

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES AND TRUST IN SCHOOL POLICE IN AN URBAN HIGH  
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### Abstract

Racial disproportionality in exclusionary discipline policies in schools and the juvenile justice system has led researchers to suggest a “school to prison pipeline” in which students of color are pushed out of the classroom and into the juvenile justice system. As exclusionary discipline policies increase, so have the numbers of school resource officers (SROs) within schools. SROs are increasingly likely to handle disciplinary offenses leading to speculation about an increased criminalization of student behavior. Increased funding for SROs has followed highly publicized school shootings, which has raised questions about appropriate role of SROs and the quality of their relationships with students. This dissertation was comprised of two related studies that drew on qualitative and quantitative methods. Study 1 was a needs assessment to determine if there is need for increased student trust in SROs. Study 2 examined the possibility of SROs using restorative approaches in their interactions with students. Specifically, the study examined the degree to which SROs felt Restorative Practices (RP) were “acceptable” and fit with their roles. RP is an intervention aimed at reducing use of exclusionary discipline in schools through a relational and problem-solving approach to conflict. Study participants included 115 students, 51 school faculty, and 11 school safety officials in two Northeastern urban high schools in the United States. For Study 1, students reported on their perception of trust in teachers and SROs, and on selected covariates (e.g., number of suspensions, race/ethnicity, victimization). For Study 1, analyses found that students reported lower trust in SROs when compared to their trust in teachers. This difference held when accounting for students’ experience with police outside of the school. The difference, however, was not found after accounting for students’ prior suspensions. For Study 2, SROs were similar to teachers in perceiving RP as acceptable and fitting well with their current practices. School faculty reported mixed opinions of student and

SRO relationships noting that RP's potential to improve relationships depended on SRO personality with some SROs being more adept at using RP elements than others. Implications are that RP is a possible intervention to improve trust between students and SROs.

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## **Introduction**

### **School to Prison Pipeline**

More students in the United States are being suspended than ever before with suspension rates almost doubling from 1.7 million in 1974 to 3.1 million in 2000 (Wald & Losen, 2003). This increased reliance on exclusionary disciplinary practices is greatly influenced by zero tolerance discipline policies originally implemented in the 1990s as a means of reducing violence and crime in schools, especially those crimes related to firearm and drug offenses. More specifically, zero tolerance is a term used to refer to discipline policies that mandate predetermined disciplinary sanctions for certain categories of offenses with no consideration given to the context or specifics of a situation. Its underlying rationale is that serious offenses should be met with firm consequences, however zero tolerance policies have expanded beyond serious offenses and have become the basis for the extensive use of exclusionary disciplinary methods used in schools, having broad implications for students involved in disciplinary offenses (American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, 2013).

School discipline practices that are punitive in nature, such as zero tolerance policies, have been increasingly called into question as research has shown that they do not decrease disciplinary problems within schools and may even contribute to negative youth trajectories. More specifically, evidence increasingly suggests that suspensions, which are often issued mandatorily if zero tolerance policies are in place, can have harmful effects on students, placing them at risk for future disciplinary issues and increased contact with the juvenile justice system (Hemphill et al., 2012). Also concerning, is the overrepresentation of ethnic minority students, particularly Black students, in rates of disciplinary referrals and sanctions, especially in regards to exclusionary disciplinary tactics. National and state data show consistent patterns of

disproportionality in regards to Black students in school discipline with Black males being particularly at risk for receiving disciplinary sanctions despite a lack of evidence suggesting racial differences in rates of misbehavior (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Additionally, the majority of these referrals tend to be due to issues of defiance and/or noncompliance, which are more minor and subjective discretionary offenses that allow for a potential differential selection process beginning at the classroom level (Gregory et al., 2010). For example a statewide, longitudinal study conducted in Texas, “Breaking School Rules” found that Black students were 23% less likely than White students to be suspended for mandatory offenses (e.g., guns or serious violence) but were 31% more likely to be suspended for minor discretionary offenses (e.g., failure to obey school rules) even when accounting for individual school and student characteristics. Furthermore, multivariate analyses used in the study controlled for 83 different variables (e.g. socioeconomic status, prior school and disciplinary history), which isolated the effect of race on discipline above and beyond other possible predictors (Fabelo et al., 2011).

Mounting research has examined the relationship between disproportionality in exclusionary discipline policies in schools and disproportionality in the juvenile justice system. While these lines of research have traditionally run parallel to one another, empirical evidence suggests that school based exclusionary discipline sanctions likely fuel the “school to prison pipeline” (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). That is to say that disproportionalities in school discipline may contribute to racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. The “school to prison pipeline” is a term used to refer to an emerging trend that describes the movement of large groups of students at risk for negative outcomes, particularly students of color, out of the classroom and into the juvenile justice system. Suspensions place students at increased risk for contact with and entry into the juvenile justice system (Christle,

Jolivet & Nelson, 2005) placing them at higher risk for poor life outcomes. More specifically, these students are at increased risk for further isolation and disengagement from the school community and deeper entry into the juvenile justice system (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). Once students have exited the juvenile justice system, they also face obstacles upon reentry into their neighborhood schools. These obstacles include school officials encouraging youth to drop out or enroll in alternative education placements in order to ensure the safety of other students and satisfactory performance on standardized tests, and youth encountering technical problems (e.g. missing documents, refusing to accept credits earned at detention facilities) that impede the reentry process (Feierman, Levick, & Mody, 2010). These impediments to reentry into academic settings could further fuel the school to prison pipeline and increase the likelihood that students reenter the juvenile justice system (Feierman et al., 2010).

Disproportionate school disciplinary trends are mirrored in community settings with Black youth being overrepresented in each stage of contact with the juvenile justice system from surveillance and arrest to imprisonment (Bishop & Leiber, 2012). Substantial research in this area suggests that this disproportionate minority contact may be largely due to a differential selection process in patterns in police surveillance, racial profiling, or biased sentencing (McGarell, 2012). More specifically, proactive police strategies aimed at reducing violence in impoverished urban areas where violent crime has been shown to be increasingly concentrated are likely to increase contact with minority youth (McGarell, 2012). This differential pattern is of increasing concern as involvement with the juvenile justice system can negatively impact long-term trajectories. For example, youth police records can influence future sentencing decisions and can foster youth perceptions of unfairness and distrust that may contribute to beliefs in the illegitimacy of authority and the likelihood of future offending (McGarell, 2012; Tyler & Fagan,

2012). Increasing concern around these issues has resulted in national efforts to reduce and examine disproportionate minority contact within schools and larger communities (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

A timely example of efforts to decrease policies that may inadvertently contribute to disproportionate minority contact can be seen in the August, 2013 ruling by a federal judge of the New York Police Department's "stop and frisk" searches as unconstitutional. "Stop and frisk" is a term used to refer to a police practice in which individuals are stopped for questioning and frisked for weapons based on "reasonable suspicion" of unlawful activity. Research has documented an increased usage of "stop and frisk" practices in urban areas, with minority individuals disproportionately being subject to these procedures. Gelman and colleagues (2007) found that when controlling for neighborhood crime rate, precinct specific practices, and estimated rates of crime committed by certain races in NYPD data, minorities were stopped 1.5 to 2.5 times more than their white counterparts. Many activists and scholars suggested that the overrepresentation of minorities in "stop and frisk" searches was due to racial profiling and that this was a violation of minority civil rights, specifically in regards to the right to privacy (Greene, 2012). Besides a sense of victimization felt by those individuals stopped, it is likely that "stop and frisk" practices also damage community police relationships with ethnic minority citizens perceiving police behavior as unfair and unjustifiable. This breakdown in relationships can lead to a delegitimization of police authority and can lead communities to feel less inclined to cooperate with authorities or to report crime (Lachman, La Vigne, & Matthews, 2012).

Concerns about reliance on school suspensions, the "school to prison pipeline", and ethnic minority youth's negative contact with school disciplinary enforcement figures (e.g., school police) point to the need to help schools and police prevent rule breaking and effectively

resolve conflict when it does arise. However, little is known about how youth experience police in school. Specifically, few studies have examined the degree to which youth trust how police exert their authority in school. Given this gap in knowledge, study 1 examined student trust in school police from both a student and school faculty perspective, with a focus on understanding whether or not some subgroups of students have more or less trust in their authority. Study 1 was, thus, a needs assessment—assessing whether there was a need for improved trust with school police.

Given concerns about the quality of relationships between school police and students, there are new efforts to transform the role of school police through whole school change programs. In order for these alternative interventions to traditional discipline approaches to be implemented successfully and have the best chance of obtaining desired outcomes, it was hypothesized that they must be acceptable to the individuals responsible for their implementation. The proposed study 2 examined possible remedies to meet the hypothesized need for improved trust with school police. Specifically, it examined the acceptability of restorative practices (RP) to a group of police officers within a large urban, high poverty school system. It also assessed the degree to which school faculty members viewed RP as aligning well with typical police practice in their schools. RP, described in detail below, is a school-wide intervention aimed at increasing community and decreasing disciplinary referrals. Acceptability of RP is particularly of interest in this population given the potential for a clash of philosophical viewpoints with RP's authoritative approach to discipline being in contrast to authoritarian viewpoints that may be more typically held by police officers.

**Role of School Resource Officers**

Intensification of school security policies to enhance school safety in the 1990s was not limited to the implementation of policies that encouraged a greater reliance on punitive and exclusionary actions in response to rule breaking. Increased zero tolerance policies were simultaneously mirrored in the implementation and expansion of more stringent security measures in schools such as the use of metal detectors, surveillance cameras, and the assignment of sworn police officials to patrol schools (Brown, 2006). Studies have found mixed results regarding the effectiveness of these new security measures, with some findings reporting enhanced school safety as a result of these measures and others reporting an increase in disorder (Theriot, 2009). Mounting concern has particularly been focused on the increased use of police officers in schools. These concerns often focus on the introduction of “new authoritative agents” (Brown, 2006) into school environments and worries about the possibility of “adversarial relationships” between students and school officials (Theriot, 2009). It has also been argued that an increased police presence within schools can lead to a criminalization of student behavior given that disciplinary offenses traditionally handled by teachers (e.g., disorderly conduct) may now be more likely to be handled by a school police officer (Hirschfield, 2008). This shift in disciplinary responsibility is particularly concerning given that some officers may have little or no training in education or developmental psychology thus making their actions less likely to be guided by a developmental framework geared at promoting a child’s educational attainment (Brown, 2006). This combination of exclusionary disciplinary policies and increased deployment of school resource officers, it has been argued, has resulted in the removal of thousands of students from mainstream education settings and increased arrests and referrals to juvenile justice settings (Feld & Bishop, 2012) thus fueling the so-called “school to prison pipeline”.

Despite concerns about the role of police officers within schools, the majority of research focuses on implementation of school based policing programs while little research has focused on understanding their role (Brown, 2006). This gap in knowledge is particularly concerning as recent current events, such as the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting have led to increased funding for school-based security measures, including increased support for school based policing. Additionally, the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) estimates that there are more than 20,000 law enforcement officers patrolling school grounds and considers school based policing to be one of the fastest growing areas of law enforcement (Brown, 2006). However, it may be pertinent to view the above-mentioned number as a conservative estimate because it is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of officers in schools as there are different types of law enforcement programs operating and no standard term for describing school police officers (Girouard, 2001). For example, some schools have their own police departments while others work closely with police departments in the community. Additionally, school police officers may also be known as school resource officers or school liaison officers (Theriot, 2009). For the purposes of this paper, the term school resource officers (SRO) will be primarily used, which is an encompassing term including armed police officers and security officers hired by school districts.

