, we report a weighted average of the entire study period because of concerns over small sample sizes (small number of disciplinary cases in some terms, particularly by race). Because we account for these disruptions with term fixed effects, we do not worry that our results are driven by artificially low disciplinary cases in the Spring of 2020. Likewise, our analyses show that the strongest reductions in defiance of authority dismissals for Black students occurred in the Spring and Fall of 2019—the two terms preceding the transition to virtual learning.

Table 3.1: ***Demographic Information and Suspension Rates in 2015-2016***

	% of student body	Suspension Rate (%)
Panel A: Restorative Practices Schools Prior to Implementation		
White	14.8	3.5
Latinx	15.5	1.6
Black	27.2	16.1
Asian	38.2	.05
Multi-Race	3.1	6.5
Male	53.8	7.0
Female	46.2	1.9
Special education student	15.8	14.4
N (students)	6,930	257
N (schools)	5	5
Panel B: Schools that Did Not Implement Restorative Practices		
White	13.9	2.1
Latinx	16.2	4.0
Black	30.1	14.6
Asian	34.1	.07
Multi-Race	3.6	8.6
Male	51.8	6.9

Female	48.2	3.6
Special education student	15.2	13.0
N (students)	21,185	932
N (schools)	12	12

Note: Table displays descriptive information on students in Oakwood Schools prior to RP implementation. Panel A displays students in schools that used RP in those years. Panel B displays schools that never used RP at any point.

Methods

We use a multivariate difference-in-difference approach to test for changes in student discipline after a school implemented RP. Intuitively, this analysis examines the difference in student discipline rates before and after the implementation of RP and compares this difference with the differences in discipline rates observed in schools that did not implement RP over the same period. Therefore, our results indicate a weighted average of the effects of being in an RP school over the course of the four years of implementation.

Because of the emphasis on decreasing discipline rates in OPS, discipline rates may have decreased during this time even if schools did not use RP. Our difference-in-difference approach allows us to account for any trends as well as term-specific fluctuations that affect all schools in that year (e.g. a transition to virtual learning). Furthermore, because our estimates compare students within the same school before and after implementation, they also account for stable, unmeasured characteristics of the school. To estimate the effects of RP, we estimate a series of linear probability models that take the following general form:

$$Y_{ist} = \beta X_{ist} + \gamma_s + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{ist} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{ist} represents a series of binary indicators for different disciplinary outcomes for individual i in school s at time t, X_{ist} are our independent variables, including a dummy variable indicating whether RP had been implemented at school s in time t (schools and years without RP serve as the omitted category), as well as the control variables described above, γ_s represent fixed

effects for school s, δ_t represent fixed effects for term t, and ε_{ist} is an error term. In models estimating the differential effects of restorative justice by race, X_{ist} includes interactions of our indicators for restorative justice and race variables. Our difference-in-differences approach estimates an average treatment effect for the treated schools, which is sometimes referred to as treatment on the treated. As such, results should be interpreted as providing information about the treated schools, rather than implying that untreated schools would experience similar declines.

Statistical significance. We use randomization inference to calculate whether differences are statistically significant (Heß, 2017). Education researchers have long recognized the importance of correcting standard errors to account for the non-independence of students in schools. However, the standard cluster-robust estimators generally employed may not be well-suited for difference-in-difference estimators, particularly when the number of treated clusters is small compared to the total number of clusters (Young, 2017). Likewise, in some contexts wild bootstrapping requires sub-cluster resampling to obtain consistent estimates (Roodman 2018). By contrast, randomization inference works well in such contexts, allowing us to randomly re-assign the treatment (i.e., RP programs) to different cases (i.e., schools) and to compute the probability of obtaining the observed results if restorative justice had no effect on student outcomes. Utilizing this approach allows us to estimate rigorous *p*-values that account for the clustering of students within schools as well as the other complexities of our case.

Limitations. Although this study provides important insights into the impacts of RP in OPS, it also has several limitations. First, beyond descriptive accounts of RP activity in each school gathered through interviews with implementors, we cannot reliably determine which students in our RP schools participated in specific RP programming or interventions. If collected, this data would likely provide nuance and specificity to the patterns we observe in OPS as we could examine how RP is operationalized with individual students. Further, we are unable to observe

the impact of this work beyond the disciplinary data that we utilize—meaning that we cannot fully capture the impact of RP that is not documented through traditional school processes. For interventions like RP, this means that quantitative studies using administrative data are only one part of the picture, and should not be interpreted as being fully reflective of the scope of RP in OPS. Thus, the findings that follow should be interpreted

Results

While our focus initially centered around overall dismissal and suspension rates, our initial models show that RP programs have not yet impacted student suspension rates ($p < .47$) or dismissal rates ($p < .54$) during the first 4 years of implementation[22]. Supplemental models show that dismissal rates are approaching statistical significance ($p < .11$) in the 2 terms (Spring 2019 and Fall 2019) preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, but additional progress and program maturity are unobservable because of these disruptions.

