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"The kids do a better job of it than we do": a Canadian case study of teachers addressing the hypocritical application of restorative justice in their school

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Abstract
Restorative justice (RJ) has become increasingly accepted in schools worldwide as an effective way to build, maintain and repair student relationships and to deal with student conflict, harm and behavioural issues. It is rare, however, to find schools that utilise RJ to deal with adult relational and behavioural issues. Drawing on a case study in a Canadian school, this paper explores this hypocritical application of RJ, when teachers are not called to practice what they are teaching. The teachers in the school studied named the hypocritical application and openly struggled with it. I argue that the act of grappling with the inequity resulted in a deepened experience of RJ for both teachers and students. By naming and addressing their hypocritical actions, the teachers, paradoxically, acted in a restorative manner, modelling restorative principles and ensuring that RJ was made more comprehensible and relevant to students.

Keywords Restorative justice · Teacher conflict · Teacher relationships · Hypocritical · Education · Congruence

Introduction

This is a story that I did not go looking for; but it is a story that the educators in one Canadian school insisted that I see. The story I went in search of was a student story, exploring the student experience of restorative justice (RJ) in schools. While listening to the students, the educators—their teachers—maintained a constant refrain that eventually reached my ears: *the kids do a better job of it than we do.*

Over the past decade, interest in RJ in schools has risen in Australia (Harrison 2007; Victoria Department of Education and Training 2018) and worldwide (Fronius

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et al. 2016; Lewis 2009; Mayworm et al. 2016; McCluskey et al. 2008; Wearmouth et al. 2007). This increased interest is due to a number of reasons, depending on the needs of the school involved, including a desire to lower suspension and expulsion rates and keep students in school (Lewis 2009; Vaandering 2009); an acknowledgement that punitive discipline does not engender long-term change (Losen 2014; Morrison 2007a; Stinchcomb et al. 2006); an interest in improving student wellbeing and relationships (Cavanagh et al. 2014; Kaveney and Drewery 2011) and a need to substantially attend to student disengagement, discipline issues, bullying, conflict and violence (Bargen 2010; McCluskey et al. 2008; Morrison 2007a). These varied motives for implementing RJ almost entirely focus on improving student behaviour, student attitudes and student relationships. Little is written specifically about the use of RJ to improve teacher behaviour, teacher attitudes and teacher-to-teacher relationships in schools. Yet RJ is an approach meant for all ages, not only students. If RJ is primarily used with students, as the literature suggests, are teachers held to the same behavioural and relational expectations as students? Why is this uneven—and potentially hypocritical—application occurring and what are the implications?

In this paper, the issue of uneven application is explored through a case study that examined the use of RJ in one school in Canada. I listened carefully to the refrain from the educators—*the kids do a better job of it than we do*—that kept surfacing during the study and how the teachers were very aware of the hypocritical application of RJ and openly grappled with it. I argue that although the application remained somewhat uneven in the school, the act of grappling with the inequity resulted in a deepened experience of RJ for both teachers and students, in which restorative principles were modelled by teachers and made more comprehensible and relevant to students.

Restorative justice literature review

Defining restorative justice in schools

As a complex, multi-layered concept, there is no universal agreement on one definition of RJ (Johnstone and Van Ness 2007; Woolford 2009). A central concept of RJ is that harm is primarily a violation of people and relationships, rather than a violation of rules or laws (Zehr 2002). The focus that RJ has on relationships makes RJ relevant to all social organisations—from neighbourhoods, to families, to the justice system, to schools. We intimately understand that when harm or conflict occurs, it is people and their connections to which we must attend.

Hendry (2009) describes RJ in schools as a philosophical approach that is fundamentally about building, maintaining and repairing relationships. This relational approach diverges from traditional school discipline where authority is exercised when a rule is broken. Such punitive methods have little effect on decreasing school violence (Kupchik and Monahan 2006), little long-term impact (Stinchcomb et al. 2006) and profound negative effects on students (Cavanagh et al. 2014; Payne and Welch 2013). Instead, RJ views the classroom or school as a community in which individuals are connected and accountable to one another (Hopkins 2011). This

view is embodied in a continuum of practices—from proactive to reactive, ranging from restorative conversations, classroom circles, peer mediation and multi-party restorative conferences—in which all affected people are engaged in dialogue and find ways to deal with the situation together (Hendry 2009; Hopkins 2011; Kaveney and Drewery 2011). Notably, these descriptions of RJ focus on all affected people in a school community, not only students.