SROs are typically employed by a law enforcement agency and are assigned to work full or part-time in a school or schools serving a multi-faceted role (see Table 1). NASRO indicates that a SRO role will encompass the duties of a “law enforcement officer, counselor, and educator” (Burke, 2001). More specifically, their actual duties may involve traditional law enforcement tasks such as patrolling grounds, investigating criminal complaints, handling students who violate school rules and minimizing disruptions during the school day and during

transitions in and out school. Additionally, they may serve as mentors to students and educators to the school community about crime and violence prevention (Theriot, 2009). They may be armed and wear security or police uniforms and have various levels of training for the school setting. For example, specialized SROs are meant to be trained in school-based policing, including developmentally appropriate disciplinary practices, thus making a differentiation between official SROs and school police officers that are meant to specifically focus on law enforcement responsibilities within the schools without a mentoring component (Theriot, 2009).

Table 1

<i>Differences between SROs and Police Officers</i>		
	Group	
	Police officer	SRO
Duties	Law enforcement	Law enforcement, counselor, teacher, and liaison to external agencies
Dress	Uniformed and armed	Uniformed and may or may not be armed
Time spent on school campus	In response to serious incidents	Full-time or part-time with a daily appearance in their host school

As previously mentioned, little research has focused on the relationship between SROs and their impact on a positive school climate. However, many scholars (Hirschfield, 2008; Theriot, 2009) point to an increased criminalization of student behavior noting instances of students being arrested for minor or subjective offenses that traditionally were more likely to be handled through suspension or detention (Hirschfield, 2011). For example, Florida schools referred 26,990 school-based offenses to juvenile court during 2004-2005, the majority of which (76%) were for misdemeanors (Hirschfield, 2008). Additionally, researchers point to an increasing number of school-based arrests in some schools as further evidence of criminalization of school discipline. Again noting, that many arrests are for minor offenses or disorderly conduct



with a small percentage representing events that are considered serious threats to school safety (Theriot, 2009). However, potential problems exist with this data given that it is unclear if arrest rates from a particular school district are comparable to other districts and if crime-reporting procedures within schools are consistent (Brown, 2006; Theriot, 2009). Disproportionate minority contact within schools and the juvenile justice system may be further compounded by increased deployment of school police and increased police handling of school based disciplinary infractions. Hypothesizing that similar processes operate within schools as in the community, with relationships between students and SROs being influenced by the type of interchange experienced, it is important to consider ways to promote positive interactions between students and police in schools. Furthermore, given the possibility for disproportionate contact between minority youth and school police, it is also important to modify police behavior in ways that reduce hostility among minority youth leading to more respectful interchanges that may have potential benefits for student outcomes (Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005). To this end, it is important to learn more about student and SRO relationships within schools and to assess the potential need for alternative interventions for SRO use within schools.

There is little evidence examining whether or not SRO ideology differs from that of traditional police officers, particularly in relationship to police interactions with youth (Bazemore & Senjo, 1997). However, if one hypothesizes that SROs subscribe to the retributive philosophy that frames traditional criminal justice system models, than one might expect SRO practice to be in conflict with practices espoused by relational interventions. This conflict might particularly apply to RP as its focus on restoration of justice through inclusive problem-solving and reintegration conflicts with retributive models that emphasize deterrence and retribution. Furthermore, RP relies more on informal social control and less on “hierarchical authority

models” (Swanson & Owen, 2007), which may be in stark contrast to the authority structure within police organizations. Thus, SROs may need to undertake an attitudinal shift in their viewpoints towards students and their perception of student and authority roles in order to properly implement RP elements.

Given the multifaceted responsibilities of SROs within schools (i.e., mentoring and counseling), as dictated by NASRO, SROs may already be less rigidly attached to authoritarian viewpoints and hierarchical power structures that influence the power imbalance that often exists between police officers and individuals in the community. More specifically, teaching and counseling in a school setting may influence student and SRO perception of one another and may contribute to more positive interactions between students and SROs, which may in turn affect attitudinal shifts between the two groups (Jackson, 2002). Additionally, the framework for SRO involvement in schools is similar to that of the framework underlying community policing. That is to say that SRO philosophy, as dictated by NASRO, aims to create partnerships with important stakeholders in schools (e.g., teachers and students) in the same way that community policing aims to create alliances within the community in hopes of establishing safer communities (Swanson & Owen, 2007). Additionally, RP is high on both support and control suggesting a relationship to traditional police viewpoints that are high on control and low on support. SROs that are trained to understand the relationship between support and control in facilitating positive behavior may be able to focus on control without excluding support and in turn may be able to use RP elements effectively (Swanson & Owen, 2007).

SROs may be more likely to be philosophically positioned to accept RP elements than their traditional police counterparts. However, given traditional police attitudes, it is important to assess whether there is a conflict between SRO ideology, which may be more likely to

emphasize dominance and control, and RP ideology, which focuses on mutually agreeable settlements and empowerment of all involved parties. In fact, McCold & Wachtel (1998) found that police officers were likely to engage in acts of lecturing and domination. However, with proper training and feedback, those instances decreased. Given this potential for a philosophical shift required by RP and alternative interventions, it is important to assess fit with SRO practice.

### **Trust**

Due to increased police presence, surveillance, and security measures within schools, particularly in urban environments, students are becoming an increasingly policed group. They are increasingly likely to interact with police officers, security guards, and other adult authority figures making it important to understand more about youth perception of authority figures and legitimacy of authority (Fine et al., 2003). An established body of research suggests the importance of citizen involvement and collaboration with authority figures in order to promote effective implementation of safety programs (Flexon, Lurigio, & Greenleaf, 2009). Research also suggests that attitudes towards police and beliefs on legitimacy of authority influence compliance with laws (Hinds, 2009; Tyler, 1990). However, few studies have examined the relationship between juvenile attitudes towards police and other adult authority figures. Given research suggesting that youth are more likely to have negative attitudes towards police and that youth impressions of authority figures often inform their adult attitudes, it becomes even more important to understand the relationship between juveniles and adult authority figures, in order to further promote safety within schools and communities. If youth are unwilling to cooperate with safety interventions in schools and are unwilling to communicate with SROs and other school authority figures, then adult authority and effectiveness within schools could be undermined (Hinds, 2009). Rather than solely focusing on crime data as an indicator of SRO effects on student experience, it is pertinent to understand students' reports of their experiences, such as

their sense of safety within schools (e.g., fear of victimization) and their attitudes toward police within schools (e.g., trust; Brown, 2006). The current study examined student attitudes towards SROs in order to better understand the relationship between students and SROs. School faculty perspectives on SRO and student relationships were also examined to gain a more comprehensive view of SRO and student interactions within the identified schools.

Legitimacy is comprised of a perceived obligation to obey (Tyler, 1990) and can be defined as “a property of an authority or an institution that leads people to feel that that authority or institution is entitled to be deferred to and obeyed” (Hinds, 2009; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). It is argued that authoritative agents cannot secure compliance solely on the basis of sanctions for rule-breaking but must partially rely on a voluntary rule-conformity (Tyler, 1990). In fact, research suggests that people subscribing to the legitimacy of police authority are more likely to comply with police directives and with authority figures in general (Hinds, 2009). Little research has focused on youth legitimacy of authority but a few studies have found that youth perceptions of legitimacy of authority mirror that of adults. Namely, youth who view police as more legitimate have been found to be more willing to cooperate with police (Hinds, 2009).

Additionally, some research has focused on youth attitudes toward police and police-youth relationships. Research has documented that younger adults overall express more negative attitudes towards police than older adults and are less likely to trust or cooperate with police (Hurst & Frank, 2000), particularly in urban areas with a large minority presence (Flexon et al., 2009). Additionally, due to issues of disproportionate minority contact and hostile exchanges with police officers, minority youth, particularly those from disadvantaged neighborhoods and who have had prior negative contact with police, may be more likely to display negative attitudes towards police (Flexon et al., 2009; Stoutland, 2001). This relationship between type of

interaction and attitudes toward police is particularly relevant to the school environment given the likelihood of minority youth to be disproportionately identified in disciplinary offenses – offenses that may be increasingly handled by police in schools. However, research has yet to fully address whether or not SROs are experienced differently than police in the community. Some research suggests that SROs are viewed more positively than police officers but that students in schools with SROs developed more negative views towards police officers than students in schools without SROs (Brown & Benedict, 2005) with other studies finding no significant contribution on youth perception of police (Brown & Benedict, 2005; Jackson, 2002).

Attitudes towards police begin forming in adolescence when there is an increased likelihood of interaction with police given increased police presence and security measures within schools. However, as previously mentioned, little research has examined the degree to which adolescents trust police in their schools. Given increased police presence and increased likelihood of police to handle disciplinary offenses, it is important to understand more about youth perception of SROs. Furthermore, given issues of disproportionality in disciplinary referrals, it is important to understand more about trust in relationship to various youth subgroups (e.g., gender, race). Study 1 assessed these relationships in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of youth perceptions of and interactions with SROs.

### **Restorative Practices**

Restorative approaches to school discipline offer an alternative to traditional zero tolerance discipline policies. In addition, they serve as a paradigm shift from the punitive nature of traditional discipline techniques by emphasizing community building, empowerment, and problem-solving elements. That is to say that restorative approaches aim to take a preventative approach to discipline versus the reactive approach of traditional disciplinary methods (Wachtel,

O'Connell, & Wachtel, 2010). Restorative approaches have their roots in the restorative justice movement, which can be traced back to many different cultures (e.g., Maori, American Indian) and religious traditions (e.g., Judaism). Restorative justice aims to bring together those affected by an infraction or crime to discuss how various members of the community were affected by the infraction and to repair the harm caused and/ or felt by the infraction (Coates, Umbreit, & Vos, 2003). Emphasis is placed on collaborative problem solving and an understanding of the subjective experiences of those involved with the infraction. The main focus is on mending relationships in contrast to placing blame, with respect being the underlying value of the process (Zehr & Toews, 2004). Practitioners and scholars outside of the US have expanded restorative justice approaches to be used in schools to not only include interventions occurring after an infraction but to include preventative elements that prevent infractions in the first place.

Wachtel, Costello and Wachtel (2009), at the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), have adapted restorative justice techniques to be used in the US school setting as a 2-year whole school change program (SaferSanerSchools) titled "Restorative Practices" (RP). This intervention is meant to not only be used for reactive purposes but to be integrated into daily instructional practices with a focus on prevention and intervention that aims to transform student and adult relationships from one based on control to a more meaningful relationship based on mutual respect thereby creating a more positive school climate. More specifically, from a prevention approach, RP aims to strengthen relationships, increase student investment in the community and rules, and hold students accountable to one another. This comprehensive school based approach allows for restorative practices to be used on a continuum ranging from the informal to formal. This continuum of approaches involves 11 essential RP

elements that include but are not limited to affective statements, restorative questions, proactive and reactive circles, and formal conferences (Gonzalez, 2012).

RP aims to promote support and connection, uphold structure and accountability, and integrate fair student process. These fundamental tenets are based on theory about and evidence for an authoritative and developmentally sensitive approach to adolescent socialization (Gregory et al., 2010). The Authoritative Discipline Theory promotes a combination of firm but fair approaches to school discipline and encourages warm and empathic communications between teachers and individual students (Gregory & Cornell, 2009). Authoritative discipline approaches may be particularly relevant to issues of disproportionate minority contact within school discipline given that African American students report less fairness and support compared to White students in schools (Thompson, Gregory, Cornell & Fan, 2012). Relationships between African American students and school officials may be hostile, with students being perceived as troublesome and problematic. More specifically, African American students seem to receive differential treatment beginning at the classroom level where they tend to receive disciplinary referrals for infractions that are more subjective in nature (e.g. insubordination, misconduct/defiance) (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Cultural barriers and low levels of trust may contribute to negative and/or hostile interactions between school officials and students (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). In addition, teachers and other adults in a school (e.g., administrative officials and school police officers) may not have the skills or supports necessary to deescalate and manage interactions with students that may seem hostile in nature. RP elements may provide the relational resources necessary to enhance the quality of relationships and communications between students and school authoritative agents thus contributing to a more positive school climate and possibly legitimizing teacher and administrator authority.

