

Restorative justice as a tool to address the role of policing and incarceration in the lives of youth in the United States

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Abstract

Disciplinary practices utilized in public libraries in the United States carry echoes of the ways in which youth of color and/or LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth are policed and incarcerated. This research includes interviews with librarians and staff engaging in relational disciplinary practices, namely restorative justice, to gain understanding of how altering approaches to discipline may create cultural shifts that lead to more culturally conscious services to youth made vulnerable by the state. Individual, open-ended interviews with librarians and staff at an urban library system in California addressed the implementation of restorative justice practices, individuals' approaches and understandings of restorative justice, and the process of institutionalizing restorative justice throughout the library system. This research reveals that restorative justice offers one approach to creating social change through increased access to library services and resources.

Keywords

LGBTQ youth, public libraries, restorative justice, youth of color, youth services

Introduction

Scholars and activists have been working to raise public awareness of the gendered and racialized structures of policing and incarceration in the United States (Alexander, 2010; Davis, 2003; Gilmore, 2007; Spade, 2011; Stanley and Smith 2011). Gendered and racialized policing also affects the life chances of young people (Bernstein, 2014; Fine and Ruglis, 2009; Hunt and Moodie-Mills, 2012; Skiba et al., 2000; Wald and Losen, 2013). The gendered and racialized policing and incarceration of youth in the United States has influenced the instantiation of library services in juvenile detention centers (Austin, 2012, 2017). Too rarely, though, library services to youth held in juvenile detention centers are not connected to library services that might push against the gendered and racialized processes of youth policing by increasing access to library services and resources. This is evident in the lack of examination into how traditional library disciplinary practices convey whiteness or gender normativity as cultural belonging, even when youth are very aware of these cultural aspects of librarianship (Agosto and Hughes-Hassell, 2010; McDowell, 2007). Library literatures and practices need to engage with the knowledges and skills that young people who have not been well served by the library utilize in their ongoing cultural practices, both localized and collective, as well as their literacies and knowledges, while recognizing how power functions in the

lives of youth (Alim et al., 2011). Restorative justice provides a medium for addressing histories of power and oppression that have been reinstated by traditional library practices by engaging in a humanizing process that builds relationships, allows for vulnerability, and recognizes youth as (often) engaged cultural and political theorists of their worlds (Alim, 2009; Paris and Alim, 2014).

This article builds from ongoing research into social justice approaches within library services in the United States (Cooke and Minarik, 2016; Mehra, 2015). It situates a change in library practice among teen services staff at a medium-sized, urban library system in California as one possible means by which library culture can shift to better serve youth made vulnerable to and by the state. It opens with a discussion of how library access is determined through overall library culture and communicated to youth made vulnerable to and by the state through traditional disciplinary practices that echo processes of surveillance and policing in their lives. This bounds an exploration of how

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restorative justice practices offer a critical contrast to traditional library practices of discipline and punishment.

The site of this research was selected for the existing racial diversity and histories of social and political movements in the city, as well as the shifts toward restorative justice in library services occurring at the time of this research. Situating the library system into a larger social, political, and historical context provides an exemplar case situation (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014) for exploring how libraries might better provide services to youth most likely to be targeted for state violence (youth of color and/or LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth) – if such services are not possible in a city with a history of activism, social change, and with a high level of racial diversity, it seems they may not be possible in the context of the larger United States. This exemplar case ties to larger discussions of services that create change in the historically based structures of young adult librarianship. This is relevant in concern to transferability of restorative justice principles and practices as some of many ways in which librarians may implement these findings.

The research site shares a devastating condition with cities across the United States. Racial profiling continues here as it does in other locales. Consider the disparities between demographics of the overall population in California and the demographic information available about people shot and killed by police in California in one year. Overall, California's population is 39.7% white, 37.4% Latinx, 6% Black, and 13.3% Asian (the remainder of the population identified as Mixed or Other) (Statistical Atlas, 2015). In 2015, 190 people were shot and killed by the police in California (*Washington Post*, 2015). Of those 190 people, 30% were white, 40% were Latinx, and almost 18% were Black. Beyond the ideals of the United States justice system that include rights to trial by peers and an idea of being "innocent until proven guilty," Kindy and Elliott, 2015 found that, "across the United States, unarmed victims were disproportionately black. In an analysis looking at population-adjusted rates, unarmed black men were seven times as likely as unarmed whites to die from police gunfire." In California in 2015, 22 people killed by police were unarmed (*Washington Post*, 2015). Recognition of the role of surveillance and policing in the lives of youth of color and/or LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth, and of the bounding power of the state, shapes this critical case. Looking to instances of police killings of people of color across the United States (and in California specifically) reveals that state power is contextualized by location but appears in similar maneuvers over time. It is not only the implementation of state power to kill or let die (Cacho, 2012) that becomes obvious in looking to the location of this research – the research site also reveals the similarities between forms of resistance to that power and claims to life. There are, for example, some striking similarities between the Movement for Black Lives (n.d.) platform and the Black Panther Party's (1966) 10 Point Program.

Restorative justice involves an approach to harms – large or small, individually experienced or collectively shared among people involved – where people who have caused harm and those harmed work together to create viable solutions for addressing what has happened (Van Ness et al., 2001). This approach to addressing harm hinges on the value of the wellbeing of all involved, and recognizes the humanity of all who have experienced an event. Restorative justice with youth depends upon informed and complex understandings of youths' lives. It is relational and occurs through a process of trust and vulnerability that is shared between all involved in making decisions and moving forward from moments of contention or harm (Zehr and Mika, 1998).

The relational and shared aspects of restorative justice align with Ginwright's (2009) understandings of radical healing for Black youth. Leveling the field of adult and resource power makes increasing room for the agency of youth – allowing youth in the process (often youth whose opportunities to make a wide range of decisions have been foreclosed by histories of policing in their communities and day-to-day lives) to take responsibility for their lives and make choices toward community accountability (Ginwright, 2009). Shared responsibility, vulnerability, and respect during the processes of restorative justice are part of how all involved develop shared ownership over decisions made in seeking restoration through restorative justice. The application of restorative justice in the library setting is made more important by Ginwright's (2009: 146) assertion that "many of the problems facing black youth come from lack of power, not of information." Restorative justice, and this research, looks to how oppressions creates a field of vision available for youth and creates ongoing harms in communities while acknowledging that youth can "contest, challenge, respond, and negotiate the use and misuse of power" (Ginwright, 2009: 151).

Individual interviews with teen services librarians and staff revealed that restorative justice practices are an effective means of shifting library culture (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006; Hardin, 2003). They also position the integration of restorative justice practices as situated in frames of power – including in relationship to youth, between staff, and shaped by library policy as well as institutions outside of the library. Analysis of these interviews presents a complicated understanding of how restorative justice can be and is currently utilized by the library system that served as the site for this research.

