

Math Corps: An Ethnographic Examination of Culture & Discipline

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Abstract

In the United States, zero tolerance policies are a form of structural violence as they disproportionately target and harm Black students. In recent years, restorative justice has emerged as a response to these zero tolerance policies. Restorative justice can be understood and applied as a social movement in order to collectively dismantle structures of injustice. This ethnographic study investigates Math Corps, a national mathematics enrichment and mentorship program, as a social movement community within restorative justice. An examination of zero tolerance policies and restorative justice offers an interesting framework in which to understand the culture and discipline of Math Corps, a program who primarily serves young Black students. This study draws on literature from anthropology of education and social movement theory and is based off fieldwork onsite at Math Corps Cleveland. This ethnographic study aims to identify how discipline is conceptualized as a cultural model in Math Corps. This study uses ethnographic data collected during fieldwork to analyze the community, culture, and collective identity of the program. Data from participant observations and interviews, show that individuals in Math Corps are linked together through social networks and a common culture, which creates a shared collective identity. These relationships, culture, and sense of belonging are important aspects of Math Corps' discipline model. The results of this thesis show that Math Corps is a social movement community that is linked to the broader goals of the restorative justice movement in that it seeks to create a more just society.

Key words: Math Corps, restorative justice, discipline, social movements, anthropology of education

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Chapter One: Introduction

Anthropologists who study education focus on the diverse ways in which our teaching and learning processes are culturally and socially organized. In this study of education, anthropologists look at how structural, social, cultural, and political forces impact communities (González 2010). Since access to education in the United States is directly shaped by political-economic forces and structures of inequity, anthropologists studying education engage in questions of power and justice. An anthropological approach in studying issues and aspects of education is valuable because of the rich, cultural narratives and counternarratives it can provide in context of social and structural issues (Villenas 2019).

The overuse of zero tolerance policies within the United States' system of education is one such social issue. Zero tolerance policies are harmful, punitive practices that identify students as problems and seek to remove, or expel, them from the school (Nelson and Lind 2015; Kaba 2017). Zero tolerance policies are a form of structural violence as they disproportionately target and harm Black students, negatively impacting their academic success and putting them at increased risk of entering the justice system (Schiff 2018). Zero tolerance policies directly contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline which violently harms Black students and Black communities (Nelson and Lind 2015; Kaba 2017). In recent years, restorative justice has emerged as an alternative response to zero tolerance policies. Restorative justice seeks to apply discipline practices that restore communities rather than cause further harm. As restorative justice programs have emerged in educational settings across the United States, scholars such as Schiff (2018) have called for a social movement understanding of restorative justice in order to collectively dismantle structures of injustice such as zero tolerance policies.

The goal of this study is to demonstrate that Math Corps, a national mathematics enrichment and mentorship program for middle school students, can be understood as a part of this restorative justice movement. As an organization that primarily serves young Black students, Math Corps was founded because of the injustices in society and public education and has a stake in dismantling unjust structures. This study takes an anthropological approach to examine the community, culture, and discipline in Math Corps, analyzing it in context of zero tolerance policies and restorative justice. An ethnographic examination of Math Corps further shows that it can be understood as a social movement organization as its members share a collective identity and common culture. The purpose of this study is to show that Math Corps can be understood as a social movement organization within the broader restorative justice movement. The results of this study also show how discipline is conceptualized and constructed through cultural models.

This study primarily draws upon literature from anthropology of education and social movement theory. Following this section in Chapter One, I introduce Math Corps and its history and structure as an organization, before discussing the site of my fieldwork in Cleveland. The history of research section, also in this chapter, provides more background literature review on anthropology of education in which to better understand the context of my research.

Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework for this study. Divided into two principal sections, Zero Tolerance Policies, and Restorative Justice, this chapter contextualizes the main research problem and question, while structuring the theoretical argument. In the Zero Tolerance Policies section, I show that these policies are a form of structural violence that disproportionately harm Black students. In the Restorative Justice section, I provide a thorough introduction to restorative justice and restorative practices as well as their use in education

settings. I conclude Chapter Two with the argument that restorative justice can be understood as a social movement.