Given that the formation of youth attitudes towards authoritative agents, such as SROs, has a somewhat lasting impact on an individual, it is important to consider programming, such as RP, within schools that can contribute to the creation of positive exchanges between students and adults in schools through fair procedures with fair outcomes. Promoting positive interactions with SROs and other school authoritative agents is even more important because weak attachment to school and adults within schools could lead to more widespread antisocial values and behaviors, creating hostile sentiments towards police and other authoritative agents (Agnew, 2005; Flexon et al., 2009; Levy, 2001). It is important to consider alternative types of programming within schools that could improve trust between authority figures, such as SROs, and students in order to promote positive interchanges and make schools safer communities. RP may offer one such alternative.

Given that many SRO responsibilities within schools involve disciplinary measures taken in response to student misbehavior, their use of RP elements would likely fall within the intervention domain of RP elements (see Appendix 1). Intervention elements are aimed at repairing harm and restoring community. More specifically, SRO RP training could emphasize well-implemented responsive circles, small impromptu circles, and restorative conference circles. In this way, SROs would have interventions to address wrongdoing while directly involving the primary stakeholders (i.e., victims and perpetrators) in a process that emphasizes accountability and solutions to repair harm. These modes of intervention could act in substitution to more typical fact-finding processes that assign blame and punishment, often through the use of exclusionary measures. In a hypothetical real life situation, this might consist of an SRO breaking up a fight in a school hallway and having the involved students answer a series of restorative questions (e.g., Who has been affected by what you have done? What do you think



can be done to make this right?) in front of each other rather than assigning an automatic suspension for such behavior.

### **Treatment Acceptability and Implementation**

Given that RP uses a problem solving conflict mediation model that likely contrasts with traditional police views on handling conflict, it is important to understand the degree to which RP is compatible with SRO roles and if it could be an effective alternative to more punitive discipline approaches. Due to the nascent stage of RP research, we know little about whether SROs would be likely to deem RP as an acceptable intervention and whether they would be willing to implement RP elements. Implementing whole school interventions to change how school staff approach community building and school discipline is a challenging process. Implementation can be affected by personal implementer factors, such as attitudes and beliefs about the specified intervention, with acceptability ranking high as an influential characteristic on willingness to implement. That is to say that for initiatives to be successful, practitioners may need to find them “acceptable,” meaning that they are useful and somewhat congruent with their current approaches. More specifically, acceptability has typically been defined as “the extent to which individuals describe themselves as liking interventions and perceive an intervention to be fair, appropriate, and reasonable for an identified population” (Forman, Fagley, Chu, & Walkup, 2012, p. 208). The guiding assumption is that individuals are more likely to implement interventions that they like and believe to be useful for a given population. Early research examining acceptability of treatments designed for clinical use found that acceptability ratings were higher for effective programs and lower for those programs with adverse effects, suggesting that programs believed to be more appropriate were also deemed more acceptable (Kazdin, 1981;

Han & Weiss, 2005). This perceived effectiveness may act as an incentive for teachers in initial implementation and intervention fidelity (Han & Weiss, 2005).

While there is an intuitive relationship between treatment acceptability and likelihood to implement that intervention, little research has examined this relationship and current results are mixed. For example, Beidas et al. (2012) found a positive relationship between adherence to cognitive-behavioral treatment and school-based provider attitudes towards evidence-based practice. In a study examining teacher implementation of treatment plans following behavioral consultation, openness to using evidence based practice, and a belief that evidence based practice aligns with current practice were related to increased adherence. In contrast, Noell et al. (2005) found that teachers did not implement interventions rated as acceptable to a great extent suggesting that acceptability is not sufficient for implementation. However, given the relationship between treatment acceptability and willingness to implement, it is still possible that acceptability may play a role in the beginning stages of intervention implementation.

Given that school personnel tend to be the primary implementers of school-based interventions, it is important to assess their motivation for and attitudes about a particular intervention. That is to say that it is important to examine implementer belief in the effectiveness of the intervention and willingness to devote their time to core intervention elements. Monitoring implementer attitudes can help determine whether there is a need to consider individual and organizational interventions that can address potential barriers and ultimately contribute to intervention success (Forman et al., 2013). As such, it is important to assess SROs' perception of RP, its alignment with their current practice, and their willingness to use RP elements to achieve their objectives.

**Summary**

In summary, increased reliance on exclusionary disciplinary methods in schools, particularly with ethnic minority youth, and disproportionate minority police contact in the community have led scholars to theorize about the existence of a “school to prison pipeline” in which ethnic minority youth are increasingly likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). Research examining disproportionate minority contact suggests a lack of evidence supporting higher rates of minority misbehavior in school settings (Gregory et al., 2010) and in the community (McGarell, 2012). Given the potential for negative trajectories associated with youth involvement in the juvenile justice system, increasing concern at the national level has resulted in efforts to examine opportunities to promote safe and positive interactions between individuals in schools and larger communities. Concerns about increased criminalization of ethnic minority youth behavior have fueled interest in the role of school resource officers and their relationship with school safety. Additionally, current events (e.g., Sandy Hook) have led to mounting support and funding for increased police presence in schools. Despite increasing support for police involvement in schools and increased police presence in schools, little research has examined student perception of SROs and/or legitimacy of authority within a school environment. Positive interchanges between youth and authoritative agents may be necessary to promote safe environments where youth are willing to cooperate and uphold community rules. Programming, such as RP, exists that aims to increase positive interactions within members of the school community but research has yet to examine acceptability of RP as an alternative to traditional SRO practice and the potential for RP to enhance interpersonal interactions between youth and authoritative agents in schools.

This dissertation was comprised of two studies. Study 1 was a needs assessment of youth perception of SROs based on student and school faculty report. We know little about the relationship between students and SROs but given increased police presence in schools and increased likelihood of police to handle disciplinary issues, it is an important area of research in order to help reduce conflict and the “school to prison pipeline.” Given the potential for negative experiences with police in the community, particularly for ethnic minority youth, rigorous research should tease apart the degree of trust in SROs beyond the effects of potentially negative experiences of police in the community. Thus, Study 1 aimed to pinpoint the degree of trust in SROs, distinct from students’ positive or negative experience of police in the community and their history of suspension. Study 2 assessed SRO experience of RP training and RP’s potential as acceptable alternative programming for SRO use in schools. More specifically, we were particularly interested in SRO perception of the acceptability of RP as an alternative to more punitive approaches that are typical of the juvenile justice system. We were also interested in school faculty perception of RP fit with SRO practice given faculty familiarity with the discipline landscape of their school. Beyond acceptability, we were also interested in SRO’s willingness to implement RP. Decreasing the racial discipline gap in both schools and juvenile justice settings requires collaborative approaches with shared goals among involved agencies.

The research questions were as follows:

### **Study 1: Trust Needs Assessment with SROs**

**How do students perceive SRO fairness and consistency (i.e., trust) in application of rules? Is there a need for improved student trust in SROs? How do teachers perceive the relationship between SROs and students in their schools?**

The hypotheses were as follows:

**Hypothesis 1a:** It was hypothesized that when comparing student perception of trust in teachers and SROs, students would have lower trust, on average in SROs compared to their higher trust with teachers. In fact, overall patterns in student-reported SRO trust would suggest a need to improve SRO-student relationships. The pattern would hold when accounting for student experience of police in the community. The findings would also hold above and beyond students' history of suspension.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Given disproportionalities in exclusionary discipline between African American males and students belonging to other races and genders, it was anticipated that African American males would report the lowest trust in SROs as compared to other students. The findings would hold above and beyond students' history of suspension. This might indicate that the greatest need for improved trust would be with specific vulnerable subgroups in schools.

**Hypothesis 1c:** It was also anticipated that students with higher numbers of suspension and/or higher reported victimization in school settings, would report less trust in SROs than other students. Like hypothesis 1b, this might indicate that specific vulnerable subgroups in schools would have the greatest need for improved trust.

**Hypothesis 1d:** No a priori hypotheses were made in regard to teacher impressions of relationship quality between SROs and students. Instead themes were derived from analysis of teacher interview transcriptions.

## **Method**

### **Procedures**

Members of the Rutgers research team presented Study 1 and invited teacher participation during a series of interviews with school staff in June of 2014. Fifty-one school faculty members voluntarily consented to participate in a series of interviews. Interviews were

administered individually and were later transcribed by members of the Rutgers research team. Of the 51 faculty members, 30 teachers, across the 2 schools, further consented to participate in the survey portion of the study. Those participating teachers were then asked to select a focal classroom from their course schedules and to provide a rationale for their choice. In the focal classrooms, teachers presented the research study and invited student participation. Consented students were administered an online or paper survey about their experiences of the focal classroom, school, RP, and trust in school authorities. Teachers indicated whether they had the computer and Internet access necessary to complete online surveys or whether they needed paper/pencil copies. Online and paper survey measures were identical in content and were given to students on the basis of teacher indicated focal classroom resources.

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the proposed study and then an application was submitted to the high schools' approval board. Approval for the proposed study was granted by the Rutgers IRB in December 2013. Approval from the school district was granted in May 2014.

### **Participants**

**Intervention schools.** The two intervention schools were located in an urban area in a Northeastern US city. Intervention schools were selected due to a partnership with IIRP to implement RP over a 2-year implementation process. The two schools were similar in composition and were the result of restructuring of one larger high school campus. According to data from the 2013-2014 NJ School Performance Report, the combined total enrollment of both schools was 1,693 students. Fifty-seven percent of students were male and 43% of students were female. Fifty-three percent of students were Hispanic, 43% of students were Black, and the remaining 4% of students were American Indian/Alaskan native, Asian, and White. Based on

program participation, 72% of students were considered economically disadvantaged with the remaining 30% of students not being listed as such. Thus, the schools had a predominately low-income student body. According to discipline data from the 2011 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), the majority of exclusionary discipline referrals were issued to Black and Hispanic students. More specifically, 59% of students receiving out-of-school suspensions were Hispanic, 32% were Black, and 9% were White. No in-school suspensions or expulsions were reported.

**School faculty, interview participants.** Interview data was also collected from a sample of 50 school faculty members belonging to the two public high schools. Fifty teachers and one administrator originally consented to participate in the interviews, with one teacher later declining to provide data beyond demographic information. Within those schools, teachers who had previously attended a RP workshop were asked to voluntarily participate in a single recorded interview, conducted by the Rutgers research team, aimed at assessing RP implementation and acceptability within the intervention schools. The interview included specific questions targeting teachers' impressions of RP fit with SRO practice within intervention schools.

Of the 51 school faculty members, 25 participants self-reported that they were male ( $n = 25$ , 49%), 25 self-reported that they were female ( $n = 25$ , 49%), and one participant did not report their gender ( $n = 1$ , 2%). Five participants were aged 18-24 years old ( $n = 5$ , 10%), 13 participants were aged 25-34 years old ( $n = 13$ , 25%), 11 participants were aged 35-44 years old ( $n = 11$ , 21%), 11 participants were aged 45-54 years old ( $n = 11$ , 22%), and 6 were aged 55-64 years old ( $n = 6$ , 12%); five participants did not self-report their age range ( $n = 5$ , 10%).