Place and space

The library functions as both place and space (Aabo and Audunson, 2012; Austin, 2012). In this division, the collections, organizational structures, and the physical structure of the library, or of an area for teens, define the "place." "Space" encompasses the less tangible aspects of the library, including culture. Institutionalized racism

shapes the culture of librarianship in the United States, although this is a contested and ongoing process. This shaping is never complete because it is met with resistance, calls for value, and alternative models of library provision. The long history of Black-led library-related projects in the face of state-sponsored segregation within libraries and other institutions offers but a sliver of an example of how individuals and communities have actively resisted white supremacy and other forms of oppression within libraries in the United States. The disruption of traditional cultural practices, including disciplinary practices, shifts the culture of the library away from white, middle-class, normative belonging. As interviews in this research reveal, this is a practical and reflexive process. It involves a critical approach to how librarians and staff shape youths' perspectives of the library as an institution of exclusion or belonging. The adaptation of restorative justice in library practice sits alongside a critical approach to representative materials as a means to address historically oppressive systems that continue in library practice.

In the community, place and space work to shape whether or not, and how, youth are able to access information. As the author's ongoing research illustrates, space (including library culture) can greatly inhibit the likelihood that youth will view the library as welcoming, much less as a location to pursue their interests without judgment. This is in keeping with Weheliye's (2014) conceptualization of embodiment and the forces that constrain embodied being through racism and anti-Blackness. In (what is here named) traditional library practice, behavioral regulations are enacted through the body – rules for access to the library often relate to noise levels, comportment, speed of pace, and abstractions read through gesture, such as respect or defiance. Youth, especially youth of color and/or LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth, are often already made suspect in the face of these types of (white, middle-class, and straight) normative behavior requirements. In traditional library practice, the rules are the tool wielded in gatekeeping. Adherence to the rules grants momentary passage into the space, although it can be said that this access is always temporal and that a slip in required conduct can lead to banishment, for a day or a longer. In this instance, rules function in the ways laws are forced to function in larger society. They take on a reiterative self-defining force, even when they are utilized selectively. Traditional approaches to library discipline do not view behavioral rules as modifiable, contextual, or subjective. Rather than being a negotiation that is in place to increase access for marginalized people to library spaces, rules, in traditional library practice, become the primary means by which affect and embodiment are regulated along lines of whiteness and middle-class sensibilities, positioning librarians as potential or actual gatekeepers.

Counter to a completely traditional approach to library conduct and rules, the library system in this research has worked to incorporate the motif of space and belonging in

relation to services for teens. The teen services department has long sought to center teens through implementation of TeenZones (Agosto et al., 2015) and programming that reflects the needs and desires of community youth. Teen areas have been created with the intention of reflecting the racially and culturally diverse communities in which library branches are located. Librarians and staff have incorporated community knowledges and suggestions, local programs, and youth recommendations into the creation of meaningful spaces for youth.

A teen librarian aware of policing and incarceration and the role these forces play in youths' lives was among the librarians that worked to incorporate aspects of restorative justice into librarianship at the research site. Alongside Staff B, one of the interviewees in this article, that librarian worked in a predominantly demographically Black and brown area of the city, an area in which residents also faced the many obstacles presented by poverty. The library where this librarian and Staff B worked included a youth space, already intended to physically center teens and young adults. In this context, the librarian who introduced restorative justice used experiences advocating for incarcerated youth to create a culture of acceptance and meaningful engagement at the library. These efforts positioned the library as a community member and were met with increasing youth participation and engagement with the library.

At the time the interviews took place, restorative justice principles were being increasingly incorporated into teen services' daily practice at the library system. These interviews illustrate the importance of restorative justice principles in shifting the space towards the needs and desires of local youth. They occurred at a moment when the teen services supervisor was actively endorsing restorative justice as an ideological aspect of teen services and overall librarianship in the library system. The head of the teen services was in ongoing discussions with another library system that was instantiating restorative justice as central to teen services. At the time of the interviews, this library and its partnering library system, Skokie Public Library in Illinois, were among the few library systems specifically claiming to incorporate restorative justice practices.

A review of restorative justice practices informs the interviews in this research. This review also supports the multiple positions undertaken by teen services staff as they work to better incorporate philosophical and practical aspects of restorative justice in their libraries. This review reveals that theorists approach restorative justice, and the possibility of implementing restorative justice principles within institutions, along a spectrum. Librarians and staff in these interviews reiterate this difference in approach.

Why restorative justice?

Zehr and Mika (1998: 51–53) published one of the early outlines of principles and practices of restorative justice. Here are the primary points they included:

- Crime is fundamentally a violation of people and interpersonal relationships;
- Violations create obligations and liabilities;
- Restorative justice seeks to heal and address harm.

Other influential scholars in restorative justice are Marshall, Sharpe, and Sullivan and Tift. Marshall (in Utheim, 2014: 359) defines restorative justice as “a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offense come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offense and its implications for the future.” This is the definition adopted by the United Nations. Van Ness et al. (2001: 5–6) offer an adaptation of Sharpe’s 1998 description, in which restorative justice:

- invites full participation and consensus;
- seeks to heal what is broken;
- seeks full and direct accountability;
- seeks to reunite what has been divided;
- seeks to strengthen the community in order to prevent further harms.

Sullivan and Tift (2006) emphasize that addressing harms through restorative justice can occur directly through restorative justice practices and material compensation (including access to legal and medical resources) or through working to address larger, social harms. They present an in-depth overview of more recent scholarship on restorative justice to show that it is both “insurgent” (“competes with the state”) and “subversive” (“because it challenges, both conceptually and in practice, social arrangements and processes that thwart human development and prevent human needs from being met”) (Sullivan and Tift, 2006: 5). They emphasize an approach to restorative justice that centers the responsibility every person has toward one another to make the world better and to improve individual (or individuated) conditions.

Principles found in restorative justice are present in indigenous knowledge and practices by First Nations and Maori peoples (Van Ness et al., 2001; Zehr, 2001). JW Zion and Robert Yazzie (2006) and Dirk J Louw (2006) illustrate some of the deeper roots and overlapping cultural practices with present day understandings of restorative justice. Zion and Yazzie (2006) address restorative justice and Navajo peacemaking. Louw (2006) illustrates the relationship between restorative justice and *Ubuntu*. In all of these instances, restorative justice inherently focuses on community through a bottom-up approach. Zehr and Mika (1998) originally positioned restorative justice as a contrast to retributive or punitive justice models. There is disagreement among researchers regarding whether or not restorative justice and punitive approaches can be reconciled (Van Ness et al., 2001; Young, 2001; Zehr, 2001). Debate around the implementation of restorative justice concerns the idea that it is a community undertaking. Institutions are not

always, or often, considered parts of the community. Zehr, in 2001, presents a continuum of institutional implementation of restorative justice principles and practices that ranges from “pseudo- or non-restorative” to “fully restorative” (p. 55).