Some who apply restorative philosophy in schools tend to replace the term justice with restorative approaches, restorative practices, restorative discipline or restorative schools to distance it from any criminal justice connotations (Amstutz and Mullet 2005; Morrison 2007b; Vaandering 2011). The Canadian school in this study used a mixture of terms—from RJ to restorative approaches to simply restorative. I use the term RJ in this paper to align with Vaandering's (2011) argument that the use of restorative paired with justice is significant, and serves as a "compass needle guiding proponents in the field to their desired destinations" (p. 308) in a way that practice or approach cannot. Vaandering (2011) explores in depth the two concepts (restorative and justice) and concludes that when justice is understood as "honoring the worth of the other through relationship" (p. 324) then the pairing of the terms accurately describes restorative processes, outcomes and philosophy. Thus, using the term RJ is not seen as a narrowing of restorative ideas to the criminal justice setting, but rather an expansion of what constitutes justice in all settings.

Restorative justice: applications and intentions

As the popularity of RJ in schools increases, so too, gradually, does the research. The first research ever conducted on RJ in schools was a study of schools in Queensland, Australia in 1994 (Cameron and Thorsborne 1999). More recently, Mayworm et al. (2016) identified 19 empirical studies of RJ in schools across nine different countries, including one in Australia, published between 2001 and 2013. The focus in all the studies was on RJ as an approach to deal with student issues, rather than a focus on teachers within the school communities.

The intense focus of the studies—and the implementation of RJ—on students is not surprising. Schools are institutions created to educate students and thus teachers implement approaches to specifically attend to their perceived needs and/or issues. The research literature mentions teachers only to discuss the implementation and sustainability of RJ approaches (Cavanagh 2010; Morrison 2007a; Reimer 2009; Riestenberg 2003; Wearmouth et al. 2007). There is occasional acknowledgment of the need for teachers to change their behaviour and attitudes for RJ to be successful at the whole school level (Cavanagh et al. 2014; Hendry 2009; Thorsborne 2013; Vaandering 2009). Even with these studies, however, teacher change is usually enlisted to bring about student change. RJ is not framed as the same "inherent good" (Coke 2005) for teachers as it is for students.

An explicit focus on teacher behaviour, attitudes and relationships—not as an implementation footnote but as central to the RJ process—emerges in only a handful of the studies conducted on RJ since 1994. Vaandering (2014), while implementing and researching an RJ professional development program, led participants in

an exploration of relationships, beginning with themselves and other adults, before even considering RJ use with their students. Thorsborne (2013), an Australian practitioner and researcher, emphasised the need for school staff to "take the lead and change their behaviour first" (p. 49). McCluskey (2013) defines this as a "strong version" of RJ in which the focus moves beyond student outcomes to the full environment in which adults in the school intentionally act restoratively in daily interactions with students, colleagues, parents and outside partners.

Williams (2004) discusses such coherence as schools teaching "through what they say and what they do" (p. 479). Usually framed as teachers practicing what they teach, the idea has been studied in such areas as citizenship education (Rubba and Rye 1997), collaborative learning environments (Austin and Harkins 2008; Coke 2005), peace education (Cremin and Bevington 2017) and school rules (Raby 2012; Thornberg 2007). Yet given widespread anecdotal acknowledgement of the importance of practicing what we teach in schools, I was surprised at how few studies I located, even outside the field of RJ, that explicitly addressed the issue of hypocritical action.

Interestingly, even in the articles that focused on teachers seeking to model and enact the principles and practices of RJ, there was no explicit mention of restorative processes being used between teachers in the schools to deal with teacher conflict or harm. Indeed, the very way that RJ is most often used with students—to deal with peer conflict, harm and misbehaviour—is absent from the discussion when teachers are involved. We know that conflict between teachers exists (Achinstein 2002; Austin and Harkins 2008), so why is RJ not discussed as an appropriate response?

This is not, of course, to say that such use of RJ with teachers never happens. But it is not, at least in the academic literature, part of the story we tell ourselves about RJ in schools. It was, however, a storyline that emerged during a case study exploring RJ in one school in Canada.