Chapter Three provides an in-depth overview of the methodology of this study. In this chapter, I detail the ethnographic methodologies I used during the course of my research such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. I discuss how these methodologies were instrumental in continuously informing, reframing, and answering my research question.

Chapter Four presents the results of my ethnographic investigation. In this chapter I used my ethnographic data to present an overview of the structure and culture of Math Corps. I begin this chapter by describing the roles and relationships within Math Corps before discussing the hierarchical structure and daily schedule of the camp. I then turn to the culture of Math Corps, engaging in a discussion of the specific cultural practices and values in the program. The data in this chapter is instrumental in arguing that Math Corps is a social movement organization.

Chapter Five continues to build off the previous results and discussions in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I discuss discipline within Math Corps, analyzing a specific ethnographic incident in context of zero tolerance policies and restorative justice. In this section, I show how Math Corps uses restorative practices and how discipline within the program is framed through a cultural model of greatness. This section highlights tensions within Math Corps' discipline practices, while ultimately showing that Math Corps is a part of the restorative justice movement.

Chapter Six summarizes the argument of thesis and contextualizes it as an original contribution to anthropology. In this section, I point to areas for future research based on the results of this study.

Math Corps

Math Corps is a national mathematics enrichment and mentorship program for middle school students. Math Corps' mission is to empower and inspire children from underserved communities through the teaching of mathematics and fostering a strong sense of self-worth. The Math Corps Summer Camp is a six-week tuition free summer program that brings middle school, high school, and college students together with educators and mathematicians in a university setting to enhance mathematical learning and foster strong relationships.

During the program, which runs from 9:30am to 2:30pm, Monday through Thursday, middle school students attend foundational and advanced math classes, enjoy structured time together in teams, and attend afternoon activities such as engineering or creative writing. Math Corps employs high school and college students in a student teaching student model to build strong connections and to pass down knowledge and values of kindness, integrity, and courage to younger students. These strong relationships cause many program participants to name themselves as part of the Math Corps family. As a result, Math Corps has created a self-perpetuating corps as previous Math Corps participants return to the program. Math Corps considers itself a lifetime program as students consistently return and are connected to the program, but also because it sets its students up for long term success. The purpose of Math Corps is to ensure that every child is prepared to graduate high school and succeed in college or other post-secondary paths.

Math Corps was first founded in 1991 by Dr. Steven Kahn and Leonard Boehm as a “humanitarian effort” to reach kids in Detroit. Dr. Kahn, a professor of mathematics at Wayne State University, was tutoring students who had failed to graduate high school when he met Leonard Boehm, an educator working with Detroit Public schools to teach Saturday classes to

fifth and sixth graders. Kahn and Boehm combined forces and worked with the Department of Mathematics at Wayne State University to create Math Corps, a volunteer, after-school tutoring program for middle school students in Detroit Public Schools. In its first year, Math Corps only reached 36 students. Kahn and Boehm intensified their efforts, and in 1992 and 1993 Math Corps held its inaugural summer camps serving 40 middle school students and 20 high school students. Twenty-eight years later, Math Corps has served over 3,000 students. Math Corps participants are prepared for success as 90% of participants graduate high school, and of those graduates, 90% continue to either college or the military (Math Corps Website).

The success of Math Corps in Detroit has been nationally recognized, awarded, and studied. Math Corps is the subject of the 2008 award-winning documentary *It All Adds Up* by Sue Marx. The documentary is available to watch on Math Corps' website. Additionally, Math Corps has been recognized by both President Bill Clinton's and President Obama's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence. Math Corps' success in Detroit made it attractive for replication in other cities. In 2012, economists from the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland worked with the Detroit based program to replicate the success of Math Corps in their own city. Math Corps Cleveland became affiliated with Cleveland State University and has been operating for the past eight years. In 2016, Math Corps was awarded a \$3 million National Science Foundation grant to study and replicate its program in Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Utica, NY. Since then, Math Corps has expanded to include even more cities including Ypsilanti and Pontiac in Michigan, and is soon to be in Atlanta, through a program based in Spelman College (Math Corps Website). Within the past two years, Math Corps has become a registered non-profit organization. In addition to the NSF grant, Math Corps is primarily funded through small

and large-scale donations, as well as through university partnerships. Based on its growth in the past few years, Math Corps is positioning itself to be a nationally sustainable social movement.