The interview sample was diverse in race and ethnicity. Sixteen participants identified themselves as Black/African American, 12 participants identified as White/Caucasian, 2 participants identified as Puerto Rican, 2 participants identified as Cuban, 8 participants

identified as Other Hispanic/Spanish/Latino, 1 participant identified as Korean, 1 participant identified as Asian Indian, 1 participant identified as Other Asian, and 1 participant identified as both White/Caucasian and Other Asian. Additionally, survey participants were able to specify if they belonged to a race/ethnic group other than those provided. One of the Other Hispanic/Spanish/Latino participants specified that they were Dominican while another Other Hispanic/Spanish/Latino participant specified that they were Iranian, Ecuadorian, and Italian. One of the Black/African American participants specified that they were Sudanese. Additionally, one Asian Indian participant, one Native American and Afro-Caribbean participant, and one Haitian participant were included in the study; 5 participants did not report their race and ethnicity. Participating teachers' self-reports ranged from 1 year in their current role to 29 years in their role as a teacher or administrator. In sum, the teacher interview sample ( $N = 51$ ) represents diverse ethnic/race groups, varying years of experience, and equal gender distribution.

**Student survey participants.** A subsample of teachers from the interview sample detailed above were followed up with the subsequent school year and were asked to voluntarily participate in the research study for three continuous semesters. As previously mentioned, a focal classroom, in which data was collected, was selected by the consented teachers from their course schedules. Students from their focal classrooms were asked to voluntarily participate in the study after they obtained formal parent and guardian consent. Thirty teachers consented to participate in the study. From the 30 teacher selected focal classrooms, 113 students had consent to participate in the study. Of the 113 participating students, 3 students were excluded due to an invalid response pattern, 10 students were excluded due to incomplete variables in the dataset, and 9 students were excluded on the basis of belonging to racial groups (i.e., white, mixed) that were not adequately represented in the sample in order to be included in any meaningful



analyses. Thus the final student sample was slightly reduced ( $N = 91$ ). Participation across the two schools was fairly even with 44 students from one school (2.6% of total enrollment) and 47 students from the other school (2.8% of total enrollment).

The student sample was comprised of slightly more male (53%) than female (47%) students. Thirty-three percent of students reported that one or both of their caregivers did not graduate from high school and 36% of students reported that one or both their caregivers did graduate from high school, whereas 31% of students reported that their caregivers had completed some higher education (community college or beyond). The reported level of caregiver education suggests that the sample was predominately comprised of students living in families with low socioeconomic status. Students in the sample ranged from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade with students self-reporting the following grade levels: 38% 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 22% 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 8% 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and 32% 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The majority of students (89%) reported that they had never been suspended from school, whereas 11% of students reported that they had been suspended for one or more days.

The sample primarily consisted of Hispanic students with 67% of students self-reporting as Hispanic/Latino, 25% of students reporting as Black or African/American, 5% of students reporting as belonging to two or more races, and 3% of students identifying as belonging to an “other” racial group. Seventy four percent of students reported that their ethnic background would be considered Hispanic or Latino, whereas 26% of students reported that they belonged to a different ethnic background. This sample is reflective of the racial composition of the total enrolled students.

## Measures

**Student self-reported history of suspension.** Students were asked to self-report on their number of suspensions.

**Student self-reported race.** Given the small sample size, a number of theoretically grounded decisions were made to reduce the number of racial categories reflected in the study sample. Only 4 students self-reported “white” as their racial identity. Those students were excluded from the dataset because the small sample size ( $n = 4$ ) limited power in statistical analysis to detect effects particular to this group. Additionally, four students self-reported that they were of mixed race. Given research suggesting that discipline referrals may be issued on the basis of how teachers phenotypically identify students (Simson, 2012), students were included in the Hispanic or Black racial category, if they identified as being a member of one of those two groups. This resulted in two racial groupings for analyses (African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino). While subsuming these students under a singular racial category oversimplifies the complexities of racial experiences (Monroe, 2013), it is believed that important insights can be gained from data analysis while acknowledging the limitations of this approach. Students that self-reported as belonging to other multiracial categories or did not report their racial identity were excluded from the analysis due to their small sample size ( $n = 4$ ).

**Trust.** Student trust in SROs and teachers in their school was examined through four items adapted from a modified scale examining teacher authority (see Appendix B; Gregory & Ripski, 2008) that was originally adapted from Tyler and Degoe’s (1995) scale measuring beliefs in government authority. Items were scalar in nature and asked respondents to rate on a 4-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (e.g., “Thinking about police in your school, I trust the way they use their power and authority”). The adapted scale was found to have a good Cronbach’s alpha of .79 in the current study. Student trust in teachers (4 items, alpha = .83) served as a comparison for student trust in SROs.

**Police experience in the community.** Student experience of police outside of school was measured through two items that assessed personal and witnessed positive experiences with police in the community (see Appendix C). Items were asked on a 4-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (e.g., “Over the past school year, I have personally had positive experiences with police outside of school”). No previously established measures were found to be appropriate. Based on theory and prior research (Flexon et al., 2009; Hinds, 2008) the items were written for this study. Each item had good face validity (e.g., “Over the past school year, I have seen others have negative experiences with police outside of school”). Other types of reliability and validity of items have yet to be assessed. The two items were formed into a positive police perceptions scale ( $\alpha = .65$ )

**Student victimization.** Student victimization was examined through 6-items assessing student safety problems in school during the past year. Seven additional items also assessed student perception of teasing and bullying in the classroom and school. Safety problems items were taken from a modified victimization scale (Gregory et al., 2010) that was original adapted from Gottfredson’s (1999) victimization index. Items asked respondents to rate the occurrence of an instance on a 4-point scale from never to 6 or more times (e.g., “Has anyone actually beaten you up or really hurt you when you were at school?” “Have you brought something to school to protect yourself”). The modified scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .67 in this study. Teasing and bullying items were taken from a bullying scale from a School Climate Bullying survey (Cornell & Sheras, 2003; McConville, & Cornell, 2003) that consisted of a 4-item Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying scale (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009) and 3 additional items assessing how students from different neighborhoods get along. One item was dropped from the Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying scale (i.e., “Students at this school accept me for who I am”). The items were scalar

in nature and asked respondents to rate on a 4-point likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (e.g., “In this classroom, students often get teased about their clothing or physical appearance;” “In this classroom, students get teased or put down because of their race or ethnicity”). The modified scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .88 in this study.

**Teacher interviews.** In June of 2014, teachers and administrators were asked to participate in 30-minute long semi-structured digitally recorded interviews aimed at assessing RP implementation and acceptability within intervention schools. Several interview questions asked participants to provide opinions on relationships between SROs and school members (i.e., staff, students) and RP fit with typical SRO practice (see Appendix E). In answering these questions, teachers were encouraged to provide examples as support for their answers.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Descriptive statistics were examined using means, ranges, and standard deviations.

#### **Hypothesis 1a:**

**Paired samples T-test.** A paired samples *t*-test was used to compare student perception of teachers and SROs.

**Analysis of covariance.** An ANCOVA was used to assess for differences in mean ratings of student trust when comparing teachers and SROs (“estimated marginal means”) while accounting for covariates (number of suspensions, race/ethnicity, community experience of police ). *Eta squared* was calculated to determine the size of the effect.

#### **Hypothesis 1b:**

**Multiple regression.** A block wise regression was used to assess whether the relationship between SRO trust and race was moderated by gender. SRO trust was entered as a dependent variable. Number of suspensions was entered as a covariate in Block 1, gender and race were

entered in Block 2 to assess whether gender and race predicted SRO trust, and an interaction term (gender X race) was entered into Block 3 to assess whether gender moderated the relationship between trust and race. The regression estimates for the interaction terms were then examined.

**Hypothesis 1c:**

**Multiple regression.** A block wise regression was used to assess the relationship between student-reported SRO trust, victimization numbers and suspensions. Number of reported suspensions was entered as a covariate in Block 1 and victimization and bullying scales were entered into Block 2. The regression estimates for the interaction terms were then examined.

**Hypothesis 1d:** Themes in the interview transcripts were assessed through a systematic qualitative examination of data. Grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used in that hypotheses were generated on the basis of themes identified in the examined interviews. The researcher read through interview transcripts and identified patterns in the responses. Once patterns were identified, the researcher re-read the interview transcripts to ensure that the identified themes were comprehensive. Those patterns were then assigned short hand codes that the researcher used to assess for redundant concepts, isolated ideas, and alternative explanations.

## Results

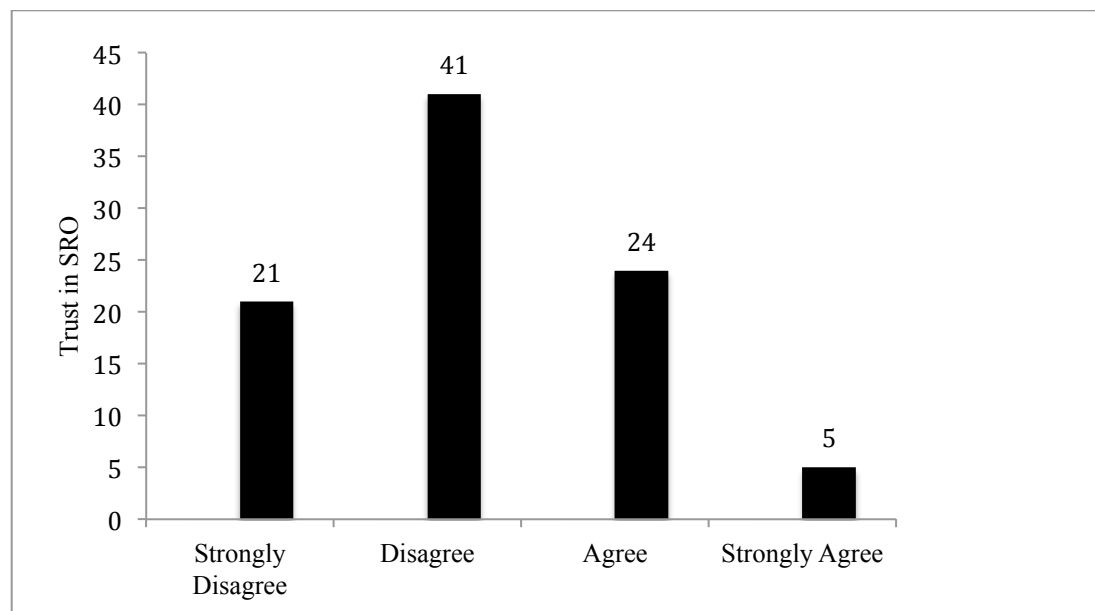
### Quantitative Findings

**Descriptive Findings.** Descriptive statistics for the teacher trust, SRO trust, victimization, and community police experience variables can be found in Table 2. The full ranges of the scales were utilized ( $min = 1$ ;  $max = 4$ ) with the exception of the victimization and teasing and bullying scales. Responses on the victimization scale indicate that the majority of students reported low frequency occurrences of victimization within the school setting. Similarly, teasing and bullying responses indicate that students generally perceived low levels of teasing within their respective schools. The majority of the responses on the trust scales suggest that students were mixed in the degree to which they experienced teachers and SROs in their schools to be fair and consistent. Figure 1 provides an example of the range of mixed responses provided by students when reporting on trust in SROs as measured by fairness and consistency. In Figure 1, student responses on the trust scale are clustered (ranging from 1.00 to 1.75 = strongly disagree, 2.00 to 2.75 = disagree, 3.00 to 3.75 = agree, and 4.00 to 4.00 = strongly agree).

Table 2

*Descriptive Analysis of Trust, Student Victimization, and Police Experience Variables*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Trust SRO	2.43	0.74	1.00	4.00
Trust Teacher	2.94	0.68	1.25	4.00
Victimization	1.17	0.30	1.00	2.67
Teasing & Bullying	2.08	0.81	1.00	3.83
Police positive experiences	2.65	0.78	1.00	4.00

*Note.* *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.*Figure 1.* Student response range on scale measuring student trust in SROs.