Methodology: case study

Case study researchers attempt to reach a deep understanding and tell a story of their participants' multifaceted reality by situating the case within its cultural and social context (Stake 2005; Yin 2003). Berger and Luckmann (1967) describe the sociology of knowledge as focusing on the processes by which any body of knowledge becomes socially established as reality. They argue that we live in an intersubjective world in which reality is socially constructed, interpreted and made meaningful. RJ is not a fixed entity, but a concept that is fluid and contextual. The stories, therefore, that we tell ourselves and one another about RJ matter.

This research was grounded in a larger multi-site case study, exploring the student experience of RJ in one school in Canada and one in Scotland. The schools were selected for similarities in student age (11–12 years old) and duration of their use of RJ (5 years). This paper focuses solely on the Canadian case study. The Canadian school, in the Western province of Alberta, was a public school with just under 350 students, between the ages of 3 and 12. The school employed about 45 staff members. One-third of students were new Canadians, many participating in formal

schooling for the first time. The School Board website identified that students in the school had 40 different home countries and that English was an additional language for approximately 80% of the families. According to neighbourhood indicators published by the city in 2010, this neighbourhood had three and a half times as many low-income households as the city average. Prior to implementing RJ, the school relied on a standard discipline model, dealing with misbehaviour punitively. Upon her arrival several years ago, the principal worked with staff to explore various options to move the school in a different direction. It was within this context the school implemented RJ 5 years prior to the study.

Aims of the study

This research aimed at understanding the perspective of educators in the school, in terms of their own experience with RJ. Given the lack of research into the use of RJ between adults in schools, the study attended to two related research questions: how do staff members view the use of RJ with fellow adults in their school? And how do these staff members respond to any inconsistencies in the school's use of RJ? According to the educators, RJ was being applied inconsistently in their school. The study explored how these educators grappled with this hypocritical application and the impact that this honest struggle had on the overall experience of RJ in the school.

Data collection

Participant observation

I was present in the school over Spring Term 2013 and involved myself as I could in the daily rhythm of the school. Most days I worked directly with students and staff, engaging in multiple formal and informal interactions. Staff often asked me to sit in on their class-wide restorative circles and usually asked for feedback both within the circle and privately. Being present in the school was an invaluable opportunity to learn about the school's priorities, values and challenges from interactions and observations in the staff room, classrooms, playground and offices.

Questionnaires

I developed an educator questionnaire to ascertain how RJ was understood and used by teachers, members of the management team and other staff. The questionnaire was adapted from Woodbury and Gess-Newsome's (2002) Teacher-Centered Systemic Reform model, emphasising the role teachers' practice, knowledge and beliefs play in educational reform. The current questionnaire added in a fourth section—goals—in accordance with Woolford's (2009) attention to the hopes implementers have for RJ.

Out of 47 forms delivered to all staff members, 23 were completed and returned, a 49% response rate. Out of the respondents, 12 identified as primarily working as

classroom teachers; of the other 11, two did not indicate their roles and nine worked in a range of roles: educational assistants, counsellors and members of the leadership team. The respondents were a self-selected group; it is possible they were more interested in RJ than non-respondents. Yet encompassing half of the staff, the identified trends and patterns in the 23 responses do represent a significant portion of the adult members of the school community. These patterns, in terms of how RJ was seen to be used among students and among adults, are referred to in the findings below.

Learning circles

Learning circles are focus groups conducted like restorative classroom circles, using similar guidelines. As with focus groups, learning circles elicit stories and in-depth explanations of people's experiences. Different from focus groups, learning circles, in the tradition of Freire's cultural circles, also provide space for participants to move from objects to subjects in their learning, with "the capacity to adapt oneself to reality *plus* the critical capacity to make choices and transform [their] reality" (Freire 2002, p. 4). Learning circles emphasise that participants are the ones with the expertise, engaging with others in a learning process about their own reality. Mirroring the relational process inherent in RJ, learning circles are facilitated to ensure that everyone's voice is valued and heard equally. With the educator learning circle, the discussion focused on how educators perceived RJ and its effect on their students and the school.

Fifteen staff members, about one-quarter of the total staff, participated in four circles. The shortest circle lasted 45 min and the longest was one and a half hours. Of the 15 participants, one was male, and all but two were white, demographics representative of the larger staff body. All participants worked primarily in the classroom, two as educational assistants and thirteen as classroom teachers. Together they represented the breadth of the school's programming: at least one teacher from each grade, as well as teachers from the early education program and from a specific behavioural assistance program. Their experience in the school ranged from less than 1 year to over 20 years. To protect participants' anonymity, pseudonyms are used.