Instead, we focus our discussion of changes that we do observe for instances of defiance of authority—which are a key axis of disproportionality in student discipline. Further, we only estimate models that look at dismissals for this infraction because they make up an overwhelming majority of exclusionary discipline for insubordination (i.e. if a student is removed from school for defying authority, over 95% of those students are dismissed rather than suspended). Because exclusionary discipline is a generally rare occurrence, estimates of defiance authority suspension rate changes are statistically underpowered and therefore unreliable.

The results that follow examine the extent to which we observe defiance of authority dismissal rates changes for students in RP schools, and examines how these changes were associated with variation in RP implementation. Figure 3.1 displays a weighted average of defiance of authority dismissal rate changes by race in RP and comparison schools during the

[22] Additional models show that RP has not impacted student referrals to the office ($p<.55$), the amount of days that student are suspended ($p<.23$), or the number of times that students are suspended or dismissed in one year.

first four years of implementation (with full model estimates provided in Supplemental Table 1). The solid bars represent defiance of authority dismissal rates for students in comparison schools, while the dashed bars represent defiance of authority dismissal rates for students in RP schools. While the overall rate of student dismissals did not change through RP implementation, we do observe stark reductions in the defiance of authority dismissal rate for Black and Multi-race[23] students in RP schools. In RP schools, Black students were dismissed for defiance of authority at a rate of 2.5%, which is a sizable 40 percent less than their comparison schools during the same period. Similarly, multi-race students experienced a defiance of authority dismissal rate of 1.6%, which is about 43 percent lower than the comparison school rate of 2.8%. While these rate changes for Black students are marginally statistically significant in comparison to Black students at comparison schools, they are statistically different from rate changes that White students experienced during the same period. By contrast, White, Latinx and Asian students do not experience defiance of authority dismissal rates in RP schools that are statistically different from comparison schools[24].

[23] We are currently unable to identify the race of multi-race students with specificity. While Oakwood city demographics suggest that many of these students may be partially Black and demographic data suggests that Multi-race students experience school discipline most similar to Black students than any other identifiable racial group; we are unable to draw any specific conclusions about these students and cannot consider them as a homogenous group.

[24] Supplemental analyses show that these observed changes do not coincide with an increase in dismissals for non-defiance of authority infractions.

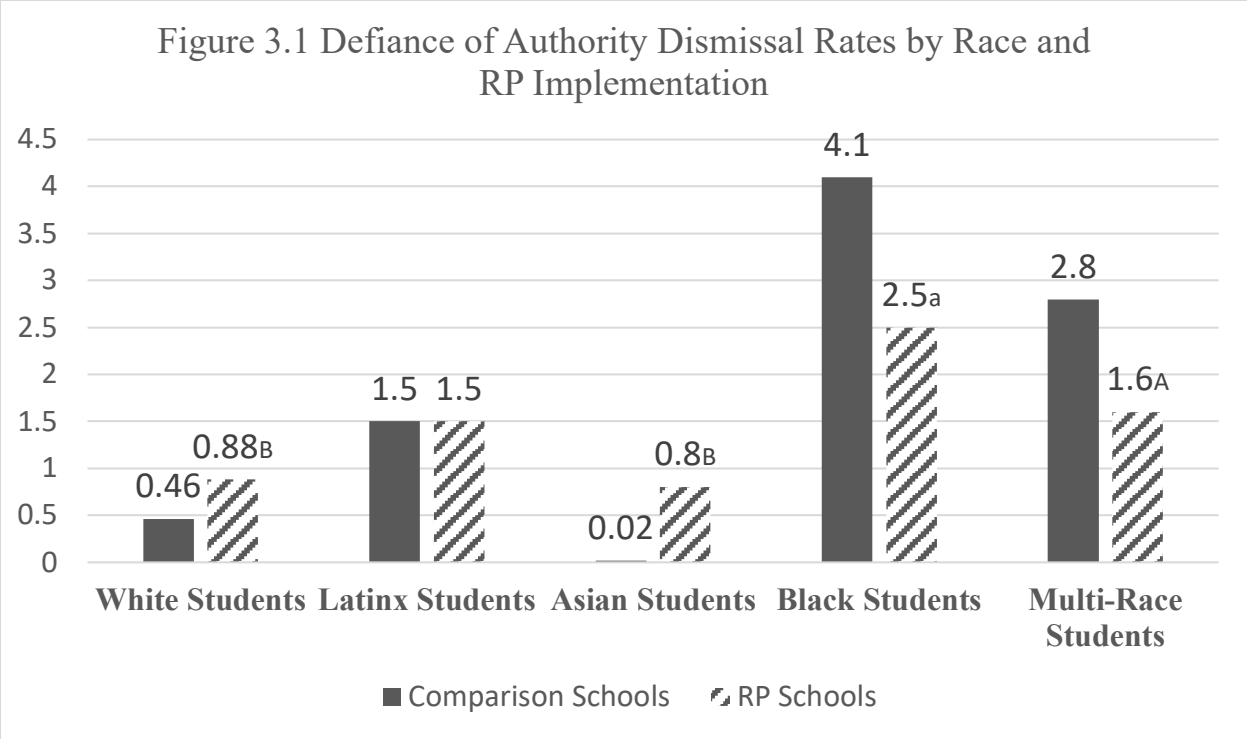


Figure 3.1 displays predicted probabilities of insubordination dismissals between 2017-2020. An "A" next to a racial group indicates that their RP school rate is statistically different from that same racial group in comparison schools; while a "B" indicates that the gap between a particular race group and Black students is statistically significant. Lower case letters indicate marginal statistical significance.