**Correlations.** Pearson correlations were computed for all control, independent, and dependent variables and are reported in Table 2. All correlations were in the expected direction. Positive experiences with police were significantly positively correlated with reported trust in teachers ( $r = .27, p = .01$ ) and reported trust in SROs ( $r = .49, p = .00$ ). This positive relationship

suggests that students reporting higher levels of trust in teachers and SROs also reported having positive experiences with police in the community. Student-reported trust in SROs was also significantly positively correlated with student-reported trust in teachers ( $r = .62, p = .00$ ). This suggests that students who reported a higher perception of SROs as fair and consistent also reported a higher perception of teachers as fair and consistent. None of the remaining variables were significantly correlated indicating that they likely measured distinct or unrelated constructs.

Table 3

*Correlations Among Student Characteristics, Trust in Teachers and SROs, and Victimization*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Race/Ethnicity	_____	-0.15	0.15	0.14	0.01	-0.01	0.14	0.01
2. Gender		_____	-0.12	-0.14	0.11	0.09	-0.04	0.12
3. Number of suspensions			_____	0.06	0.13	0.10	0.02	-0.02
4. Victimization				_____	-0.03	-0.17	-0.07	-0.05
5. Teasing & Bullying					_____	-0.05	-0.20	-0.18
6. Trust_SRO						_____	.62*	.49*
7. Trust_Tch							_____	.27**
8. Positive police experiences								_____

$p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .001$ \*

**Student Perception of Teachers and SROs.** A paired samples  $t$ -test was run to assess for significant differences between student ratings of trust in teachers in comparison with trust in SROs. Statistical analysis revealed that there was a significant difference between student trust in teachers ( $M = 2.94, SD = .68$ ) and student trust in SROs ( $M = 2.43, SD = .74$ );  $t(90) = 7.69, p = .00$ . These results suggest that students have more trust in teachers or in other words perceive teachers to be more fair and consistent in their interactions with students than they perceive SROs.



A Repeated Measures ANCOVA was run to assess whether the differences in student ratings of teacher and SRO trust remained when accounting for community experiences with police officers and number of suspensions. The significant difference in ratings across teachers and SRO trust held when controlling for student's positive experiences with police in the community,  $F(1,89) = 20.13, p = .00$ . In other words, whether or not students reported positive experiences of police in the community, students still held higher trust in teachers than SROs in the school. That said, significant differences did not hold when accounting for student number of suspensions,  $F(1,89) = .43, p = .51$ . This means that when accounting for students' self-reported history of suspension, perceived trust in SROs was no longer statistically significantly different from perceived trust in teachers.

**Predicting student-reported SRO trust.** Blockwise regression analyses (Models 1-3) were run to assess the relationship between race, gender, and trust. Blocks were entered in succession to determine the unique variance explained by race and gender when accounting for the covariate, number of suspensions. An interaction term (gender X race) was also entered to test for moderation effects. In each model, number of suspensions was entered into Block 1, gender and race were entered as Block 2, and gender X race was entered into Block 3 (see Table 4). Results indicated that there were no significant relationships between race, gender, and student-reported trust in SROs. The interaction of gender X race was also not found to moderate student-reported trust in SROs. This means that neither student gender nor student race was related to their reported trust in SROs.

Table 4

*Regression Analysis for Race and Gender as Moderators of Student Trust in SROs*

	SRO Trust		
	$R^2$ change	$\beta$ at each step	$p$ at each step
Block 1: Suspensions	0.01		
		0.10	0.33
Block 2: Gender	0.01		
		0.11	0.33
Race		-0.01	0.96
Block 3: Gender X Race	0.00		
		-0.17	0.61

Additional blockwise regression analyses (Models 1-3) were run to assess the relationship between student-reported incidents of victimization and suspensions within the school setting and reported trust in SROs. Blocks were entered in succession to determine the unique variance in trust in SROs explained by victimization when accounting for the covariate, number of suspensions. In each model, number of suspensions was entered into Block 1, victimization incidents were entered into Block 2, and perception of teasing and bullying within the school was entered into Block 3 (see Table 5). Results indicated that there were no significant relationships between experienced victimization or perceived teasing and bullying within the school setting and student-reported trust in SROs.

Table 5

*Regression Analysis for Victimization Predicting Trust in SROs*

	$R^2$ change	$\beta$ at each step	$p$ at each step
Block 1: Suspensions	0.01	0.10	0.33
Block 2: Victimization	0.03	-0.18	0.10
Block 3: Teasing & Bullying	0.01	-0.07	0.51

**Qualitative Findings on Teacher Perception of SRO-Student Relationships.**

Data from interviews with teachers and administrators yielded two primary themes related to teacher impressions of police roles in the intervention schools. More specifically, one theme demonstrated that many teachers saw SRO-student relationships varied depending on the subgroup of SRO. They noted power differentials between security guards and police in intervention schools. More specifically, of the 13 teachers who commented on student perception of police compared to security guards, a majority of teachers seemed to report that students had a greater respect or deference to the authority of police officers in comparison to school security guards ( $n = 11$ , XX% of sample). For example, one teacher reported that:

For security, it depends on the person. Mr. J, great. Mr. A, I've heard kids curse him off right to his face and just walk away from him. I've heard that happen to him and some of the other security guys. The police, they don't mess with. It's just a different atmosphere (T21).

Similarly, another teacher noted:

I think they would never take a run at like a police officer but a security guard, they would try to get around them because all a security guard has is their hands and they're

not necessarily allowed to use that. They definitely mess with the security guards a lot (T40).

Teachers reported that that these differences in deference to authority were possibly mediated by student experience with police officers in their community, familiarity and increased exposure to security guards, and/or potential consequences attached to negative interactions with the respective authority figure. For example, one teacher said: “they experience them differently, they’ll tell you which security [officials] they can get away with things and which they can’t. They know” (T5). Similarly, another teacher said “they know if the police are coming, then it’s serious. Security guards is kind of serious. Discipline team is kind of serious, but if the police come, it’s definitely serious” (T13).

A second theme, indicated by the data, suggested that teachers generally held positive impressions of SROs and found SROs to be responsive to student and teacher disciplinary needs ( $n = 27$ , XX% of sample). For example, one teacher reported:

They have a good rapport with [students]. I just think it’s family oriented and with myself as well. Like, they got to know me very quickly and [are] very helpful when I need them. There’s quite a few of them. They are accessible (T28).

Similarly, when referencing SROs, another teacher reported, “They’re approachable and they interact with the students. They laugh, they joke, and they know them by name. It’s not just a security guard, they know who that security guard is, so it’s nice.” (T17).

Other teachers continued to note that SROs maintained an active presence in the school, indicating that “they are around and present and in the hallway” (T39) should teachers or students experience a safety issue. Additionally, teachers noted that SROs primarily maintained a positive rapport and a sense of familiarity in their interactions with students and teachers. One

teacher noted that she believed that “students treat them as they are cousins, brothers, sisters, uncles. They’re incredible” (T1). Remaining teachers reported mixed impressions of SRO interactions within their schools ( $n = 10$ ) and a few teachers reported largely negative interactions with SROs ( $n = 3$ ). For example, one teacher reported:

Security officers...some of them would be kind of antagonistic with the kids. Sometimes situations will arise that will blow up because they don’t know how to address situations without it escalating into a conflict...I mean they’re security officers, so they only have authority attached to them not relationships with the kids (T30).

Teacher impressions of SROs seemed to be mediated by personality based characteristics of SROs, with many teachers noting that interactions with SROs were variable depending on individual officer personality.

### **Study 2: SRO acceptability of RP**

**To what degree do SRO participants in the RP training find the RP elements “acceptable” and potentially useful in their everyday practice? To what degree do teachers believe RP fits with typical SRO practice?**

**Hypothesis 2a:** It was hypothesized that RP acceptability would be a significant predictor of willingness to implement RP for SROs and teachers.

**Hypothesis 2b:** It was hypothesized that SRO RP training participants would find RP elements mostly acceptable but not as acceptable as teacher participants in the RP training.

**Hypothesis 2c:** No formal hypothesis was made in regard to teacher impressions of RP acceptability with SRO practice. Instead themes were derived from analysis of teacher interview transcriptions.

## Methods

### Participants

Data for Study 2 was collected from teachers and SROs from public high schools in an urban Northeastern US city. These schools were selected due to a partnership with the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) to begin a 2-year implementation of RP in the schools. All teachers participating in the study attended a 1-2 day RP workshop in the fall of 2013 or winter of 2014 in the school district. Fifty-one teachers and 11 SROs and school safety officials completed anonymous survey data. Of the 51 teachers, 21 self-reported that they were female ( $n = 21$ , 41%), 25 self-reported that they were male ( $n = 25$ , 49%), and 5 participants did not report their gender ( $n = 5$ , 10%). Teachers were diverse in race and ethnicity. Fifteen participants identified themselves as White/Caucasian ( $n = 15$ , 38%), 10 identified as Black/African American ( $n = 10$ , 25%), 7 identified as Hispanic/ Spanish/ Latino ( $n = 7$ , 17%), 3 identified as Puerto Rican ( $n = 3$ , 7%), 3 identified as Other Asian ( $n = 3$ , 7%), 1 identified as Native American/Indian ( $n = 1$ , 3%), 1 identified as Asian Indian ( $n = 1$ , 3%), and 11 participants did not report their race or ethnicity. Of the 11 SROs, 7 self-reported that they were male ( $n = 7$ , 64%) and 4 self-reported that they were female ( $n = 4$ , 36%). The majority of SROs self-reported that they were Black/African American ( $n = 9$ , 82%) and 2 participants did not report on their race/ethnicity.

Interview data was also collected from the same sample of 50 school faculty members belonging to the two public high schools previously reported in study 1. Fifty teachers and one administrator originally consented to participate in the interviews, with one teacher later declining to provide data beyond demographic information. Within those schools, teachers who had previously attended a RP workshop were asked to voluntarily participate in a single recorded

interview, conducted by the Rutgers research team, aimed at assessing RP implementation and acceptability within the intervention schools. The interview included specific questions targeting teachers' impressions of RP fit with SRO practice within intervention schools. Demographic data pertaining to this teacher sample can be found in the study 1 description of the qualitative sample.

### **Procedures**

Anonymous teacher and SRO survey data was collected by IIRP and the school district from teachers and SROs who had attended a 2-day RP workshop. Teachers attended RP training sessions held in the fall of 2013 and winter of 2014. These RP workshops, were entitled Using Circles Effectively, and focused on methods to systematically use circles to address misbehavior, establish norms, build community, and mend relationships. SROs attended an RP-focused training in August of 2013. The SRO RP workshop was more broadly focused than the teacher workshop and focused on multiple RP elements. IIRP trainers led the teacher workshop while an ex-police officer familiar with RP elements led the SRO workshop. Participants were asked to anonymously complete a hard copy, paper/pencil survey on the acceptability of RP procedures. SRO acceptability survey data was collected in May 2014 by school district administrative officials while teacher acceptability survey data was collected immediately after RP workshops.

A separate sample of 51 school faculty members who had previously attended a RP training were asked by members of the Rutgers research team to voluntarily consent to participate in a series of interviews in June of 2014. Interviews were administered individually and were later transcribed by members of the Rutgers research team. A more detailed description of procedures can be found in study 1.

## Measures

**Acceptability of RP procedures.** After RP training sessions (led by IIRP) all participants (e.g., school staff) were asked to complete an acceptability survey on paper. This acceptability measure (see Appendix D) was adapted from an Implementation Potential Scale (Forman et al., 2012) that was modified from existing treatment acceptability scales. The survey was primarily closed format containing scalar questions (e.g., 1 – strongly disagree to 4 – strongly agree), questions assessing demographic information based on a list of possible options (including an option for “other” with explanation), and one open format question allowing respondents to provide additional information in their own words. Items were modified to refer specifically to RP elements, however no novel items were added to the scale. One question referring to research support for the intervention was omitted, as the targeted audience for this survey was not believed to readily have access to or knowledge of that information. Given the recent creation of this scale, only one study has assessed its psychometric properties.