Over time, Zehr has undertaken a reformist position that even criminal justice systems can incorporate forms of restorative justice into practice (Zehr, 2001). Zehr supports this through a description of New Zealand’s 1989 blending of juvenile justice and restorative justice principles and practices. This is also the position of Prison Fellowship International, the overseeing group for restorativejustice.com (Centre for Justice & Reconciliation, 2017). This version of restorative justice was incorporated into the United Nations’ Declaration of Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters in 2002. Others trouble whether or not it is possible for criminal justice systems to be reformed.

Young (2001) follows the proposed implementation of restorative justice principles by police forces in multiple locations. Young (2001: 220–221) states: “police-led conferencing is prone to some distinctive pitfalls. Traditional police culture, and the authoritarian and questionable practices it can generate, present a significant obstacle to the implementation of restorative justice.” Despite this, Young believes in the possibility for forces of punitive justice to utilize principles and practices of restorative justice.

This position is disturbed by interviews included in this article and the insightful contributions of Utheim (2014). Utheim examines how narratives of colorblindness within institutions (schools, but this can be extrapolated to libraries) can reinstate oppressions and harms that restorative justice purportedly addresses. Utheim (2014) presents an unequal field that must be framed by the school-to-prison pipeline, increasing militarization and growing carceral philosophies, and neoliberal endeavors to monetize and restrict the lives of youth of color. This is used to unsettle the idea of community that “presumes some shared set of sociocultural referents” (Utheim, 2014: 360). Through participant observation and engagement with youth in alternative, post-release educational settings, Utheim contextualizes the implementation of restorative justice practices. This form of restorative justice, which attaches to transformative justice – a form of addressing harms that prioritizes a focus on how institutional oppressions influence the occurrence of certain types of harm and creating social change to end those forms of oppression (Harris, 2006) – centralizes how histories of and ongoing oppression impact the positions of youth within the practices and their overall implementation. It includes realities and ways of being that are specific to the life-worlds of youth. As Utheim (2014: 366) emphasizes: “[t]he goal should not be to negate or quarantine their (the youths’) actuality but to engage their variegated alternate ways of life as part of a more representative and reflexive, restorative dialogue.”

Utheim (2014: 369) concludes with the statement that “[r]estorative deliberations that are representative of *all* stakeholders in conflict will only be possible once theorists, policy makers, and practitioners transcend the barriers imposed by circumscribed understandings of crime, delinquency, and countercultural realities.” Utheim’s conception of restorative justice fits most closely with Harris’ statements on how restorative justice and transformative justice can overlap or become interchangeable terms and practices. Harris (2006: 557) describes the aims of transformative justice as working to “improve conditions and relations so that crime and other injury are less likely to occur.”

As the analysis of interviews with teen services librarians and staff illustrates, no on-site implementation of restorative justice principles and practices is completely similar to the next. A rich variety of restorative justice practice emerges in this analysis, one that often falls closer to Utheim’s youth-focused approach. Interviewees make clear that the incorporation of restorative justice can sit alongside a concern for meaningful representation in collections and programs to address the institutionalized racism and homophobia of library services. Doing so creates a more complete response to the stated needs and desires of youth. Utheim (2014) presents the idea that focusing on disruptive behavior can further reinstate the idea of youth as problems. Examining adults’ perspectives of their own disciplinary practices involves a degree of understanding that interview participants hold various perspectives on youth behavior as racialized or culturally informed. This research seeks to examine the perspectives of adults, and the biases these may include, while engaging in a “humanizing research” project (Paris, 2011: 139). It centers on the ways that restorative justice can work to address historical harms that are recreated through traditional library practice. This research differs from Paris’ (2011) approach in that the researcher was not engaged in building dialogic relationships directly with youth, but holds valuable concepts from humanizing research found within restorative justice – relationship building, trust, dialectic knowledge creation, and a recognition of how policing and surveillance work to constrain the life worlds of youth of color and/or LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth.

Individual interviews with librarians and staff

Interviews with teen services librarians and staff took place in December of 2016 and January of 2017. The head of the teen services department initiated the recruitment process by sending an informative email to teen services librarians and staff describing the opportunity to be included in interviews about disciplinary practice and restorative justice in day-to-day library process. Five

librarians and staff, at various locations, chose to participate. The characteristics of librarians and of the neighborhoods where libraries are located are listed in Table 1. All demographic characteristics of neighborhoods were retrieved from Statistical Atlas (2015), a tool that overlays US Census data on neighborhood, zip code, city, or state boundaries.

Interviews were open-ended to allow for the richness of library staff’s experience to be included in the research. This also helped to reveal library staff’s own conceptions of restorative justice practice in the library. Interviews took around one hour each and the interviewer used a pen and paper to transcribe the interviews. Librarians and staff were anonymized in the following analysis. Topics covered in each interview included:

1. How would you describe your disciplinary measures involving teenagers?
2. How does teen services work to advocate for teens in relation to disciplinary measures?
3. How have you experienced these encounters?
4. How have you implemented restorative justice in your individual practice?
5. How are restorative justice concepts different or similar to your previous disciplinary practices?
6. What has been the process of institutionalizing restorative justice concepts in library practice? What are barriers to institutionalization?

Interviews were conducted in keeping with feminist ethnographies (Davis and Craven, 2011) and Paris’ (2011) ideas about humanizing research. Feminist ethnography, in Davis and Craven’s (2011: 102) iteration, involves “efforts toward social justice in the wake of neoliberalism and post-neoliberalism.” Feminist ethnography acted as a lens, allowing coded analysis of the interviews to take place as situated within understandings of the demographic, politicized, and policed characteristics of neighborhoods and the overall city. Interviewees’ comments are held within the knowledge that the youth served by this library system are heavily surveilled, policed, and incarcerated, and that the interviewees who self-selected to be included in this study work daily with youth who experience these life-shaping forces. This research necessitated a humanizing process, one that recognizes the power held by interviewees alongside their own positions to powerful forces, such as institutional policies, that shape their abilities to act or speak to given subjects (Paris, 2011). As interviews revealed, librarians and staff felt some level of institutional support, but this did not mean that restorative justice was embraced wholesale across the library system. Analysis drew from grounded theory coding procedures – it followed lines of insight as they emerged between and in interviews and it occurred in two phases (“searching” and then later “focused coding”) (Charmaz, 1983: 113). Two

Table 1. Interviewees and locations.