These changes are notable and suggest that RP programs have changed how educators respond to defiance of authority cases. Supplemental models show that Black and Multi-race students are not less likely to be sent to the office for defiance of authority in RP schools ($p < .33$), but instead are not sent home at the same rates as students in comparison schools. While Black students are still overrepresented in this outcome, these differences are reflective of a reduction in disproportionality in defiance of authority dismissals. If we conceptualize racial disproportionality as the ration of Black and non-Black defiance of authority dismissal rates (i.e. relative risk), we find significant and stark differences. In comparison schools, Black students were about 10 times more likely than White students (4.1/0.46), 2.7 times more likely than Latinx students (4.1/1.5) and about 205 times more likely than Asian students (4.1/0.02) to experience a dismissal for defying authority. By contrast, Black students in RP schools were about 2.8 times more likely than White Students, about 1.67 times more likely than Latinx

students, and about 3.2 times more likely than Asian students to experience the same outcome. As we expand on in the discussion, we interpret these results as underscoring the importance of the processes in RP schools that allowed educators to both react and respond to these instances without exclusionary discipline.

We build on these results by examining how defiance of authority dismissal rates for Blacks students varied by implementation scores in RP schools. The results of these models, shown in Table 3.2, should be interpreted as associations to different facets of RP implementation in OPS and not as causally attributable to any specific practices. The discussion that follows highlights the associations that were statistically significant, but does not suggest that other facets of RP implementation are unimportant or less deserving of attention. Further the effect sizes displayed in Table 3.2 should be interpreted in multitudes of 4, which correspond with implementation score ranges from 1 to 4.

Table 3.2: Estimates of Defiance of Authority Dismissals by Race and Restorative Practices Implementation Scores								
	Leadership	Restorative Culture	Family Engagement	Youth Engagement	Restorative Impulse	Repair of Harm Activities	Content Circles	Community Building Circles
Defiance of Authority Dismissals	-0.0022+	-0.0025	-0.0058+	-0.0030*	-0.0025	-0.0017+	-0.0040**	-0.002
	-0.0013	-0.0016	-0.0029	-0.0012	-0.0015	-0.001	-0.0013	-0.0014
White	-0.0179	-0.0179	-0.0179	-0.0179	-0.0179	-0.0185	-0.0179	-0.0179
	-0.0037	-0.0037	-0.0037	-0.0037	-0.0037	-0.0038	-0.0037	-0.0037
Latino	-0.0134	-0.0134	-0.0134	-0.0134	-0.0134	-0.014	-0.0134	-0.0134
	-0.0032	-0.0033	-0.0032	-0.0032	-0.0032	-0.0033	-0.0032	-0.0033
Asian	-0.0214	-0.0214	-0.0214	-0.0215	-0.0214	-0.0221	-0.0214	-0.0214
	-0.0052	-0.0052	-0.0051	-0.0051	-0.0051	-0.0052	-0.0051	-0.0052
American Indian	-0.0097	-0.0097	-0.0097	-0.0096	-0.0097	-0.0098	-0.0096	-0.0097
	-0.0045	-0.0045	-0.0045	-0.0045	-0.0045	-0.0044	-0.0045	-0.0045
Multi-Race	-0.0096	-0.0096	-0.0097	-0.0096	-0.0096	-0.0103	-0.0095	-0.0096
	-0.0022	-0.0022	-0.0022	-0.0021	-0.0021	-0.0024	-0.0021	-0.0021
White X Implementation	0.0008	0.0011	0.0029	0.0012	0.001	0.0012*	0.0018	0.0007
	-0.0011	-0.0013	-0.0024	-0.001	-0.0013	-0.0006	-0.0013	-0.0012
Latinx X Implementation	0.0012	0.0017	0.0046	0.0015	0.0018	0.0013*	0.0013	0.0014
	-0.0014	-0.0015	-0.0032	-0.0016	-0.0015	-0.0005	-0.0019	-0.0014
Asian X Implementation	0.0014	0.0022	0.0048	0.0023	0.0022	0.0015*	0.0028	0.0016
	-0.0015	-0.0018	-0.0043	-0.0015	-0.0018	-0.0006	-0.0018	-0.0016
Native American X Implementation	-0.0008	-0.0008	-0.0024	-0.0014	-0.0006	0	-0.0016	-0.0006
	-0.0014	-0.0015	-0.0031	-0.0012	-0.0017	-0.0008	-0.0015	-0.0014
Multi-Race X Implementation	0.0011	0.0011	0.0038+	0.0009	0.0009	0.0013+	0.0009	0.0008
	-0.0007	-0.0008	-0.0021	-0.0006	-0.0008	-0.0008	-0.0008	-0.0006
Female	-0.0036***	-0.0036***	-0.0036***	-0.0036***	-0.0036***	-0.0036***	-0.0036***	-0.0036***
	-0.0005	-0.0005	-0.0005	-0.0005	-0.0005	-0.0005	-0.0005	-0.0005
English Language Learner	-0.0063***	-0.0063***	-0.0063***	-0.0063***	-0.0063***	-0.0062***	-0.0063***	-0.0063***
	-0.0017	-0.0017	-0.0017	-0.0017	-0.0017	-0.0017	-0.0017	-0.0017
Special Education Status	0.0160***	0.0160***	0.0160***	0.0160***	0.0160***	0.0160***	0.0160***	0.0160***
	-0.0025	-0.0025	-0.0025	-0.0025	-0.0025	-0.0025	-0.0025	-0.0025
Grade Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
School Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Term Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Constant	0.0421***	0.0421***	0.0423***	0.0421***	0.0422***	0.0428***	0.0420***	0.0421***
	-0.0093	-0.0093	-0.0093	-0.0092	-0.0093	-0.0094	-0.0092	-0.0093
Observations	468821	468821	468821	468821	468821	468821	468821	468821
R-squared	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03