Forman et al. (2012) assessed preliminary construct validity of the original scale through a principal components analysis of the original treatment acceptability scale prior to modification for the present study. Four components were found: acceptability/efficacy beliefs (9-items; e.g., “Restorative Practices will offer acceptable ways to handle student misbehavior”), organizational resources (3-items; “Given my workload, the time and effort needed for Restorative Practices is reasonable”), administrator support (3-items; My district-level administrators would view Restorative Practices in a positive way”), and implementation commitment (9-items; “I would speak up at meetings to facilitate the implementation of Restorative Practices”). The four components were found to explain 74.85% of variance. These factors are consistent with critical implementation factors previously supported by empirical research. However, the sample size ( $n$



= 124) was less than that typically recommended for a factor analysis so results must be interpreted with caution (Forman et al., 2012). Concurrent validity was also assessed using implementation commitment as a dependent variable. Beliefs about the acceptability of an intervention and the availability of organizational resources for intervention implementation were found to significantly predict willingness to implement the intervention (Forman et al., 2012). Forman et al. (2012) did not report other forms of validity.

Forman et al. (2012) also assessed internal consistency of the original scale by examining coefficient alpha reliability for items on the scale. All coefficient alphas were between .85 to .97 suggesting good internal consistency for scale items (Forman et al., 2012). Other forms of reliability were not assessed. Additionally, the sample used for assessment of reliability and validity was a sample of convenience and therefore not readily generalizable.

**Teacher interviews.** In June of 2014, teachers and administrators were asked to participate in semi-structured digitally recorded interviews that were previously mentioned in study 1.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Descriptive statistics were examined using means, ranges, and standard deviations. Pearson's correlations were used to assess the relationship between each of the dependent and independent variables.

### **Hypothesis 2a:**

**Regression analysis.** A hierarchical linear regression analysis was run for the sample of SROs and the sample of teachers. The linear regression assessed the relationship of organizational resources, administrative support, RP acceptability, and RP fit with school affiliates on the likelihood to implement RP. These four scales were simultaneously entered into

Block 1 to predict the dependent variable (willingness to implement). *R-squared* change was then examined in order to determine the size of the effect.

**Hypothesis 2b:**

Independent samples *t*-tests were used to compare teacher and SRO perception of RP acceptability. Mean comparisons were examined for the five subscales from the acceptability measure: organizational resources, administrative support, RP acceptability, RP fit with school affiliates, and willingness to implement RP.

**Hypothesis 2c:**

The same-grounded theory approach discussed in Hypothesis 1c (study 1) was used to analyze RP fit with SROs on the basis of teacher interview data.

**Data Reduction**

To assess the underlying factor structure of the acceptability measure and reduce the items on the measure into empirically cohesive scales, I conducted a principal components analysis of mean ratings of the 24 items. Five components were found: acceptability/efficacy beliefs (9-items; e.g., “Restorative Practices will offer acceptable ways to handle student misbehavior”), organizational resources (3-items; “Given my workload, the time and effort needed for Restorative Practices is reasonable”), administrator support (2-items; My district-level administrators would view Restorative Practices in a positive way”), implementation commitment (7-items; “I would speak up at meetings to facilitate the implementation of Restorative Practices”), and RP fit with schools (3 items; “As far as I know, Restorative Practices is consistent with and does not conflict with other interventions or procedures used in the school”). The five components were found to explain 75.25% of variance. Four of these factors (acceptability/efficacy beliefs, organizational resources, administrator support, and

implementation commitment) are consistent with critical implementation factors previously supported by empirical research (Forman et al., 2012). The fifth factor, RP fit with schools, was added for the present study. The items in this component did not load onto the four initial factors but all loaded well onto a fifth additional factor. Lower loaded items were placed on certain scales due to face validity and prior research (Forman et al., 2012) in order to maintain the integrity of the prior scale. Rotated factor loadings (varimax) for the five above components are displayed in Table 2.

Table 6

*Rotated Factor Loading for Varimax Rotation of Acceptability Measure*

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
<i>Acceptability/Efficacy</i>					
Restorative Practices will offer acceptable ways to handle student misbehavior	<b>0.8</b>	0.12	0.06	0.4	0.2
I like the procedures (e.g., restorative conferencing, responsive circles, etc.) used in Restorative Practices	<b>0.78</b>	0.19	0.2	0.05	0.12
Overall the use of Restorative Practices techniques will be beneficial for students	<b>0.75</b>	0.12	0.14	0.23	0.21
Use of Restorative Practices is likely to affect students in a positive way	<b>0.74</b>	0.25	0.27	0.12	0.06
I would suggest the use of Restorative Practices to other individuals working in schools	<b>0.69</b>	0.29	0.48	- 0.08	-0.2
Most professionals would find Restorative Practices suitable for dealing with disciplinary processes within schools	<b>0.19</b>	0.47	0.54	0.3	0.17
Restorative Practices are consistent with general approach to working with students	<b>0.01</b>	0.28	0.76	0.17	0.23
Restorative Practices would not result in negative side effects for children	<b>0.35</b>	0.23	0.26	0.1	0.72
<i>RP Fit with Schools</i>					
As far as I know, restorative practices is consistent with and does not conflict with other interventions or procedures used in the school	0.03	<b>0.82</b>	0.2	0.25	0.21
Most other special service providers in my school would view Restorative Practices in a positive way	0.24	<b>0.77</b>	0.22	0.28	0.01
Most parents would view Restorative Practices in a positive way	0.25	<b>0.67</b>	0.27	0.11	0.21
<i>Administrator Support</i>					
My district-level administrators would view Restorative Practices in a positive way	0.41	<b>0.58</b>	0.3	0.11	-0.1
In general, I am encouraged to use new techniques in my job	0.47	<b>0.51</b>	- 0.14	0.31	0.07
<i>Organizational resources</i>					
I believe any resources (e.g., supplies, space) needed to implement Restorative Practices would be available	0.22	0.56	0.06	<b>0.68</b>	-0.2
Given my workload, the time and effort needed for Restorative Practices is reasonable	0.16	0.23	0.25	<b>0.73</b>	0.08
I believe that if I needed assistance and/or advice to help implement Restorative Practices, I would be able to obtain it	0.13	0.22	0.3	<b>0.81</b>	0.07
<i>Implementation Commitment</i>					
I would request additional consultation in order to implement Restorative Practices effectively	0.25	- 0.04	<b>0.76</b>	0.43	0.06
Restorative Practices will help me achieve my work goals	0.47	0.48	<b>0.36</b>	0.31	- 0.24
It would be worth my time and energy to implement Restorative Practices	0.54	0.48	<b>0.52</b>	0.05	0.04
I would speak up at meetings to facilitate the implementation of Restorative Practices	0.31	0.25	<b>0.72</b>	0.18	-0.1
I would advocate for Restorative Practices at my school	0.33	0.29	<b>0.71</b>	0.17	0.19
I would be willing to use Restorative Practices	0.28	0.61	<b>0.52</b>	0.2	- 0.17
Among my usual professional activities, I would rank Restorative Practices techniques as high priority	0.59	0.21	<b>0.41</b>	0.58	- 0.04
If I implement Restorative Practices, I would do better at my job	0.58	0.23	<b>0.3</b>	0.45	- 0.33

Internal consistency was assessed by examining coefficient alpha reliability for items on the scale. All coefficient alphas were between .78 to .93 suggesting good internal consistency for scale items.

## Results

### Study 2: SRO Acceptability of RP

#### Descriptive Findings

Descriptive statistics for the acceptability component variables are reported in Table 7. A total of 62 individuals completed the survey. The majority of respondents were teachers ( $n = 47$ ) with 11 individuals identifying as school safety officials. Of those eleven respondents, about half identified as being police officers and the other half as security guards. All of the scales seemed to be slightly negatively skewed. This indicates that teachers and school safety officials generally endorsed positive opinions about RP use within schools. Nevertheless, the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables were found to be in the acceptable range (*Skewness* = -1.44 - -.30; *Kurtosis* = -.71 – 2.68).

Table 7

#### *Descriptive Analysis of Acceptability Component Variables*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Acceptability/Efficacy	3.27	.58	1.63	4.00	-.92	.64
Organizational Resources	3.15	.66	1.67	4.00	-.30	-.71
Administrator Support	3.54	.59	1.50	4.00	-1.44	2.02
Implementation Commitment	3.22	.67	1.57	4.00	-.82	-.16
RP Fit with Schools	3.37	.60	1.00	4.00	-1.16	2.68

*Note.* *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

Pearson correlations were examined between the four independent variables (RP acceptability, administrative support, organizational resources, and RP fit with school affiliates) and the dependent variable (willingness to implement RP, see Table 8). All correlations were in the expected direction. All four scales were significantly positively correlated with willingness to implement RP (all  $ps = .000$ ) and with one another (all  $ps < .05$ ). These intercorrelations suggest that individuals who felt that there were enough organizational resources within their schools to administer RP, who endorsed RP as being a good fit with their school's practices and affiliates, who felt they had administrative support for RP were likely to find RP more acceptable and vice versa.

Table 8

*Correlations Among Acceptability Component Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Implementation Commitment	———				
2. Acceptability/Efficacy	.85**	———			
3. Administrator Support	.64**	.58**	———		
4. Organizational Resources	.73**	.61**	.53**	———	
5. RP Fit with Schools	.70**	.72**	.65**	.64**	———

\*\* $p < .001$

**Comparisons between teacher and SRO responses**

Independent samples  $t$ -tests were run on the five acceptability subscales to test for significant differences between teacher and SRO perceptions of RP acceptability (see Table 9). No statistically significant differences were found when comparing teacher/administrator and school safety officials' survey responses, which means both groups saw RP as having promise

for use in their schools. Despite no statistically significant differences, it is noteworthy that school safety officials' responses, on average, trended in a lower direction than teachers. This hints that a larger sample might detect less overall enthusiasm for RP relative to teachers. That said, the current study showed both SRO's and teachers were similarly enthusiastic about RP.

Table 9

*Results of T-tests and Descriptive Statistics of Acceptability Components by Role*

Component	Group						95% CI for		
	Teacher			SRO			Mean Difference	t	df
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n			
Acceptability/ Efficacy	3.31	.56	47	3.09	.66	10	-.18-.62	1.12	55
Implementation Commitment	3.26	.66	46	3.04	.70	10	-.24-.69	.96	54
Administrator Support	3.57	.62	46	3.35	.47	10	-.20-.63	1.03	54
Organizational Resources	3.23	.69	46	3.03	.48	10	-.19-.58	1.08	17.99
RP Fit with School	3.44	.63	44	3.20	.48	10	-.19-.67	1.13	52

**Factors affecting likelihood to implement RP**

A hierarchical linear regression analysis was run separately for the sample of SROs and the sample of teachers (see Table 10). The following variables were entered into Block 1 simultaneously: perceptions of administrative support for RP, organizational resources for RP, RP fit with school practices and affiliates, and RP usefulness with students. These variables served as predictors of the dependent variable: willingness to implement. Statistical analyses showed that teachers who thought RP would be useful in their practice and thought they had the appropriate organizational resources to use RP were more likely to report that they would implement restorative practices in their classrooms ( $\beta = .61$ ,  $\beta = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively). Over

three quarters (77.3%) of the variance in implementation commitment was explained by the combination of variables entered into Block 1. Thus, acceptability/efficacy beliefs and perception of organizational resources explained a large portion of the variance in implementation commitment. The greater one's acceptability/efficacy beliefs and one's perception of organizational resources, the greater the endorsement of implementation commitment. Teachers' reports of administrative support and RP fit with school affiliates were not linked to teachers' reported likelihood to implement RP ( $\beta = .62$ ,  $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p > .10$ , respectively).