Acting as *subjects* (Freire 2002) in the circles, the teachers ensured that the space was not only for me to learn from the staff, but for them to learn from each other. Several staff members remarked on the benefits of hearing what their colleagues were thinking and doing—a rare opportunity in their rushed work environments. In two of the four circles, staff members devised plans for how to use staff learning circles more regularly to improve communication and educate one another. It was within the circle conversations that the refrain *the kids do a better job of it than we do* started to resonate.

Data analysis

Data collected were initially analysed inductively, meaning that the identified themes were strongly linked to data (Patton 2002), sometimes bearing little relation to the questions asked of participants (Braun and Clarke 2006). The data collected through the questionnaire, participant observation and learning circles were coded based on repeating ideas that emerged, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of

TA: become familiar with the data; generate initial codes; search for themes; review themes; define and name themes and produce the report.

Findings

Theme 1: "the kids do a better job of it than we do"

From the outside, RJ seemed to be an approach that fit well with the school's educators' values and practices. Walking through the school, it would not be surprising to witness restorative circles occurring in classrooms, or a teacher facilitating a restorative conversation between two students in the hallway or playground. Indeed, 66% of respondents to the educator questionnaire indicated that they *often* or *always* used RJ in their classroom and/or school. The number rose to 92% when *sometimes* was included. For many educators, RJ aligned closely with their values. Educators in the learning circles described RJ as fitting with their "mindset" (Beth) and hitting their "moral centre" (Mai).

Educators were generally quite positive about staff dynamics in the school, choosing words such as "supportive", "respectful", "warm", "caring", "accepting" and "collegial" to portray the staff culture. Yet this portrayal of staff culture did not remain one-dimensional. Educators in the learning circles devoted significant time, of their own volition, to discussing the multifaceted aspects of their interactions. Many educators welcomed the opportunity to explore staff dynamics, citing aspects of the culture that were conducive to RJ as well as those that detracted from RJ.

A main topic of conversation regarding RJ and educators was the extent to which staff members were practicing what they were teaching. This emphasis was significant, given the scant attention paid within the research literature to how RJ is practiced among teachers. Learning circle participants continually moved the focus away from whether students were acting restoratively to whether adults were acting restoratively. It was here that the refrain *the kids do a better job of it than we do* (Beth; Tanya; Sonya) started surfacing.

As evidence of staff embodying RJ principles and practices, examples were shared: there had been staff circles to deal with concerns in the past; one educator invited others to her classroom to view circles in process and some staff members approached one another when in conflict. Corroborating these examples, 30% of questionnaire respondents said that RJ was used to address issues among adults *often* or *always*.

That said, another 30% of respondents indicated that RJ was used among adults *never* or *hardly ever*. Sonya explained her response to the survey question: "the kids do it, yeah, we do it with the kids. But when it comes to the staff? I was like, no, no. I'm being totally honest here". There were numerous examples provided in learning circles as evidence of RJ not being present in staff culture: staff members talked behind each other's backs; one educator yelled at another in front of students; disrespectful comments were made by staff about staff members and students; and the use of circles for discussion or dealing with issues among adults was rare. Hypocrisy, in

terms of how RJ was taught to students versus how it was enacted by and among staff members, was openly discussed in the learning circles.

Cohesion between words and actions was deemed important by staff for two reasons: for the sake of the students, and for the sake of the adults. Cohesion was seen to affect students because, as Eleanore expressed it, "if it becomes a part of us, it will become a part of the kids". There was discussion about being "role models of the school" (Beth) and that working on RJ among adults was the best way to "engage our kids and have our kids reap the most benefit out of it" (Eleanore). On the flip side, the issue was raised of what happened when students saw the opposite:

> The kids see it and they see, like, well, they do it. You know, [a teacher] is mean to [another teacher] and she's allowed to do it. And she doesn't get in trouble for it. So why do I have to be nice? And kids will say that. (Sonya)