Interviewee	Interviewee characteristics	Library	Library location characteristics
Librarian A	Teen librarian with library system for less than 5 years, little previous experience with restorative justice	Library A	Located in poorer neighborhood (median income under \$33,000/yr), majority Black, majority 34 years old or younger
Librarian B	Teen librarian with library system for more than a decade, little previous experience with restorative justice	Library B	Located in a wealthy neighborhood (median income over \$100,000/yr), majority white, majority 35 years old or older
Librarian C	Branch manager and teen partner, little previous experience with restorative justice	Library C	Located in poorer neighborhood (median income under \$33,000/yr), majority Black and Latinx (not white), majority 34 years old or younger
Staff A	Library staff and teen partner with the system for less than 5 years, previous experience with non-traditional approaches to conflict resolution	Library D	Centrally located library at the interstices of many neighborhoods and easily accessible by transit, downtown area is poorer (median income under \$33,000/yr), majority Black and Asian, majority 35 years or older
Staff B	Library staff with the system for more than 5 years, previous experience with non-traditional approaches to conflict resolution	Library E	Located in poorer neighborhood (median income under \$33,000/yr), majority Latinx (evenly split white and not white) and Black, majority 34 years or younger

major initial codes (themes) emerged in the analysis of these interviews. The first concerned the implementation of restorative justice in daily library practice, including some interceding factors noted by librarians and staff. The second related to interviewees' own ideas of restorative justice as an effective library practice.

In regard to the first theme, interview coding revealed that librarians and staff prioritized applied practice in the library, providing numerous examples of restorative justice and other disciplinary approaches. When discussing youths' role in restorative justice practices, they emphasized the role of youth expression in the respective processes. They tended to situate restorative justice and other disciplinary practices in the contexts of youths' lives while also giving some consideration to how buildings and physical spaces shaped the likelihood that a disciplinary process would be undertaken. Many of the interviewees also included understanding and relationship as part of their overall approach to addressing concerns.

Interviewees' perspectives on effective restorative justice practice and the possibility of institutionalizing restorative justice in the library contained three major codes. First was a consideration of how interviewees defined restorative justice in relation to their work with youth. The remaining codes concerned what resources the library had provided to support the incorporation of restorative justice practices, and what resources librarians and staff believed would be useful if the library is to further institutionalize restorative justice.

Restorative justice in the library

Restorative justice in practice

It is impossible to discuss restorative justice (and other disciplinary) practices without also addressing the events that

led to immediate harm (of one sort or another). Only a few of the examples interviewees provided related to physical interaction or threat. These examples ranged from a patron being inadvertently hit by an object that a youth was throwing at another youth, to physical altercations between youth, and, at the most extreme, to a situation that escalated because of police involvement. The majority of examples provided related to the behavioral codes of the library.

All librarians were at differing points in using restorative justice circles to address behavior related to noise, volume, and disruptions of library functions. Librarian C discussed a group of youth who were "particularly challenging ... it seemed like they came into the library to cause a disturbance." These types of behaviors were described as repeated, though librarians differed on their perceptions of youths' intentions. Librarian B stated that youth "forgot where they are" or rebelled as a reaction to "rigid, stern" staff. Librarian A noted that they perceived behavior related to noise, volume, and disruptions in the library to be intentional and part of a group dynamic. These situations, where there is not a direct victim but an overall effect on the community's ability to access the library, were described by Staff B as some of the more difficult to address. Where in direct conflict there was an obvious group of people who could be involved in a dialog, these instances did not always clearly involve a person or people who had been harmed.

Library E was the only library that was portrayed as having incorporated theoretical principles of restorative justice into the overall practice among librarians and staff. Staff B had been at the library since it opened in 2011, and provided rich and detailed examples of how restorative justice had been utilized in relation to youth. At Library E, restorative justice was discussed as encompassing not only a means to address harm, but an underlying philosophy of

service. It is “how we approach everything here ... not a model to deal with problems but a model to deal with relationships.”

This was evident in the examples Staff B provided. In cases of behavior that affected the regular functioning of the library, youth were given multiple options with one choice being to leave the library for the day. This allowed youth to “own the experience,” disrupting ideas of adult power that so often shape the life-worlds of youth. Working to adjust for differences in power was also present in the example of physical occurrences and harms that happened in the library. Staff B shared a powerful story that unsettled normalized power differentials in multiple ways. In this account, a younger Black teenager who was considered a difficult patron had begun to show interest in a scraper bike program that had requirements for participation (requirements related to grade point average and behavior). Scraper bikes are a local phenomenon with historical importance. Scraper bikes are decorated in specific ways, with duct tape or other affordable materials, as a way of improving, personalizing, and modifying bicycles. The youth attended a library-based program on the same day as the police department toy drive was occurring outside of the library. An altercation occurred between the youth and a Spanish-speaking woman, and Staff B was summoned when the police began threatening to arrest the young boy for assault. Staff B understood that the woman had tried to communicate to the police that the boy had spit on her car, while the police continued to state that the youth had spit on the woman. Staff B was able to intercede with restorative justice practices. The woman (the person harmed) wanted only an apology, which the boy provided. As a way of addressing a deep imbalance of power, Staff B then approached the police, explained that the woman had wanted an apology and the teenager had apologized, and asked them to acknowledge their aggressive behavior toward the youth. The police refused, but Staff B was able to reassure the youth that he “showed a better example by apologizing.” This youth became a regular attendee of programs and a respected (and mostly respectful) library patron.

Librarians at Library A, Library C, and Library B were much more likely to emphasize the *process* of restorative justice. All three of the librarians at these sites had been involved in restorative justice circles provided through an outside, trained, mediator. These librarians stated or implied that disturbances were part of youth seeking power in their peer groups or in relation to the librarian. They also heavily emphasized the effectiveness of restorative justice circles in relation to youth whose behavior caused repeated interruptions in the ongoing functioning of the library. Librarians at Library C and Library B had been involved in circles led by restorative justice practitioners located at youths’ schools. Librarian A had hosted circles run by a local non-profit focused on restorative justice.

Librarian C shared a detailed description of the restorative justice circle that addressed recurring and frequent behavioral disturbances by a group of youth. Librarian C, the children’s librarian, the restorative justice professional, the vice-principal of the youths’ school, and four youth attended a restorative justice circle. The restorative justice facilitator opened with a breathing exercise, and then began to pose questions for all to answer, always allowing the youth to answer first. Questions concerned what had been happening at the library, how everyone in the room was personally affected, and how other patrons were affected. Youth were prioritized in the process, which ultimately resulted in an almost complete change in the relationship between the attending youth and librarians.