The results from our supplementary models indicate that an increased score in the use of restorative content circles and youth empowerment initiatives had the strongest reduction in defiance of authority dismissal rates for Black students. Each unit increase in implementation score for youth empowerment was associated with a .003 reduction in defiance of authority dismissal rates for Black students. Likewise, each unit increase in implementation score for content circles was associated with a .004 reduction in defiance of authority dismissal rates for Black students. Taken together, schools who were awarded a score of 4 for either category were associated with a 1.2% reduction (youth empowerment) and 1.6% reduction (content circles) in Black student suspension rates. These reductions are noteworthy because these are two facets of RP programming that may provide opportunities for educators to build relationships with students that may encourage them to perceive or respond student behavior differently. As we elaborate on in the discussion, the districts operationalization of both youth engagement activities and content circles may have encouraged practices that have shown promising potential to improve student-educator relationships and school climate, which may partly be observed in this facet of school discipline.

Similarly, though only marginally statistically significant, an increase in score for family engagement, repair of harm circles and leadership stability also were associated with a reduction in defiance of authority dismissal rates. Models examining associations between scores for restorative culture and community building circles were statistically insignificant. While these results are not causal, they underscore the relevance of how restorative practices were implemented in OPS and provide nuance to the broader findings that we observe. Because of the emphasis on thinking of RP as an educator-focused intervention, it is striking that schools that scored higher in content circles, youth empowerment and family engagement experienced the largest declines in defiance of authority dismissal rates. These findings are noteworthy because they are facets of restorative practices that are indicative of a deepening connection between students, educators and their families that may impact how school staff are perceiving instances

of defying authority and giving them tools to address these instances without punitive discipline. While we cannot observe the direct impact of these activities on the psyche of educators and students, it is possible that these types of activities facilitate a school environment where behaviors are both perceived and treated differently. As a result, the students who were most at-risk of experiencing exclusionary discipline for defying authority have benefited the most from RP.

Discussion

The impact of RP in OPS during the first four years of implementation was nuanced. While RP had yet to shift overall rates of exclusionary discipline, we did observe substantial reductions for Black students in dismissals for defying authority relative to students in comparison schools. As a result, while the overall prevalence of student discipline has not yet changed, our results show that disproportionality has begun to narrow for these highly discretionary behavioral offenses. These results build on prior studies that have documented a reduction in racial disproportionality after the implementation of restorative interventions (Augustine et. al, 2019), and somewhat differ from studies that have shown overall discipline rate changes but increased or unchanged racial disproportionality (Davison, Penner & Penner, 2021; Hashim et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2016). Further, models that examine how our findings are associated with different facets of RP implementation suggest that youth engagement activities and restorative content circles were associated with stark reductions in defiance of authority dismissal rates.

These findings underscore important components of both the goals of RP programs and how schools choose to locally implement RP. While RP programs are becoming more widespread, the specificity of RP programming seems to be malleable to local context and school needs (Gonzalez, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al.,2020). This malleability likely means that RP functions quite differently between school districts and sometimes within one district. Unlike restorative interventions that implemented specific school disciplinary policy or procedural

changes (see Davison, Penner & Penner, 2021; Augustine et al., 2019; Hashim et al., 2018), RP implementation in OPS did not include overt disciplinary changes. As such, it is potentially unsurprising that we do not observe widespread changes in these outcomes because the district hoped that the prevalence of school discipline would change *after* widespread school cultural shifts rather than through policy changes. Given prior work that documents the limits of relying on such policy shifts to achieve transformation, it is noteworthy that we observe promising changes to Black student defiance of authority dismissal rates.