A similar regression model was run based on safety officials RP perspectives. Perceptions of RP (e.g., four aforementioned RP scales) explained a vast majority (92.1%) of the variance in implementation commitment. Yet, not all the scales were significant predictors of commitment. Specifically, safety officials who thought RP would be useful in their practice were more likely to report that they would implement restorative practices in the coming school year ( $\beta = .56$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Acceptability/efficacy beliefs made a significant unique contribution to implementation commitment. Safety officials' who thought RP would fit with school practices and affiliates trended towards reporting a greater likelihood to implement RP ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $p = .10$ ). No significant results were found in the relationships between safety officials' report of administrative support or organizational resources and their reported likelihood to implement RP ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $p > .10$ , respectively). Predictors for both sets of data were entered in varying order to ascertain order effects on the results. No matter what predictor was entered first or last in the block, results remained similar.



Table 10

*Multiple Regression Analysis of Implementation Commitment by Role*

Predictors	Group					
	Teacher			SRO		
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Acceptability/ Efficacy	0.61	5.66	0	0.56	3.85	0.01
Administrator Support	0.62	1.67	0.1	0.12	3.85	0.42
Organizational Resources	0.32	1.67	0.00	0.12	0.96	0.37
RP Fit with School	-0.07	-0.63	0.53	0.3	1.98	0.1

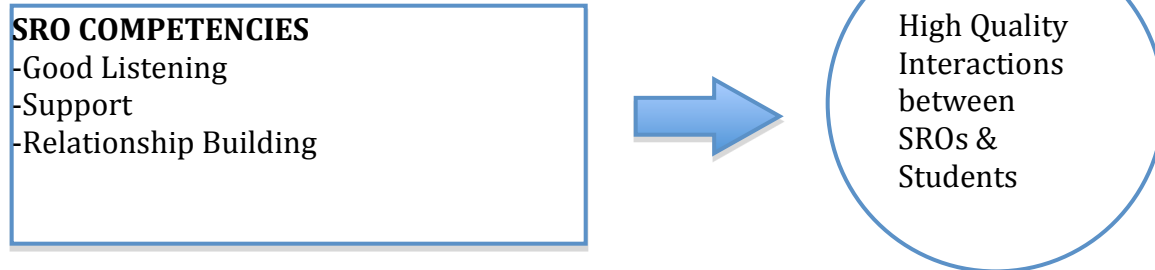
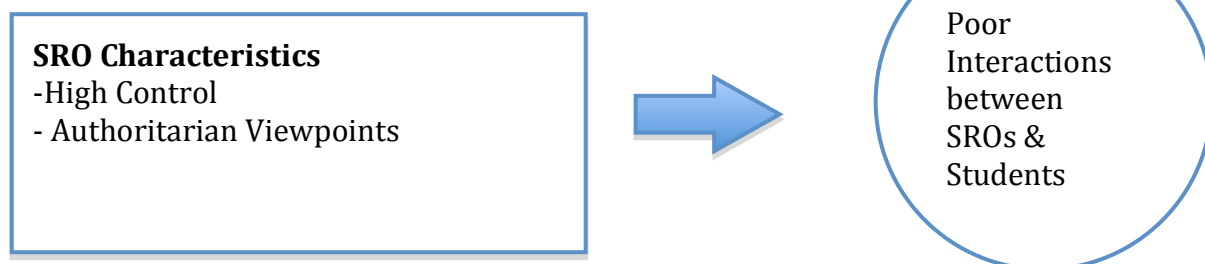
Teacher data:  $R^2 = .79$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .77$ ,  $F = 40.91$ ,  $p < .001$

SRO data:  $R^2 = .95$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .92$ ,  $F = 30.01$ ,  $p < .001$

Standardized *Beta* estimates are shown above

### Qualitative findings on teacher impressions of RP fit with SRO practice

Data from interviews with teachers and administrators yielded one primary theme regarding RP fit with typical SRO practice. More specifically, individual SRO personality characteristics seem to be salient in discussions about RP fit with SRO practice. Specifically, data analysis revealed two different belief systems about RP fit with SRO practice with the majority of school faculty seeming to fall into one or the other grouping (see Figure 2).

**High RP fit****Low RP fit**

*Figure 2.* Characteristics that teacher interviews suggested influence the degree of RP Fit with SRO practice.

Some school faculty members reported that RP did not align with SRO ideology but that on an individual basis, RP may fit with some SROs' individual practice. From this vantage point, SRO personality type was the most important factor that determined RP fit. For example, one teacher reported that "you have to be a certain type of person to be able to facilitate [RP] really well" (T11). Similarly, another teacher stated:

I think that the way it's done right now in school does not align with Restorative Practices. I think that...it's on an individual by individual basis. There are some security guards that do things like make affective statements and stuff like that, that are more, their way of dealing with behavior happens to be, on an individual basis, more in line

with restorative practices but as a whole, I don't think that they are, that their philosophy on what they do comes from a perspective of restorative practices" (T47).

School faculty reported that SROs who displayed high levels of emotional intelligence, interpersonal competencies, and relational resources were likely to have positive interactions with students, which would be increased in quality by RP training. While those SROs displaying authoritarian viewpoints, who seemed to be more vested in maintaining control and hierarchy over students, were likely to have low quality interactions with students that did not seem to align with RP components.

Whether or not school faculty thought it was a good fit, the majority of faculty noted that RP training for SROs could be beneficial no matter level of fit. The majority of teachers reported that they believed that including SROs in RP trainings would be beneficial to increasing positive disciplinary actions within the school (i.e. making discipline less punitive) and to creating opportunities for relationship building between SROs and students. One teacher reported that "[SROs] should be trained, they should be shown how to speak to the students, how to handle situations..." (T16).

### **Discussion**

Study 1 examined student trust in SROs as measured by student self-reported perception of SRO fairness and consistency and teacher reports on the relationship between students and SROs in their schools. The hypothesized need for improved trust with SROs was supported given that students reported less overall trust in SROs in comparison to their teachers. However, overall trust was not found to vary by race, gender, or victimization so it is unclear what factors influence the lower trust reported in SROs. Additionally, results indicated considerable variability in student self-report of SRO trust suggesting that students have very different

experiences with SROs. Qualitative interviews revealed that while school faculty members generally perceived positive relationships between students and SROs, they did notice variability in those relationships on the basis of subgroups of SROs (i.e., police officers vs. security officers). These relationships seemed to be mediated by a variety of factors including community experience with police and familiarity with individual officers, among other factors.

Study 2 examined RP acceptability with SROs and teacher perception of RP fit with SROs to assess RP's potential as a possible remedy to improving the quality of relationships between students and SROs. No statistically significant differences were found between teacher and SRO ratings of RP acceptability, suggesting that both groups had mostly favorable impressions of RP. This finding was surprising given the potential authoritarian framework behind SRO ideology but promising given SROs increasingly multi-faceted roles within schools. Acceptability was measured in terms of an individual's perceptions of administrative support for RP, organizational resources for RP, RP fit with school practices and affiliates, and RP usefulness with students. Regression analyses further showed that SROs and teachers with higher acceptability/efficacy ratings of RP were more likely to report a willingness to implement RP in their practice. While SROs noted RP as being mostly acceptable, school faculty expressed variable opinions about the degree to which RP would fit with SRO daily practice. From a faculty perspective, some SROs already have the relational resources to establish good relationships with students. However, some SROs struggle to form high quality and/or meaningful relationships with students and could use RP as a tool to improve their interactions in the schools.

### **Student trust in SROs**

Qualitative interviews with school faculty members revealed some variability in faculty perception of the relationship between students and SROs. About half of school faculty participants reported largely positive relationships between the two groups, noting that most SROs are responsive to student needs and that students tend to approach SROs with respect. However, a minority of faculty reported having witnessed negative and harsh interactions between students and SROs. Taken together, the findings suggest that from the perspective of many faculty members, the quality of relationships between SROs and students is good and that some SROs are doing well at engaging students. That said, there still may be less common but salient negative interactions between SROs and students, detected by a minority of faculty. This suggests that fractures in trust can occur, albeit with some infrequency.

With that being said, there is still some room for improvement in the quality of student and SRO relationships, specifically as it relates to trust. As anticipated, students reported lower trust, on average, in SROs compared to their higher trust with teachers. More specifically, 68% of student respondents indicated that they do not have trust in SROs. This means that *over half* of respondents reported that they did not trust the way the SROs in their school used their power and authority, did not respect that power and authority, felt unfairly treated by their SROs, and/or did not feel that SROs made good decisions for everyone. These low trust ratings are in alignment with the reported tension that some faculty members perceived between students and SROs suggesting that there is some reason for concern about the quality of SRO and student relationships.

**Improving SRO-student relationships through RP**

Given student-reported lower trust in SROs and school faculty report of variable relationships between students and SROs, there is room for improvement in SRO-student relationships that could be mediated by training and opportunities for relationship building. RP could serve as a possible remedy to the distrust evident in some SRO-student relationships. However, findings are somewhat mixed that RP could serve as a fully viable solution. Some school faculty believed that many SROs do not have the basic essential building blocks (i.e., social emotional skills) to engage in a more relational approach to discipline. More specifically, some school faculty reported that some SROs struggled in their relationships with students due to authoritarian viewpoints and attempts to gain and maintain control over students. In contrast, some school faculty noted that other SROs seemed to have a restorative mindset in that they possessed good listening abilities, high levels of support (e.g., encouragement, nurturance), and other relationship building tools (e.g., empathy, perspective taking).

SROs, themselves, also tend to see promise in RP as a potential alternative to their traditional practice. Statistical analyses revealed that on average, SROs, rated RP as mostly positive in terms of acceptability of RP elements, willingness to implement RP elements, administrative support for RP use in their practice, organizational resources necessary to implement RP, and RPs fit with school affiliates. This overall positive endorsement of RP suggests that SROs find RP acceptable and thus may be amenable to RP focused trainings, policies and procedures around their role in schools.

While RP may serve as one potential solution to distrust in SRO-student relationships, it remains unclear what moderates the variability in trust reported by students. Differential effects of trust were not moderated by race (African American vs. Latino), gender, history of

victimization, or history of suspension. Thus, unexpectedly, relative to other groups, African American males did not report lower trust in SROs. These results are somewhat tentative given the small sample of African American students in the dataset ( $n = 23$ ). It is possible that African American students might have been under-sampled and, thus, we could not detect effects. Alternatively, Latino and African American students in the study schools may have had similar perceptions of SROs, based on similar experiences. Recent research suggests that Latino students are subject to similar rates of differential disciplinary treatment relative to African American students in some parts of the country (Hannon, DeFina, & Bruch, 2013). That is to say that African American and Latino students, both being subject to disproportionate suspensions, expulsions, and disciplinary sanctions, may perceive similar degrees of (dis)trust in their relationships with disciplinary officials, including SROs, in their schools. Differential perceptions of trust were also not mediated by gender. An increasing body of research suggests that African American and Latina girls may have similar negative experiences with school police/SROs as African American and Latino males within their schools (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015). This may mean that African American and Latina girls experience the same levels of (dis)trust in SROs within their schools.

Additionally, student endorsement of past victimization within their school was not related to their trust ratings in SROs. The majority of students did not report having experienced any victimization within their schools (53%). It is possible that those endorsing a history of victimization may have more covert experiences of victimization that did not bring them into contact with an SRO. If that were to be the case, then these covert victimization experiences may not have differentiated them from their peers, with no history of victimization within the school setting. Finally, reported history of suspensions also did not differentiate trust ratings. Only a

small group of students reported having been suspended once or more times ( $n = 10$ , 11%).

Larger samples of suspended students may have detected a difference. It is also possible that students reporting a history of suspension may experience the initial disciplinary sanction in their classrooms so may associate distrust at the classroom level and not with SROs, who may be viewed as acting in accordance with their primary discipline roles.