Teen librarians at Library A and Library B also provided instances of restorative justice circles as change making events. The circles at Library A were ongoing for a few months, and were usually attended by between five and 10 youth. One inspiring result of the non-profit run restorative justice circles involved a youth opening up to others about personal events, allowing herself to be vulnerable with her experiences and needs. Librarian B discussed similarly successful outcomes after a circle at the local middle school, reflecting on a time they had not utilized circles but wished that they had.

Alongside these experiences, librarians at Library A and Library B shared their own attempts to balance power, consequences, and youth privacy as aspects of their disciplinary practice. These dynamics were more complex than simply occurring between a librarian and a youth. Teen librarians felt that they were, at times, expected by library staff to be primary arbiters of disciplinary practice of youth. This was the case even when librarians expressed that they felt largely supported by library staff. This combined with more traditional staff’s (stereotyping) perceptions and other patrons’ experiences and likelihood of interceding to place librarians in positions they described as strained.

Librarians A and B described either intentions to contact parents or events where they had actually contacted youths’ parents as part of ensuring the behavioral mores of the library were upheld. These occurrences appeared to come out of feelings of lack of power coupled with the age of youth in the library (primarily middle-school aged in both instances) and the desire to not utilize security or police (in recognition of how policing affects the lives of youth of color). Librarian A described an instance of feigning a call to building security in order to convince a group of youth involved in a physical altercation to leave. Librarian B described, in more extreme instances, contacting youths’ parents in order to gain their support in enforcing the library’s rules for conduct. In one instance, this may have led to a youth who was perceived to be questioning their sexuality not returning to the library.

Librarians had differing responses related to security and police presence in the library. Librarian B stated that the police were slow to respond or did not respond, a stark difference to Staff B's approach of not calling the police as one means to respect and acknowledge youth. Librarian A, located at a library with personal security, and located in a building with its own security force and a police station, presented a leveled approach. Librarian A would not call building security (though did, in the example above, feign calling), and refused to call the police on youth. At the same time, Librarian A relied on the authority of the library security guard to imply that rules of conduct would be enforced.

This contrasted with some of Librarian C's experiences with outside security. Librarian C described the library's use of contracted security guards, conveying their views of library conduct as often more traditional. This was in conflict with the overall aims of teen services and restorative justice practices. Librarian C was working to mediate this difference in approach, stating, "it has become a constant conversation to share our values."

Staff A, a library assistant at the Library D TeenZone and a former teen partner at another library branch, also discussed the role of security in addressing harms. In their description, the security guard was part of what kept people "accountable to the rules of the space." The library consistently received security services from a "not small, African-American" security guard who staff described as agreeable, friendly, and concerned about the well-being of people in the local neighborhood and library patrons. This security guard was involved in restorative justice practices that led to reaching resolution or agreement making.

Staff A emphasized relationships as an aspect of non-traditional disciplinary practices, often utilizing individual, one-on-one conversations to address any breaches of library conduct. This was supported by the children's librarian at the branch where Staff A had worked before this research was conducted, who had asked to have all staff issues with children and youth directed to them as a way of intervening in more traditional approaches to discipline. Staff A discussed needing the support of the children's librarian so that together they could navigate rules and library policy as they applied to youths' individual circumstances.

Staff A provided a broad view of library practices around restorative justice. Where other librarians and library staff connected and compared restorative justice practice to schools, Staff A attached it to disciplinary measures undertaken by the state. They described using their own experience with and understandings of restorative justice to reach youth who are incarcerated. Staff A had made efforts to create a public library presence in the intake unit of the county juvenile detention facility and had

attended a caseworker meeting. Most recently, they had worked with other library staff to create a program where library patrons wrote Christmas cards for youth held in juvenile detention. The program resulted in over 134 handwritten cards being delivered to incarcerated youth, the majority of which were handmade. In describing the effect of this program, Staff A stated that it "shows them that people care, gives them respect ... isn't that the first thing, to feel like you matter?"

Understanding and relationship

Staff A's question speaks to the value of relationship in working with youth. All interviewees, in one way or another, described youth affect as related to understanding and relationships. These relationships were not always presented as static, and were often positioned within the larger contexts that shaped youths' lives. At times, interviewees' contextualization of youths' lives went beyond comments and comparisons of the institutions with which youth engage to include structurally oppressive forces that shape the life chances available to youth (and primarily, as previously noted, youth of color).

At Library E, relationships based in "respect, compassion, kindness" and "exchange" were foundational to library practice with all age groups. Relationship were understood as a determining factor in whether or not youth might come to resent adults, a perceived case of the behavioral cycles and power struggles described by other librarians and library staff. At other locations, interviewees focused on peer relationships and power. Youth, especially middle-school aged youth, were viewed as engaged in power dynamics around grouping and peer approval. Even in instances where librarians and library staff viewed relationships between groups of youth and themselves as imbalanced or, at times, combative, librarians and library staff continued to assess the negative consequences their potential actions could have on youths' lives. Librarian B, speaking of older teens, stated that if "they are not happy with us, they just don't show up." In addition to lack of access, librarians and library staff incorporated their understandings of other institutions' power over youth. These institutions included family, schools, and the state. Interviewees presented themselves as navigating complex structures of power both in and outside of the library. In the library, this primarily related to access for all and library codes of conduct. Outside of the library, this related to the complexity of youths' lives. In this way, the library was positioned as a potential or actual member of the community.

Interviewees heavily emphasized functional relationships with youth as evidence of the efficacy of restorative justice. Multiple interviewees mentioned opportunities for youth expression and youth willingness to effectively

communicate as one of the surprising features of being involved in restorative justice circles with youth. Librarian A noted that they frequently had to piece together information about youths' lives, but that restorative justice circles had provided opportunities for "youth maybe speaking candidly about how they feel" about problems between adults and youth. Librarian B discussed the complexity with which youth understood their own reasons for wanting to be in the library. Youth often expressed access to resources as a major factor in library attendance, alongside a desire to have a place to be (and to be together). These were factors of library usage that interviewees had largely interpreted from youth behavior. Without restorative justice circles interviewees could have interpreted themselves as easy targets rather than as human elements of a trusted resource.

Librarians and library staff also noted the role of respect in restorative justice processes. Respect was part of what made it possible for all parties involved to be vulnerable with one another about their needs and desires. This was cyclical – vulnerability from multiple sides of contestation tended to lead to increased respect from all sides. The importance of vulnerability was evident in Librarian C's discussion of engaging in circles with a group of youth who had been vocally derisive of library staff and created noise in the library space. Meeting with this group of youth, expressing feelings related to the behavior, and hearing that the youth truly did value the library before beginning to form plans for the future allowed Librarian C (and the youth) the ground needed to create a future change in the relationship between library staff and the youth. This dynamic was reiterated in other accounts. Youth were not expected to completely reveal themselves and their life stories, but relationships, which were supported through trust-building practices, made it more likely that trust could be developed between staff and youth. In this way, relationships were positioned, either explicitly or implicitly, as part of whether or not youth would gain access to resources. Interviewees often noted the ease of interaction between themselves and youth following restorative justice circles, from increased ability to have conversations with youth and build trust over time, to complete changes in youth address (in the instance described by Librarian C, youth who had frequently cussed out – sworn at – library staff immediately began to greet staff by name following the restorative justice circle).