As proponents of RP advocate for system-wide school cultural transformation, our findings suggest that prioritizing whole-school cultural changes along with procedural changes may be effective in reducing racial disproportionality. Particularly because the issue of race (and racism) remains pertinent under RP, how schools address how race plays a role in school disciplinary responses is just as important as the policies that are in place. Ray (2019) offers a theory of racialized organizations that defines organizations as racialized if they 1) enhance or diminish agency of certain racial groups, 2) legitimize unequal allocation of resources, 3) allow whiteness to function as a credential, and 4) decouple race from existing inequalities. Building on this theory, Stewart, Garcia and Peterson (2021) position K-12 schools as racialized organizations, whereby racial inequality is reinforced through policies (like discipline, language and tracking) and practices (interactions between students, teachers and staff).

Because RP programs are implemented within the context of existing localized school norms and processes, they are inherently racialized interventions that increase discretion in decision-making. While prior work suggests the potential pitfalls of discretion in restorative interventions (Gavrielides, 2014; Davison, Penner and Penner, 2021), it is perhaps possible that the culprit is not discretion itself but rather *how* schools utilize discretion under RP to improve or exacerbate existing racialized processes. Moreover, the outcomes associated with RP implementation are likely to be in-part a reflection of the extent to which school staff critically

engage with racial processes (like punitive school discipline) and can integrate restorative principles into their day-to-day operations.

By being educator-focused, RP implementation in OPS intervened in the decision-making process by encouraging educators to consider their perspectives and their students' perspectives differently—which may have impacted their perceptions of student behavior. Given recent work documenting how anti-Black sentiment drives educator attitudes and racial disparities in student outcomes (Turetsky et al., 2021; Chin et al., 2020), it is unlikely that these attitudes or outcomes will change without being directly challenged or addressed. As such, it is possible that focusing on a combination of the actors within schools (i.e. educators, students and administrators) as well as the structure of schools (i.e. policies, practices and procedures) is necessary to have RP programs that both mitigate racial disparities and reduce the prevalence of school discipline.

Further, Okonofua and colleagues (2020) show that schools may take multiple approaches to mitigating racial bias amongst educators and that these approaches—in tandem—are not necessarily linear or straightforward. These interventions may include top-down mandates that impact decision-making, policies that provide structural diversions to mitigate bias, and relational interventions. While these approaches have shown inconsistent results by themselves, they have shown promise in mitigating anti-Black bias when implemented in tandem. Evidence from an experimental study shows that educators under these combined interventions were less likely to label students as troublemakers, interpret misbehavior as a pattern, and expect future misbehavior (Okonofua et al., 2020).

While these results are promising, they suggest that "success" of an intervention like RP is likely to depend on a multitude of factors and will likely take time to manifest in each context of implementation. In contrast to programming that may rely on an implementation science approach that continually measures fidelity to a model (Franks and Schroeder, 2013), restorative interventions are commonly more fluid to respond to local needs. As such, we interpret our

findings in OPS as being indicative of a continual process that may have varying impacts over time. Although recent work has suggested that full implementation of RP may not occur for three to five years (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), it is possible that even this wide-ranging timeline may heavily depend on local context and stability. While RP in OPS did not adhere to a rigid implementation framework or timeline, implementors did emphasize certain components of the RP philosophy that schools were accountable to during each year of implementation. In the absence of a rigid implementation framework for most RP programs, it is thus necessary to first understand what transpired during RP implementation and how these practices may be continually evolving before determining impact.

In this vein, it is noteworthy that a reduction in defiance of authority dismissal rates for Black students were associated with youth engagement activities and restorative content circles. Because of the district's emphasis on impacting the educator-student relationship prior to thinking about widespread disciplinary policy changes, these two activities may have provided the strongest opportunities to impact educator perceptions of student behavior. Winn (2018) argues that schools that transition to a restorative culture can provide more opportunities for student voice in a way that further democratizes the school space. In these spaces, students are seen as vital contributors to the school community in a way that disrupts the strict hierarchy of punitive school environments. If internalized by educators, it is possible that both what they perceive as defying authority—and what they consider as an appropriate response—has shifted under RP.

Further, informal interviews with district officials suggest that restorative content circles were a practice designed to allow educators to introduce or reinforce content that is explicitly connected to the backgrounds of their students. While this could include culturally relevant curriculum topics, it could also include topics that educators feel could have personal relevance for some students. These activities are notable considering prior work that shows that such opportunities for student voice can strengthen the student-educator relationship and allow

students and educators to see each other beyond the roles that they occupy (Ferguson et al., 2011; Fielding, 2011; Mitra, 2003). By facilitating these connections, it is possible that these content circles provide another medium through which the hierarchical nature of the educator-student relationship is softened, which may allow opportunities for sharing power and shifting normative culture within the classroom (Sandwick, Hahn & Ayoub, 2019; Gregory et al., 2016). While not completely observable with quantitative data, our findings suggest that these facets of RP implementation in OPS played a meaningful role in how schools both perceived and responded to the behavior of Black students.