Beyond being beneficial for the students to see, RJ was also discussed as being worthwhile for adults. Several participants gave examples of festering conflicts that they thought would be helped by restorative processes. Tanya provided a typical example: "I hear comments in this school that are quite embarrassing—not from the kids. The kids are kids. Adults. Who have been harmed by other adults in the school. Do we need a circle? Yes". Mai, to the agreement of her fellow circle participants, felt it was "issues of trust and fear, risk" that really kept adults from fully engaging restoratively with one another in the school. Those issues, others agreed (Eleanore, Kirsten, Beth), were both hindering the use of RJ and exacerbated by not using RJ. Mai summed it up this way: "if you've got people, there's going to be conflict. But there's, I mean, it's a big trust issue. That's where I'd like to see us grow more, as a staff". The consensus seemed to be that adults were falling short of practicing the RJ they were teaching. They agreed that this was a problem—that they were both failing the students and one another by not acting in a consistently restorative manner.

Theme 2: "I'd never know if I wasn't sitting here listening to you"

Within the learning circles, amid the self-critique, there emerged a sense that what the educators were doing—airing issues in the learning circle, discussing feelings, reflecting honestly on their application of RJ—was itself an embodiment of a restorative process. Beth named it as an example of being "cognizant of what we're really thinking and what we really believe". Tanya, discussing the need to listen carefully to what was being said in circle, turned suddenly to the educator beside her and said, "if we don't start with us, with hearing what you have to say, because, I mean, I'd never know if I wasn't sitting here listening to you". The idea started to grow in the circles that perhaps the educators were more capable of applying RJ among themselves than their initial assessment and, indeed, were even doing so at that very moment. Beth offered a cautiously optimistic view of the educators' embodiment of RJ: "I think we're touching the surface a little bit…"

Within all four learning circles, the idea that educators were capable of practicing what they were teaching was followed—unprompted—with a variety of suggestions for improvement. In some ways, this mirrored the future or solution orientation of

many restorative processes. An interesting exchange happened in one learning circle, with a call for ongoing reflection:

> **Leona:** How could we change things? How can we grow it? Like, where can we go from here? We've hit some roadblocks here and there but we're kind of trying to fix those roadblocks…
> **Mai:** It's good that there's roadblocks. It means we're thinking and reinventing.

There were numerous ideas shared about how to better support one another: mentor new teachers, model good practices for each other and engage in community-building professional development. Several staff members suggested implementing the use of circles for staff, for the purposes of sharing ideas and information, learning from one another, supporting each other and dealing with conflicts or issues. Sonya suggested "having circles about how to run circles".

It was within this conversation that two learning circle participants (Eva and Kate) suggested I, as an outsider, conduct a whole staff circle, focused on staff communication. The principal agreed, and it was planned as a special staff meeting. The circle focused on what staff appreciated about working at the school and how they could better support one another. Initially, during the circle, discussion remained positive and rather superficial. In the second round, more issues arose: people spoke of their own insecurities, others were specific about what was not working in their current situations, and one talked about the lack of respect she saw in adult conversations. Overall, the circle experience represented an opening of the conversation. It occurred on my final day in the school so I cannot comment on the long-term or even short-term impact. It was, however, very much in line with the story that emerged in the educator learning circles: a desire to use RJ to build honesty and connection in staff, mirroring the process that they advocated with their students, being a further embodiment of the aspirations they had to practice the RJ they were teaching.

Discussion

As mentioned, this was a story that the educators in this Canadian school opened my eyes to; it was not one that I went looking for. It was, as Brinkmann (2014) would call it, "stumble data". Data upon which I stumbled, which broke my gaze; Brinkmann (2014) advises that we, as researchers in this stumbling, allow "ourselves to stay unbalanced for a moment longer than what is comfortable, for this is where we may learn something new" (p. 724). I was focused on how students in the school were experiencing RJ; the stumbling shifted my gaze slightly to one side to take in a broader view of that experience. The adults in the school were aware of the inequitable application of and engagement with RJ and grappled with it in the learning circles. I argue that the grappling was crucial—both to understand the reasons underpinning such inequitable application and to embody restorative principles and practices. This grappling resulted in deepened experiences of RJ for adults and, potentially, students.