In thinking through relationships with youth, Librarians A and B expressed feeling split between their role as librarian and other roles that related to disciplinary practice. Librarian A felt that they were positioned between acting as an advocate for teens and as a security guard. The second of these roles affected their ability to build relationships with youth. Librarian A heavily emphasized the professional separation between being a librarian and being a therapist.

Staff A offered a possible balance between these roles in their understandings of restorative justice as a philosophy, emphasizing the need to create a "balance between having something youth-led and giving them guidance to do what they have to do." This was supported by other interviewees' understandings of their own roles as teaching youth to switch between the rules of the institution and the modes of conduct in other institutions or in their neighborhoods or as guides about acceptable library behavior.

Librarians' and library staff's understandings of the (positive or conflicted) relationships they shared with youth or groups of youth were often contextualized. Librarians and staff gestured at or explicitly mentioned how structures of systemic oppression – structural racism through segregation, and its intertwining with poverty and overall gentrification across the city – shaped the life-worlds of youth. Librarian A mentioned how youth in the area were stereotyped through affiliation with their school, which could be identified through their school uniforms. Librarian B mentioned conflicts between store owners in the upscale neighborhood and middle-school youth who came from far flung neighborhoods to attend the school, noting that this may be changing as the school has actively recruited from the local neighborhood. This indicated a convoluted process of social exclusion and inclusion, one mediated not just by race but also by middle-class behavioral norms and forms of belonging. These norms came into conflict with youths' lived realities. In one example, Librarian B recounted a young girl becoming verbally aggressive to her (the girl's) friend in the library. Through conversation, the librarian was able to ascertain that the girl's family had recently faced an eviction and were being displaced. This information allowed library staff to support the girl and her family through the removal of fines on books that had been lost during the forcible eviction. Without a contextualized understanding and willingness to listen, staff may have easily told the girl to leave and irreparably damaged her, and her family's, relationship to the library and ability to access materials.

Staff A and B both emphasized the role of care in understanding how various contexts youth encountered shaped their overall lives. Staff A, who has led workshops with *The Beat Within* (2016) – a newspaper that publishes writings by youth who are incarcerated – for years, emphasized the role of the state as an interceding factor in youths' life chances, especially for youth of color. They were careful to not reiterate patterns of the white savior as much as possible through holding youth accountable to their abilities rather than infantilizing youth or viewing them as victims. Staff B noted "a lot of conflict in the community" and trying "to teach them (youth) and help them make a switch, to let go of the pressure to defend themselves" that youth felt in the community. This approach involved not simplifying youths' experience but trying to understand youths'

behaviors as based in realities – as reactions to the events in their lives rather than as stereotypically defiant behavior. Staff B reiterated that this could not be a complete task, but that librarians and staff should not approach youth from a place of judgment because “we don’t understand the weight and pressure on them and its influence.” Part of restorative justice in Staff B’s experience was to challenge youth “out of love and understanding.”

The roles of race and sexual identity were not always explicitly mentioned even when librarians discussed the contexts of youths’ lives. Race and racism were, however, more likely to be implied through librarians’ discussions of how youth were perceived by more “traditional” library staff, by police and security forces, and through recognition of marginalization through availability of representations of youths’ experiences or interests. On the last point, Librarian A mentioned that one of the resources provided by the library was a speaker for playing music. Youth connected their phones and played music through the speaker, a resource the librarian prized because it was difficult to find any of the music youth wanted to listen to through online retailers and conventional library buying practices. In contrast, youth sexual and gender identity was addressed only in two of the five interviews, despite being mentioned during the introduction to the interview and as a component of this overall research. In one instance, queer and trans youth of color were acknowledged as library patrons. In the other, mentioned above, the librarian speculated that a youths’ navigation of sexuality had been related to behavioral issues in the library.

It is possible that sexuality was not often explicitly mentioned because so little information is easily available about youths’ sexuality and gender identity. Sexuality and gender identity are not always explicitly written on the body in the same way as race and racialization. That said, markers of sexuality or of trans or gender non-conforming identity (youth who identify with being assigned a gender at birth that does not fit with their lived gender or youth who express their gender in ways that are not associated with mainstream conceptions of gender) can sometimes be recognized, at least impartially, by people who have an informed ability to interpret the cues individuals use to express their sexual or gender identity. This may imply that staff could use more support and training about working with LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth, or, alternately, that youth did not view the library as a space in which sexuality and gender identity were specifically made visible. This is not to imply that sexuality and gender identity were unacknowledged in teen spaces – each teen space included a handout that mentions LGBTQ identities and issues and the teen services website features resources on sex and sexuality. Rather, it seems important to note that LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth identity did not often arise as part of librarians’ and staffs’ conceptions of the larger context of youths’ lives or navigation of structural forces.

Buildings and intentions

The inclusion of sexuality and gender identity in resource guides for youth, alongside online resources and stickers and posters that utilized LGBTQ imagery in welcoming ways (such as signage with LGBTQ insignia – rainbow flags, for instance – and signage that staff were “allies”), spoke to the role of space and place as defining aspects of library services. Library staff had worked to incorporate available representative materials into their collections – thinking through demographic and cultural backgrounds of youth in their geographic areas or served by their specific libraries. As the example of the speaker as a library resource shows, this extended beyond conventional library collection development.

Physical construction and location of teen library spaces heavily determined which and whether or not behavioral codes of conduct needed to be strictly enforced. The majority of interviewees mentioned that spaces had not been intentionally designed to include increased noise levels. This meant that teens congregating in social formations or for library programs were more likely to create a level of noise in the library or engage together in behaviors that upset the internal community of the “peaceful” library. In a way, not incorporating specific spaces where noise could be considered a healthy part of the library community placed teens and young people in a position where they were more likely to be disciplined. For example, Librarian C noted that while the library had moved toward incorporating more of a teen presence, it was still “a small building with one open space” where the TeenZone was “really just a corner.” Library B has a designated teen area that is glassed off from the rest of the building, but this did not include enough physical space for the high numbers of youth that went to the library. Only Library E, the newest library building in this research, had been designed with a teen area that was recessed from the rest of the library. The inclusion of spaces “designated for youth, children, families, eating” and more pushed against traditional conceptions of library practice. It is notable that Staff A did not emphasize having to address harms caused there in relation to behavioral mores. This could be related to the fact that Library D has a room (separated, for the most part, from the rest of the library) designated as the TeenZone. This space has different codes of required conduct than much of the rest of the library or of branch libraries.