More broadly, our findings underscore the importance of highlighting the specific implementation nuances of restorative interventions in future studies. While RP can lead to varying outcomes, the specificity of which strategies, practices or policies lead to the most promising outcomes is unclear. Particularly because RP is often layered on top of other policies or initiatives, understanding the core components of successful RP programs should be a priority in future work. Moreover, our work draws attention to the importance of the philosophical and resource nature of RP implementation, as a key component of RP adoption in OPS was educator buy-in (of 75%) and guaranteed funding for the first four years. Because RP programs are an ambitious intervention, future work should focus on how both financial and human capital resources may contribute to the efficacy of such programs. As RP programs mature, it is also necessary to not only determine which practices are most effective but how they may sustain once in place.

Conclusion

Our findings show that while RP implementation did not coincide with widespread changes in student suspension and dismissal rates, it did substantially reduce the rate that Black students were dismissed for defying authority. Though promising, we interpret these findings as being indicative of a continual implementation process and not as fully reflective of the impact

of RP in OPS. As the guiding principles of RP are broadly focused on inclusion, our work highlights the importance of implementing a holistic, whole-school approach that challenges standard practice and provides opportunities for relationship and capacity building. Because of the localized nature of RP programs, our work also points to the need for future studies that closely examine different facets of restorative interventions (both structural and interpersonal) and which strategies are most effective in achieving school district goals.

APPENDIX 3

Supplemental Table 1: Difference-in-Difference Estimates of Restorative Practices Effects by Race

	Defiance of Authority Dismissals	All suspensions	Dismissals
Restorative Practices	-0.0154+	0.0186	-0.0106
	(0.0087)	(0.0252)	(0.0171)
White	-0.0362	-0.0995	-0.1121
	(0.0083)	(0.0170)	(0.0121)
Latinx	-0.0255	-0.0715	-0.0825
	(0.0078)	(0.0101)	(0.0093)
Asian	-0.0406	-0.0940	-0.1169
	(0.0105)	(0.0120)	(0.0114)
American Indian	-0.0199	-0.0458	-0.0541
	(0.0111)	(0.0127)	(0.0160)
Multi-Race	-0.0124	-0.0414	-0.0387
	(0.0028)	(0.0109)	(0.0093)
RP X White	0.0196*	-0.0217	0.0144
	(0.0082)	(0.0311)	(0.0191)
RP X Latinx	0.0159+	-0.0126	0.0128
	(0.0088)	(0.0194)	(0.0187)
RP X Asian	0.0234*	-0.0266	0.0056
	(0.0105)	(0.0257)	(0.0172)
RP X Native American	0.0008	-0.0449	-0.0411
	(0.0101)	(0.0142)	(0.0256)
RP X Multi-Race	0.0038	-0.0119	0.0036
	(0.0029)	(0.0189)	(0.0149)
Female	-0.0054	-0.0226	-0.0320
	(0.0009)	(0.0053)	(0.0063)
English Language Learner	-0.0112	-0.0212	-0.0314
	(0.0031)	(0.0027)	(0.0033)
Special Education Status	0.0225	0.0687	0.0772
	(0.0043)	(0.0093)	(0.0081)
Grade Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
School Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Term Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Constant	0.0819	0.0692	0.1239
	(0.0098)	(0.0166)	(0.0197)
Observations	190015	195928	198842
R-squared	0.038	0.088	0.094

Note: Coefficients represent differences in student discipline rates (measured as the proportion of students who were suspended or dismissed in a particular year). Statistical significance was calculated using randomization inference with 1,000 permutations of RP adoption; as such we only report significance for restorative justice coefficient

Description of Restorative Practices Implementation and Programming in Oakwood

Restorative practices were implemented in Oakwood were first widely implemented in 2016 after the district received funding to pilot the programs in twelve schools with a staggered rollout. The six schools discussed in this study were the first six schools to implement RP, while three additional schools began implementation in the fall of 2017 and the three final schools began implementation in the fall of 2018. For a school to be selected for RP implementation, they had to have 75% of educator support, submit an application that demonstrated an initial plan for implementation and demonstrate need based on a variety of criteria that may include equity gaps, low morale, or a desire to improve performance.

Once selected for implementation, schools received an ample amount of support from a district-level administrator, an RP District Lead, that has ample experience in RP and oversaw implementation efforts in each building. The RP District Lead worked with external evaluation partners and school officials (administrators and an RP Site Lead) to develop an implementation plan for each building that had different phases. These phases were not rigid but were designed to both meet schools where they were and to facilitate progress as the programs matured.

Installation Stage (6-12 Months). This stage included finalizing the whole-school implementation plan, identifying structural barriers to address and begin educator professional development in RP. The professional development expectations included ensuring that all staff received training on the principles and practices of RP, were introduced to community-building circle practices, and training in restorative responses to minor harm. These initial sessions were completed during two full days prior to the start of the school year, with additional training and support from Site Leads throughout the year.

Initial Implementation (2-3 years). As implementors understood that implementation of RP would take time, they had an initial three-year plan (with funding) to reach a stage where RP was embedded within the normative culture and practices of the school. This included trainings for all behavioral and administrative staff that responded to student disciplinary cases, coaching for improving community building and content circles, required family engagement activities, and training for teachers in restorative pedagogical stances developed by Winn (2018).