The act of grappling: reducing hypocrisy by naming hypocrisy

In the learning circle conversations, the educators did not shy away from naming the hypocrisy inherent in expecting students to address issues through a restorative process that adults struggled to use with other adults; in fact, they were drawn to this topic in each of the four circles. Adults discussed the issue at length and dug into both the possible reasons for it and the potential implications of it. Once aired, they were also not content to let their hypocritical engagement with RJ sit: in all circles, participants moved the discussion from what was wrong to where they could go from there; they surfaced ideas for future action to lessen the hypocrisy, and live out their values more consistently.

In many ways, this process mirrored common restorative processes. In most restorative processes, some variation of these questions is posed: what happened? Who has been harmed? What harm resulted? What needs to happen to make things right? (Bargen 2010; Zehr 2002). The educators in this study thoroughly discussed what happened (RJ being used with students and not adults), who had been harmed (students, staff and the school culture), the resultant harm (to both student understanding of RJ and to adult relationships) and what needed to happen to make things right (supporting one another, staff circles, trust building exercises, more cohesion between words and actions). Although not involving student voices in these discussions—which would be necessary to embody the restorative principle of full participation of all affected—the circles did give educators the opportunity to grapple with their own participation in the hypocrisy and their own role in making things right. Woolford (2009) describes RJ as "fostering opportunities for individuals and collectives to evaluate their lives and their worlds, and to initiate attempts to bring change into these arenas: to address injustice and to improve the lives of the many" (Woolford 2009, p. 17). In entering into conversation about adult relationships and behaviour in the school, the educators evaluated their school lives and talked through how to improve the school lives of all members of their community.

The educators embodied restorative principles by doing something both difficult and necessary: moving toward conflict rather than away from it. Lyubansky and Shpungin (2016), drawing on Dominic Barter's Restorative Circles model, write that moving toward conflict that exists within the restorative movement is essential "to 'walking the walk' with integrity as we propel the restorative revolution forward" (p. 199). Although perhaps not passionate about participating in a restorative revolution, the educators were absolutely passionate about propelling their own school's revolution forward with integrity. Thus, they moved toward the conflict that came when hypocrisy was named and flaws—whether personal or organisational—were identified. These conversations were difficult since, even implicitly, they acknowledged the power dynamics at play when one group (the adults) operated by a different set of rules than another group (the students). Lyubansky and Shpungin (2016) suggest that many in the RJ field resist acknowledging, confronting and potentially sharing their own power. Although there were few discussions about sharing power, as the structure of schools is inherently hierarchical, educators in the school, in moving toward conflict, acknowledged the power hierarchies of their school and confronted the implications of such hierarchies in terms of the hypocritical use of RJ.

It was in this moving toward conflict, I would argue, that the educators also embodied real community. Restorative discourse tends to evoke the idea of the community, often without explicitly defining the concept. Without critical reflection, community can be seen as synonymous with harmony and consensus where any conflict is an aberration (Achinstein 2002). Those with a critical view of RJ, however, do not seek to preserve existing relations or harmony within community, but rather to assess and disrupt inequitable current relations to better create the conditions for equitable relationships in the future (Llewellyn and Llewellyn 2015; McCluskey et al. 2008). Conflict, therefore, is a necessary and desirable component of community; we must disrupt so as to change and transform. Achinstein (2002) in her study of how teachers managed staff conflict reveals that "active engagement in conflict, a dialogue of differences, is a normal and essential dimension of a functioning teacher community. Conflict can create the context for learning and thus ongoing renewal of communities" (p. 422). Productive engagement with conflict that allows for review, critique and challenge, it seems, moves a school community away from Hargreaves' (1994) ideas of contrived collegiality and toward a truly collaborative culture. The educators in this study, by moving toward conflict, with the intention of using that conflict to improve the school culture, embodied a truly collaborative restorative community. This response—the grappling—was not an aberration but part and parcel of the supportive adult relationships that participants had alluded to in the learning circle discussions; it was one more expression of real community.

Thus, somewhat paradoxically, by naming how unrestorative they were, the educators were acting in a highly restorative manner. McCluskey (2013) surmised that the most convincing sign that a school has embraced a strong version of RJ is that members of that school community continually insist that the school is not restorative enough. I would add that not only do they insist that it is not restorative enough, they also grapple with the perceived shortcomings. Even if the hypocrisy is not erased, if the application of RJ continues to be more focused on students than on adults, the act of grappling is a lived example of a restorative approach. RJ, it could be said, is found in the process and not necessarily in an end product. Educators do not need to be perfectly consistent with their use of RJ; but they do need to make genuine attempts to use RJ with all members of their school community and openly acknowledge when those attempts fall short.