Staff A did mention that, during their time at another library in the system, space and place had been mediated by the children’s librarian’s ability to bend or break rules relating to consequences for behavioral transgressions. This was echoed through librarians’ and library staff descriptions of their own actions in relation to youth behavior in the library. Many interviewees recounted that, in instances when youth were asked to leave the space, they were still offered a place of welcome. Statements as

simple as, “we really want you here, we absolutely want to see you tomorrow, but today you have to go,” let youth know that they had a place to return, working to disrupt power while addressing the needs of other library patrons.

Librarians and staff noted how effects of space and place combined with skill levels in implementing non-traditional disciplinary practices or even working with teenagers. Librarian B discussed heavy staff turnover and a feeling that many of the previous staff had not had facility or experience working with teenagers, stating that it had previously been a “very traditional library.” Skill building and a recent restorative justice training led Librarian B to believe they would be better supported in their future efforts with youth. Librarian B also noted changes in the library, such as a more racially diverse staff, as making more room for restorative justice and other, less-traditional, library-based practices. All interviewees mentioned or implied that they navigated their own levels of agency in implementing library regulations, some in relation to the needs of other patrons in the space (the likelihood that other patrons might escalate youth behavior if librarians or staff did not initiate addressing these occurrences) and some in relation to other staff’s familiarity with working with youth. Levels of agency were, at times, frustrating for librarians and staff – they needed support from other library staff in order to create a more unified approach to youth access to the library as a whole, but also to be able to implement consequences to behavior (a desire that did not always fit within concepts of restorative justice). Both youth and library employees were constrained in their activities by the requirements set forth by library rules and the limited physical space for non-traditional (noisy, lively, and communal) library programs.

Interviewees noted a careful balancing of these various influences and structures as part of the skill set that allowed them to effectively incorporate restorative justice practices and principles into their own work. Staff B noted that it was an effort that took intention, comparing this youth-centered balancing act to the ease with which library employees could either not ever enforce library rules or could, alternately, take an approach of constantly monitoring youth behavior. Other skills mentioned by interviewees included the need for reflection on discipline-related events and their frequency of occurrence and patience. Staff B advised that part of the philosophy of restorative justice required that librarians and staff be “extremely tolerant of the process of change” and the pressures in youths’ lives that shaped the speed or possibility of change. Maintaining a perspective of faith in youth and the overall process was another heavily utilized skill. Librarian B expressed this as an understanding of how to approach youth, offering the recommendation that “tone is very important” and that adults should “be calm, think through it” and “compromise and come back to a new start.” This reflective and emotionally aware skill set speaks to the

responsibility for their own actions that many of the interviewees modeled in their daily library practice.

Librarians and library staff mentioned that their personal experiences with restorative justice informed their individual practice and approach to the concepts in their day-to-day library practice. The next section engages with how personal experience and familiarity with restorative justice influenced its application. Evident in this exploration is that, despite varied levels of experience and approach, librarians and staff did express belief in the efficacy of the process and its importance to ongoing library services to youth. Interviewees outlined resources that had supported them in their efforts, and noted needs for more support in further institutionalizing restorative justice practice.

Institutionalizing restorative justice

Interviewees’ perspectives on and definitions of restorative justice were informed by their own experience with these concepts. There was a strong division in experience – both library assistants (Staff A and B) interviewed had extensive histories with non-traditional systems of conflict resolution. The three librarians interviewed had encountered restorative justice as part of their professional pursuits. They had each been introduced to restorative justice as a practice through partners – a local non-profit focused on restorative justice-led circle process at Library A, and school-based, facilitated circles at Library B and at Library C.

A contrast between these two ways of becoming informed about restorative justice was apparent in whether it was viewed as an overarching philosophical approach to services (and beyond) or as a practical method for addressing harm. These differences reflect the scope of approaches covered within the field of restorative justice. Staff A and B both spoke of having a high level of facility with restorative justice as a concept, and each had a number of years’ experience practicing restorative justice and other forms of justice that centered the dignity of people. Staff B had become familiar with the philosophical applications of restorative justice through work with a community program for youth who were incarcerated. Staff A had spent their 20s working with an organization that addresses international inequality, and had begun to volunteer with *The Beat Within* after finding that the magazine had approaches to justice that overlapped those they had embraced through that work. Staff A and B spoke to the necessity of restorative justice practices in creating the library as a place of community and as a possible intercessor and source of support for youth made vulnerable to the state. Each spoke of creative solutions that extended beyond circles into day-to-day informed practice and relationship building. Staff A outlined the possibility of restorative justice as an approach that could be undertaken

between library staff when harm occurred, noting that it is a facility and approach built through continued practice. Staff A and B were the two interviewees who questioned the ways that “restorative justice” has become a buzzword that does not actually acknowledge the contexts of youths’ worlds or the political and social forces that shape the lives of (specifically) youth of color.

Librarians who had learned restorative justice as a process largely discussed it in its practical application and through traditional restorative justice circles. Their understandings of restorative justice and its application in the library were based in seeing the real impact of restorative justice circle processes on individual youth, interviewees’ own perceptions and approaches, and youths’ overall perceptions of the library. They frequently mentioned hybridized forms of approach to discipline and harm in the library, incorporating theoretical aspects of restorative justice into their more punitive actions. Above all, librarians, even if haphazardly, sought to combine what they thought was effective practice with relationship building. As noted above, they were frequently constrained by their capabilities, the responses and willingness to utilize restorative justice principles by other staff, and the ways in which buildings and policy combined to make it more likely that youth would be seen as doing harm. They highlighted the roles of respect and of trust in effective librarianship. Librarian C, in particular, was emphatic about how “restorative justice addresses the issue” and that it leads to “additional trust between you and youth, both opening up and sharing your feelings – that leads to trust.”

All librarians and library staff interviewed felt supported in utilizing concepts from restorative justice in their practice. They were most likely to mention support originating from other teen services staff and from the teen services and children’s services supervisors. Staff support varied by locations. Where Librarian A felt supported by other staff, Librarian B noted that staff were beginning to engage and that some changes in staffing had shaped a shift in approach, but that it was not finalized. Librarian C acknowledged that some staff were more willing than others to adopt restorative justice-based practices, but that they had identified overlap between restorative justice and their role as a library manager. Staff B saw restorative justice as inherent to library procedures and mission at Library E, and Staff A advocated for applying restorative justice at a scale that went beyond the library, as well as the need for greater staff support in these efforts.