Full Implementation (4+ years). At this stage, implementors hoped that schools would reach a point where RP was entrenched within school culture and practices and would then shift focus to maintaining and continually improving upon that foundation. At this stage, schools were expected to implement an ongoing training plan, continue using RP and monitor for quality and remain connected to district supports. Of note though, is that grant funding for RP activities ceased after the third year of implementation. However, each of the 5 schools in our study reallocated funds to continue financing RP after the initial external funding stopped.

CONCLUSIONS

These studies provide notable contributions to broader understandings of school discipline and restorative justice interventions. Further, the outcomes presented in these chapters provide a nuanced overview of how school discipline and interventions like restorative justice can play a key role in racial stratification both within schools and as students transition to adulthood. This section puts discusses each study as a complete body of work and highlights how the broader take-aways from this study may inform future work.

Study One. The findings from study one are noteworthy in light of both scholarly and advocacy positions that have long-maintained the deleterious impacts that experiencing school discipline may have on students. Not only did we find profound linkages between experiencing school discipline and early adulthood outcomes, but we also found that experiencing school discipline explains a non-trivial percentage of Black-White disparities in several outcomes. While the school-to-prison nexus provides a framework for us to understand how finding a linkage between school discipline and criminal justice outcomes, our work shows that school discipline can also be linked to early adult outcomes such as college completion, SNAP participation, earnings, and poverty. While these are outcomes that researchers and advocates have feared, prior studies have been unable to fully document these linkages mostly because of data limitations.

Despite this, our findings are consistent with prior work that has examined the negative linkages between school discipline and adulthood mostly through survey data (Mittleman, 2018; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2014; Pesta; 2018). Importantly, we cannot causally attribute our early adulthood findings to the experience of school discipline, which is noteworthy considering studies that suggest that exclusionary school discipline may make students more likely to experience negative short-term outcomes (like dropping out) that may further hinder their long-

term success (McGrew, 2016; Vanderhaar et al., 2014). Thus, while school discipline should not be thought of as a causal predictor of negative life outcomes, it is a key axis of short- and long-term attainment and racial stratification. As prior work theorizes schools as sorting machines (see Domina, Penner & Penner, 2017), our work suggests that school discipline may be one way through which schools categorize students, and this sorting process can hinder student ability to both achieve in school and healthily transition to adulthood. Thus, the findings from this work position school discipline as potentially one way that students may experience categorical inequality.

Further, the bevy of qualitative studies that have documented how school discipline and criminalization can follow students beyond the classroom (see Rios, 2011; Shedd, 2015; Sojoyner, 2016 and others) suggest that our findings may not fully capture how experiencing school discipline may impact students. Nevertheless, our results suggest that the inherently racial process of school discipline contributes to racial stratification in criminal justice outcomes, SNAP participation and completing college as students age. What is less clear however, is the tension between the environmental or structural prevalence of discipline (i.e. going to school where exclusionary discipline rates are high) and experiencing school discipline as an individual. Thus, our work signifies the importance of school interventions that address the prevalence of school discipline, but also attempt to account for the ways in which broader structural inequalities may explain later life outcomes. While schools are not the sole source of inequality in adulthood, their discipline practices may further reinforce structural inequality rather than create an optimal learning environment for their students.

Studies Two & Three. The findings from studies two and three are contradictory but reflective of a broader process that informs restorative interventions. While Black student overrepresentation

in school discipline was exacerbated by RJ implementation in Meadowview, Black students were dismissed less for insubordination after RP implementation in Oakwaood. Taken together, they mirror prior studies that suggest that restorative justice interventions may have success in some contexts (Augustine et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2016) but struggle in others (Hashim et al., 2018). I see these contrasts as being indicative of two key mechanisms of schools that impact restorative justice implementation both before implementation through broader structural conditions surrounding the school-to-prison nexus and through organizational challenges that schools experience through implementation. Thus, it is my view that both studies provide examples of how reform efforts like restorative justice are ultimately battling phenomena that are beyond the scope of their philosophies, and this makes their success or failure dependent on external mechanisms.

As previously established, the school-to-prison nexus framework allows us to examine the linkages between education and criminal justice institutions as part of an ecosystem of overlapping organizational policies and practices that continually inform one another. In building on this framework, Sojoyner (2016) describes this process as an "educational enclosure" that embodies the removal, withdrawal, and denial of services and programs that are key to the stability and long-term well-being of communities. Under these enclosures, the spatial reality of school communities is key, as legacies of community and state violence, and resource deprivation inform the current environments that students must navigate in school. While school discipline is just one component of an educational enclosure, this framework allows us to understand how these disparities proliferate across social contexts and have local complexity despite sharing racially disparate similarities.