Significance

By listening to these educators in one Canadian school, the story we tell ourselves about RJ in schools is changed. The story is expanded to include questions of inequitable application of RJ in schools and suggestions for how to struggle openly and honestly with such hypocrisy.

The study is significant in that it highlights an issue that is anecdotally raised but rarely researched—how do educators reconcile not practicing that which we teach? In this situation, it turns out, the educators were in fact practicing what they taught by, paradoxically, engaging with the idea that they were not. The study suggests that educators would do well to acknowledge discrepancies between words and

actions—at least among themselves—and embrace the complexity inherent in teaching. The educators in this study built genuine community and embodied restorative values by moving toward—rather than away from—conflict. By naming hypocrisy, they reduced hypocrisy: this is a lesson that transcends the field of RJ and the context of Canadian schools. It is a lesson that could find resonance in Australian schools and other schools internationally.

Building on Vaandering's (2014) professional development program, adults need to be provided with protected learning spaces to examine their working relationships and the processes in place to build, maintain and repair those relationships. The adults in my study created their own spaces—by utilising the time and space afforded them to participate in my research activities—to grapple with their relationships and practices. Far better if that space could be intentionally offered, as part of the reflective inquiry that is integral to professional learning (Loughran et al. 2011). It is a risk, of course, to admit personal or organisational shortcomings or conflict; it is also integral to the building of genuine learning communities. Cremin (2018), in an autoethnography of a peace educator, suggests that out of such vulnerability "comes the possibility of change, and even perhaps transformation" (p. 2). Teachers—both pre-service and in-service—need the permission to collectively struggle with the complexities of their relationships and with any incongruence they identify between what they are teaching and how they are acting, to develop what McGraw (2018) calls "thinking dispositions" (p. 161). Learning for teachers is, as Arnold et al. (2013) argue, a social act, grounded in the "absorbing and reflexive experience" (p. 71) of those undertaking it. Walking toward hypocrisy together allows teachers to name the hypocrisy, reflect upon it, address it and, therefore, lessen it.

Limitations

This is the story of one Canadian school. As a small-scale, descriptive study, it is unrealistic to make broad generalisations, and impossible to know how the story would play out in different contexts with different educators.

There are uncertainties in the study. Although student voice was attended to in my broader study, students were not specifically asked how they saw adults being restorative to one another. Asking student-specific questions about adult behaviour, relationships and perceived hypocrisy would add to the study.

The impact of the grappling on the adults is also not certain. Although I argue that the willingness to grapple showed the adults' proclivity to such activity and an embodiment of real community, it is unclear what, if any, long-term impact on adult or school culture this specific engagement with the hypocritical application of RJ might have had. I also need to acknowledge that the participants were a self-selected group, interested in RJ, and perhaps more likely to engage with the issue of hypocrisy than the other educators in the school. More long-term engagement with the school would strengthen this aspect of the study.

These limitations do not, of course, make the educators' story less valid; their story is one more narrative through which to understand how RJ is used—or not

used—in schools. And their story suggests that more research into the area of teacher consistency and hypocrisy is warranted.

Conclusion

It is typical with stories to conclude with the moral, the lesson to be learned. The lesson here, for teachers, was not one of the relational techniques to be mastered, restorative practices to be perfected or hypocritical approaches to be eliminated. The lesson here was more one of airing the messiness of issues, flaws, shortcomings and conflicts, and being willing to engage in a collective process of walking toward that messiness with the hopes of understanding and acting upon it.

The educators within this Canadian school named their hypocrisy—*that the kids did a better job of RJ than the adults did*—and talked together about what to do about that. This adds an important and honest layer to the academic conversation about RJ in schools; it identifies how educators are often socialised to focus on student behaviour and relationships without serious thought to their own behaviour and relationships. Although the research focus on the impact of RJ on students is crucial, it must be seen within a wider restorative and relational context that includes how adults engage in building, maintaining and repairing their own relationships. We cannot continue to hold students to different behavioural and relational expectations than we hold adults to; if RJ is good enough for the students in our schools, it is good enough for the adults in our schools.

This is a story of what happens when we engage openly and honestly about our inability to practice what we teach. Which, interestingly, gets us closer to *the job the kids do* than it first appears.

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