Staff A was the interviewee who most thoroughly described how restorative justice shapes the library as a place and why it is useful as a theoretical approach held by all library employees. Where Staff B and the librarians interviewed noted the efficacy of restorative justice in their responses to difficult situations with youth, Staff A firmly believed in the need for libraries to utilize the previous experience and knowledges of all staff, including library

assistants. Poignantly, Staff A recounted an instance in which a youth they had met through workshops with *The Beat Within* approached library staff asking for them. The youth, who had a dark skin tone and facial tattoos, was, in the interviewee’s opinion, stereotyped and turned away rather than assisted. This is a harm that may have been irreparable. This type of behavior on the part of librarians and staff leads youth to see the library as unwelcoming or oppressive, communicating to youth that they are not worth the time of librarians and staff. Staff A emphasized a counter to this interaction, insisting on the need for “recognizing and promoting the dignity of every individual.” This illustrates the ideological depth of restorative justice and other non-traditional justice practices that can be applied in the library.

Staff A also emphasized the need for leadership, stating that individuals can do their best to implement restorative justice in their practice, but that this can create the idea of specific staff as providing refuge from more punitive staff. In this description, the library is not a part of the community (although individual librarians might be), and enough negative interactions could lead youth to relinquish their desire to access library materials or resources. In short, the cost can become too high for youth to endure. Librarian B made a point that this process can be exacerbated when other staff hold more traditional values or view the teen librarian or partner as the sole responsible party for interacting with youth in the library. Librarian A noted how this could be complicated by the limited staff resources at the library – they were unable to address teens if they were the only person on the reference desk, and other staff were not always available in order to schedule time for more interaction with youth. This was complicated by the dual role of being an enforcer of rules and a “youth advocate ... to be these kids’ friend.”

Other interviewees identified the need for facilitators or more advanced and ongoing trainings to support the institutionalization of restorative justice in the library system. Alongside Staff A’s push for support and leadership as part of the institutionalization of restorative justice, librarians noted the need for increased structure and physical space for holding circles. Librarian B optimistically related that staff had been heavily receptive to recent training on restorative justice, but questioned, as did other interviewees, whether or not libraries could engage in restorative justice in the same manner as schools. Here, Librarian B noted the compulsory nature of some of the restorative justice proceedings at schools as a contrast to the (seemingly) voluntary nature of accessing the library. This statement, and those made by other interviewees, was mediated by the fact that youth in restorative processes had actively discussed their commitment to the library.

Librarians and library staff agreed that library leadership and those with power needed to embrace non-traditional approaches to harm in order to institutionalize

philosophical and applied approaches to restorative justice in the library overall. They agreed that this would create greater access for youth, often for youth viewed as problems, a complex standing tied with middle-class behavioral norms and racialized and potentially gendered normative ways of being. Staff A's consideration of staff implementing restorative justice into their interactions with one another was bolstered by Librarian C's statement that "in order to do it right it would have to be an ongoing thing." It is no wonder that outside support was requested as part of institutionalization – in instances where restorative justice was in the early stages of implementation, librarians and staff were at times enthusiastic about its possibilities to transform the library as a space but unsure about their level of skill or available resources to incorporate restorative justice into their roles and daily practice.

Restorative justice as library transformation

Overall, librarians and staff planned to continue learning about and implementing restorative justice circles and some of the more philosophical approaches of restorative justice. Library staff, who had more experience with non-punitive disciplinary practices, energetically embraced restorative justice as a position of trust, respect, relationship building, and shared vulnerability. Together, the efforts of interviewees in this research stand as a testament to the possibility of change in the library, a change that would better serve youth made vulnerable to and by the state and transform the library by replacing traditional practices of discipline.

Interviewees' levels of commitment to restorative justice varied along a continuum. They moved from viewing disciplinary procedures separate from restorative justice as essential to working with teens and youth, to modified processes that created connections to family but may interfere with patron privacy, to successful circles with youth, to the incorporation of restorative justice into shared library practice. Future research may benefit from comparing these approaches, now in their infancy, to why and how librarians undertake more traditional forms of discipline with youth and the effect that these more traditional approaches have on youth attendance and access to resources. Based on these interviews, restorative justice changed the ways youth understood the library as a place – creating a more inviting, community-centered institution that worked to address ongoing structural racism and other structural oppressions through contextualized understandings of youths' lives.

Librarians who wish to incorporate restorative practice in their library practice may be disheartened by the fact that much of the actual restorative justice processes at the library system in this research involved restorative justice professionals. Librarians who are not able to easily locate

individuals trained in restorative justice may benefit from further exploration of some of the resources described in the literature review above or some of the practical approaches to addressing harm highlighted by interviewees. For instance, circles, as described in this article, often involved adults from other institutions with which youth had frequent involvement (including school). Librarians may seek to implement their own forms of circles given their existing resources. A series of questions included in Utheim's (2014) review of restorative practice in schools could be asked in a library-based circle. They are

What were you thinking at the time?

What have you thought about since?

Who has been affected by what happened?

What can you do to make things right?

What can you do to make sure this does not happen again? (Utheim, 2014: 357).

The interviews in this research offer a careful reminder to librarians moving toward restorative justice to share responsibility with youth. They reveal that adult vulnerability is at once a model of possible behaviors and a way of building trust and emphasize patience and contextualized understandings of youths' lives. At its heart, then, restorative justice in library practice reveals the value of forming and building relationships, which disrupts power imbalances that have led youth to see the library as a restrictive and uninviting environment.

Conclusion

The interviews in this article reveal that a shift from traditional disciplinary practices to restorative justice involved complex forces. Relationships of power – between librarians and staff and youth, between library employees, and around the institutions with which youth engaged or may encounter, informed and bounded the implementation of restorative justice practice at the time of these interviews. Teen services staffs' facility with and ideological approaches to restorative justice were formed in relation to their own experiences, resources, and the levels of support they received within their individual libraries.

These forces did not deter librarians and staff from enthusiastically relating experiences in which forms of restorative justice practice had effectively worked to build trust and relationships between adults and youth. Despite the difference in interviewees' conceptions of the scope of restorative justice – some positioned their practice and approach within understandings of institutions and oppression while others focused specifically of its efficacy in library practice – the majority of interviewees described

the incorporation of restorative justice as a positive means to address the behavioral mores of the library and the realities of youths' lives.

The findings in this research illustrate the necessity of contextualized understandings of the forces through which youth are made vulnerable to the state within the cultural contexts of libraries as institutions. They reveal that access to library resources must be understood within the ways that library services have continued to operate through cultural and behavioral norms that value white, middle-class, and hetero-normative belonging. This affirms that libraries must take a broad approach to disrupting these histories, one that incorporates socially responsive library culture in order to better serve youth of color and/or LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth.

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