It is through this view that we must pay attention to the local complexity of restorative interventions, as these are the conditions under which these programs are implemented. While we may learn about the broad promise of restorative interventions, sweeping generalizations about program effectiveness are unlikely to yield consistent results, and considering the programs as a panacea are likely to result in disappointment (Payne, 2008). Thus, it is notable that both studies examine restorative interventions in demographically liberal and White cities where racial inequality is among the highest in the United States[25]. While schools are key sights of racial stratification, the legacies that structure the lived realities of students and teachers do not begin in the classroom. This has been a reality that social scientists have well-documented, but the implications of this are far-reaching for an intervention that targets the school-to-prison nexus.

Further, analysis of restorative interventions should be in conversation with emerging and robust work that examines antiblackness and abolition in education (see Shange, 2019; Stovall, 2018; Love & Muhammad, 2020 and others). Central to this view is that rather than reforming the current education system that has failed in its ability to adequately serve all students, we should create a new schooling system where students can thrive. This view is accentuated by Shange's (2019) study of schooling in San Francisco, a generally progressive city with ongoing equity-oriented reform efforts. In the study, Shange documents the ways in which, though progressive, schools continually fail to address antiblackness and argues that this results in a carceral progressivism that further entrenches antiblackness under the guise of reform efforts. Through this view, we should consider the possibility that restorative interventions may be both well-intentioned and promising, but ultimately miss the mark in achieving their true goal of

[25] Both Meadowview and Oakwood have rampant racial disparities in societal outcomes. Black-White disparities in home ownership, earnings, wealth, health and criminal justice outcomes are some of the highest in the country.

school transformation. Particularly because restorative interventions are implemented into systems with their own constraints and racial processes, it is possible that any progress may be met with adjustments by the current system that do not result in profound progress (Abad et al., 2019). Thus, because restorative interventions are positioned as reforms, implementors should be weary of how the programs may become another facet of the status-quo rather than truly transforming schooling.

In addition to these broader structural impediments to restorative interventions, implementors are likely to face organizational processes that may dictate implementation success. In building on the framework that sees schools as racialized organizations, it is important to note the ways in which restorative interventions are inherently racial projects. Gavrielides (2008) highlights this in defining the "conceptual fault lines and power battles within the restorative justice movement." In doing so, Gavrieldes outlines how implementors of restorative interventions are at odds with different stakeholders within their systems of implementation and explains how these tensions create conceptual conflicts. This was apparent in both Meadowview and Oakwood, as informational interviews suggest that implementors had to balance both their conceptual inclinations toward justice with the realities of contract renewals, school district approval and educator support. As restorative justice programs require an ample amount of funds and resources to be successful, how implementors fund these programs—and sometimes at what expense—is deserving of further attention (Guckenburg et al., 2016; Fronius et al., 2019)[26].

[26] Informational interviews in Meadowview and Oakwood also suggest that implementors experience funding hurdles that may change from year to year. When funding ceases, administrators are often tasked with rebalancing their budgets to account for RJ funding or to revise their programming to operate with limited funds.

Moreover, the ambitiousness and ambiguity of restorative justice interventions creates an opportunity for discretion to dictate implementation. While discretion may have led to the opportunity for increased disproportionality in Meadowview, findings from Oakwood suggest that a more nuanced view of discretion is needed. Particularly in the context of prior work that documents the impacts of reducing educator autonomy in responding to student discipline (Arum, 2003), it is perhaps possible that the additional tools (and discretion) afforded by trainings in restorative practices may help educators better-support students through disciplinary cases. In this vein, it is possible that increasing discretion might increase racial disproportionality in student discipline in some contexts while reduce it in others as educators may utilize these tools differentially and more effectively.

Because schools are racialized organizations, the increased discretion adds a component of complexity to the implementation of restorative justice programs. While the restorative justice philosophy promotes equity and power-sharing at its core, those tenants are fundamentally at-odds with standard practice in education. Thus, implementors have an ambitious task in interrupting structural and interpersonal processes that undergird racial inequality in schools. Recent work has documented these challenges, noting that the most successful restorative interventions coincide with a considerable amount of pre-implementation training, ongoing coaching, district support, and staff-focused community building circles (Fronius et al., 2019). To this end, it seems noteworthy that RP implementation in Oakwood was well-resourced and teacher-driven, which may have contributed to both the buy-in and continual support that resulted in a difference in how RP schools responded to Black student behavior.

As shown, experiencing school discipline is a key axis of racial inequality both in schools and as students transition to adulthood. While these disparities have led many school districts to

embrace restorative justice practices, this project shows that these programs can have diverging impacts on student discipline outcomes. These diverging outcomes are likely attributable to ongoing structural, cultural, and organizational processes that make restorative justice implementation both an educational and racial intervention. I offer these critiques not to express opposition to restorative justice, but to note the limits of the system that implementors hope to restore. In the absence of broader revolutionary change that facilitates the creation of new educational systems, restorative justice practices—if implemented with integrity—can be an effective tool in encouraging schools and educators to examine their systems and practices in a way that ultimately helps them better-serve their students. Additionally, this work should encourage future studies to consider the local context of school discipline interventions, as focusing on widespread impacts alone may ignore the local complexities that determine the extent to which student outcomes are recursive.

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