### **Limitations of the research and future directions**

There are several limitations to the study that should be considered. Given the parsimony of the data analysis, trends in mixed-race students and white students were unable to be analyzed given that they were excluded from the dataset and/or re-categorized into racial groups. In other words, the study's sampling of white and mixed race students was too small to examine if they had a different experience than those participants included in the study analysis. As such, we do not know much about students in the school who are in the minority (i.e., white and mixed race students). Future research should examine these trends with a larger student sample to detect patterns in student differences in trust across racial groups.

The study also contained a small sample of SROs ( $n = 11$ ) in comparison with teachers ( $n = 47$ ). This is a relatively small sub-sample when considering trends on the basis of SRO status. A larger sample of SROs may have been able to detect statistically significant differences. That is to say that given the lower trends in SRO ratings of RP acceptability, a larger sample size may have detected statistically significant differences in SRO ratings of RP in comparison to teacher ratings. Future research should include a larger sample of SROs to better reflect their perspectives.

Another limitation to the study is the study's focus on two intervention schools. Data from members of the two schools may not be representative of a general sampling of schools. It



might be the case that some schools have particularly strong groups of SROs, which may influence student and teacher reports of trust between students and SROs. Additionally, given that SROs perception of acceptability of RP was evaluated immediately after an RP training, their answers may have been subject to self-reporting bias. More specifically, SROs having experienced RP trainings may rate RP positively after the training and endorse a willingness to implement RP that is not followed by actual implementation. In fact, previous research has found that acceptability is not necessarily linked to implementation (Noell et. al, 2005). Future research should not only monitor SRO attitudes towards RP after trainings but should also monitor barriers to implementation post RP training. Monitoring their attitudes could help determine whether there is a need to consider individual and organizational interventions that can address those barriers and contribute to increased and high fidelity RP implementation (Forman et al., 2013).

An additional limitation to the study is the possibility of self-report bias and mono-method bias on the part of student responses. The trust ratings in SROs and teachers may have been highly correlated due to the tendency for students to score items according to a particular response style. Future research should attempt to have a more multi-informant, multi-method approach to understanding the quality of student-SRO relationships. For example, future research could include interviews with both students and SROs in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of student-SRO relationships and RP fit with SRO practice. In addition, students and SROs could provide detailed descriptions of critical incidents experienced in the school and their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as they relate to said incidents as well as the quality of the interactions with each other during these incidents. Additionally, the quality of interactions between students and SROs could be rated by observers within the school to gain an outside

perspective on these interactions. More specifically, these observations could take place in school hallways during transition times or upon school entry or exit.

This research contributed to the current literature because it provided a portrait of the quality of student and SRO relationships and an assessment of SRO perspective of RP as a potential remedy to student-SRO relationships and as an alternative to traditional disciplinary tactics, which are often exclusionary in nature. Excluding students from school for rule breaking does not appear to be effective and may even worsen trajectories (Hemphill et al., 2012). Therefore, schools are seeking new ways to remedy civil rights concerns, such as the implementation of school-wide programs aimed at creating more positive interactions between students and adults within schools. To this end, it is important to clarify the role of police officers within schools and consider appropriate policies, procedures, and trainings around having police in schools. While previous studies have examined youth perspectives on police in their communities (Hinds, 2009), few studies have examined student trust in SROs within their schools. Additionally, little research has examined RP as it relates to traditional SRO practice.

First, study 1's hypothesis regarding lower overall student-reported trust ratings in SROs compared to teachers was supported. However, hypotheses regarding factors moderating trust ratings were not supported. Over half of student respondents ( $n = 62$ , 68%) reported low overall trust in SRO's. This is concerning given that we have not identified what factors differentiate these students from their more trusting peers. Future research should be conducted to determine variables influencing differential trust ratings. Larger and more diverse samples including a greater variety of groups should be used in comparative analyses. Larger and more diverse samples would ensure that all sub-groups contained an adequate number of students to have statistical power to detect effects.

Second, study 2's hypothesis that RP acceptability ratings would be a significant predictor of willingness to implement RP elements was found to be true. Both SROs and teachers that reported higher ratings of RP acceptability also reported higher ratings of willingness to implement RP elements. However, study 2's hypothesis that RP acceptability ratings would significantly differ between teachers and SROs, with SROs rating RP as less acceptable than teachers was not supported. There were no statistically significant differences in SRO and teacher ratings of RP. However, on average, SROs trended lower in their responses. Future research that includes larger samples of SROs should be conducted in order to assess whether or not a larger sample of SROs might detect a statistically significant difference.

### **Implications for practice and policy**

Statistical analyses revealed variability in student-reported trust in SROs and a lower overall trust in SROs when compared to trust in teachers. However, this finding did not hold when controlling for prior self-reported suspension history. This result was unexpected and was unable to be explained given the small sample size of suspended students ( $n = 10$ ). We found no detectable differences between suspended students' and non-suspended students' trust ratings. This suggests future research would benefit from a larger sample of suspended students to better understand if their level of trust in SROs and teachers differs from non-suspended students. While school faculty reported that relationships between students and SROs are largely positive in quality, some teachers noted tension in student-SRO relationships. These results suggest that there is a need for an intervention aimed at creating more positive relationships between students and SROs. RP possesses potential to serve as a remedy to distrust in student-SRO relationships given its mostly positive ratings from SROs and some teacher endorsement of RP fit with SRO practice. However, some teachers note that some SROs do not possess the restorative mindset

necessary to engage in the RP elements. In addition, RP's philosophical orientation is in contrast to traditional authoritarian viewpoints that are indicative of SRO and police frameworks.

Given the paradigm shift necessary to incorporate RP elements into SRO practice, introduction of RP to SROs may require intensified efforts. For example, SROs may need a different training than teachers that involves content that acknowledges the philosophical shift necessary. Additionally, given the decentralized nature of SRO programs, the restorative justice community may need to do more in terms of establishing links with the SRO national organization and building bridges through education partnerships with NASRO and RP training centers. Funding agencies could be encouraged to provide support for the development of these relationships and establishing community connections. In addition, funding agencies could work to support the creation of pilot projects that assess the utility and implementation of RP with SROs and providing for their evaluation. For example, SROs could undergo critical incident reviews after having experienced a negative altercation with students. During this review, SROs and their supervisors could engage in problem solving around ways to deescalate conflict that are specific to the incidents experienced by SROs in their specific settings. These reviews could even be mandated on a monthly basis to ensure that SROs are appropriately monitored and can have their issues/concerns with student interactions assessed on a frequent basis. SROs, themselves, could also come together during meetings to participate in their own restorative circle process in order to discuss thoughts, feelings, and behaviors around their daily practice and to allow information about successful de-escalation tactics and interactions to be communicated within the SRO group. During these circles, SROs could also discuss realistic student interaction scenarios to help teach problem solving and generate a range of positive tactics to reduce tension during negative and potentially negative interactions with students. They could also be present at

or facilitate restorative conferences for students involved in more serious infractions within the schools as an alternative to traditional punitive discipline approaches.

In sum, Study 1 and Study 2 offer a new understanding of the quality of student-SRO relationships and SRO perceptions of RP. Study 1 showed variability in student-reported trust in SROs, meaning some students lacked trust in their safety staff. However, the study was unable to identify what moderated this variability in trust. This suggests the need for more research to understand why some students remain trusting in SROs while their peers report more skepticism and mistrust. Additionally, Study 2 findings suggest the need for further research on SRO perception of and implementation of restorative approaches to improve the quality of student and SRO relationships. That said, SRO ratings of RP acceptability offer some promise that SROs might successfully adopt a new role in schools—a role that engages students in relationship-based, problem-solving around conflict and rule infractions. Adopting such approaches could potentially transform how students (and teachers) experience “security” in their schools and provide an alternative route to a sense of safety and community within schools.

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## Appendix A

*Elements of Restorative Practices*

Domain	Elements	Description
Prevention (building relationships and developing community)	Affective Statements	Use in response to negative or positive events in the classroom and school
	Proactive Circles	Run on daily or weekly basis (e.g., students sit in a circle and discuss a topic that helps build community).
	Fair Process	Engage students in decisions, explain the rationale.
	Restorative Staff Community/ Restorative Approach with Families	Model and use restorative practices with one another and with student families
Intervention (Repairing harm and restoring community)	Restorative Questions	Address negative behaviors using questions (e.g., “Who has been affected by what you have done?” “What do you think you need to do to make it right?”).
	Responsive Circles	After a moderately serious incident, students sit in a circle and address who has been harmed and what needs to be done to make things right.
	Small Impromptu Circles	Address negative behaviors by asking the wrong doer and those harmed to answer restorative questions in front of each other.
	Restorative Conference Circles	Respond to a serious incident using a scripted approach to facilitate accountability and repair harm.
	Reintegrative Management of Shame	Acknowledge the emotions of the wrongdoers and those impacted by the wrong doing.

## Appendix B

## Trust Scale

Thinking about police in your school; Thinking about the teachers in your school; Thinking about the principals and assistant principals in your school...

Strongly disagree = A, agree = B, disagree = C, strongly disagree = D

1. I trust the way they use their power and authority.
2. I respect their power and authority.
3. I feel fairly treated by them.
4. I feel like they make good decisions for everyone.

## Appendix C

## Police Experience in the Community Scale

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly disagree = A, disagree = B, agree = C, strongly agree = D

1. Over the past school year, I personally had positive experiences with police outside of school.
2. Over the past school year, I have seen others have positive experiences with police outside of school.



## Appendix D

## Acceptability Measure

Please circle the number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements, using the following scale.

Strongly disagree = 1, somewhat disagree = 2, somewhat agree = 3, strongly agree = 4

1. Restorative Practices will offer acceptable ways to handle student misbehavior.
2. I like the procedures (e.g., restorative conferencing, responsive circles) used in Restorative Practices.
3. Overall the use of Restorative Practice techniques will be beneficial for students.
4. Use of Restorative practices is likely to affect students in a positive way.
5. I would suggest the use of Restorative Practices to other individuals working in schools.
6. Most professionals would find Restorative Practices suitable for dealing with disciplinary processes within schools.
7. Restorative Practices are consistent with my general approach to working with students.
8. Restorative Practices would not result in negative side effects for children.
9. It would be worth my time and energy to implement Restorative Practices.
10. I would speak up at meetings to facilitate the implementation of Restorative Practices.
11. I would advocate for Restorative Practices at my school.
12. I would be willing to use Restorative Practices.

13. Among my usual professional activities, I would rank Restorative Practices techniques as high priority.
14. If I implement Restorative Practices, I would do better at my job.
15. My district-level administrators would view Restorative Practices in a positive way.
16. In general, I am encouraged to use new techniques in my job.
17. I believe any resources (e.g., supplies, space) needed to implement Restorative Practices would be available.
18. Given my workload, the time and effort needed for Restorative Practices is reasonable.
19. I believe that if I needed assistance and/or advice to help implement Restorative Practices, I would be able to obtain it.
20. I would request additional consultation in order to implement Restorative Practices effectively.
21. Restorative Practices will help me achieve my work goals.
22. Most other special service providers in my school would view Restorative Practices in a positive way.
23. As far as I know, Restorative Practices is consistent with and does not conflict with other interventions or procedures used in the school.
24. Most parents would view Restorative Practices in a positive way.

## Appendix E

## Teacher Interview Security Questions

1. Please describe how SROs, police, and security guards within your schools interact with students and with you?
  - a. How do SRO, police, and security guard roles within the schools vary?
2. Please describe student perception of SROs in your school? Of police? Of security guards?
  - a. If students, police officers, SROs, and security guards are of the same race, does it matter?
  - b. If they are of different races, does it matter?
  - c. Do students experience these three groups as different or do they see them as the same?
  - d. Do they respond to them differently? How do they know the difference?
3. How do restorative practices align or not align with how SROs, police, and security guards interact with students?
  - a. In what ways might RP help improve interactions between SROs/police/security guards and other members of the school community?
  - b. What are ideal roles for police in schools? SROs? Security guards?