While Math Corps' longevity and impact is rightfully recognized and celebrated, the existence of Math Corps is necessitated by the political and economic structural forces that have created and maintained racism, inequity, and trauma in these cities. In Detroit and Cleveland, Black students make up the majority of the population participating in Math Corps. While Detroit is the cultural and organizational center of the Math Corps network, my ethnographic fieldwork took place at the Cleveland site and so Math Corps Cleveland and its participants are the primary focus of this thesis.

Math Corps Cleveland draws students from the greater Cleveland area. This encompasses both the city of Cleveland and the surrounding metropolitan area, covering a range of neighborhoods and zip codes. Cleveland is highly segregated by race, ranking between fifth and tenth in the nation as one of the most segregated metropolitan areas (Logan & Stults 2011). Like many other cities in the United States, this segregation is a result of historical policy decisions, such as redlining, and systemic divestment in areas where African Americans lived (Battey 2013). Since 1934, the practices and policies of the Federal Housing Administration have systematically shifted loan money and future investments from communities of colors and into White communities (Battey 2013). While communities of colors were systematically devalued, White communities benefited from federal tax policies that allowed them to enjoy home ownership, benefit from high property values, and build generational wealth (Battey 2013). In addition to residential segregation, these policies are responsible for the wealth gap between White and Black communities in the United States.

The systemic racial and economic segregation of cities significantly impacts access to a quality education. In the United States, a substantial portion of public-school funding comes from property value taxes (Battey 2013). Wealthier communities with high property values will have better funded schools, while low income communities will be left with poorly resourced schools. Students attending schools in low income communities suffer from a lack of resources and quality teachers, experiencing educational inequity (Battey 2013). Wealthier school districts and low-income school districts can also be mapped as either suburban or urban. In the United States, the suburban areas of cities, are Whiter and have higher property taxes (Battey 2013). In contrast, for the most part urban areas of cities have lower property values and are associated with low-income communities of color. Suburban school districts can receive funding twice that of urban schools (Battey 2013). The issue of educational inequity is racialized as school districts are residentially racially segregated.

This issue is intensified in Ohio, where schools are largely funded through property values. While Ohio public school funding was ruled unconstitutional twenty years ago, attempts to solve public school funding have been fruitless (Escue 2015). This is an issue for Cleveland, where property values are lower than other communities. Furthermore, there is a high degree of segregation between Black and White students in different school districts and even in the same schools. The Cleveland Metropolitan School District has a student body that is 65% Black and 15% Hispanic, making it a majority minority school district (Warren 2018). Many Math Corps participants are coming from schools within this district.

School funding directly impacts access to quality mathematics education. Students in poorly resourced communities suffer from a lack of quality investment into their education, particularly in science and math programs (Battey 2013). The resource gap between school

districts in cities like Cleveland creates inequitable access to quality math programs. In addition to the inequitable funding of schools, racism and cultural biases also impact access to equitable education. The identities and relationships between teachers and students have a significant impact in education. White educators disproportionately target and discipline Black students for the same behaviors that they ignore in White students (Ladson-Billings 2006). In the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Black students are 1.7 times more likely to be suspended than White students (Warren 2018). White educators must interrogate their racial and cultural biases and develop culturally competent teaching styles to create more equitable learning environments (Ladson-Billings 2006).

Systemic racism in education impacts Black students' success in mathematics. Battey (2013) argues that mathematics education is used to racially stratify society in the United States. Battey argues that this stratification occurs through the systematic investment of mathematic opportunities in mostly White schools. While White students are able to benefit from placement in advanced math classes, minority and lower-income students are disproportionately assigned to lower tracked math classes and not recommended for more advanced coursework (Battey 2013). In Cleveland, White students are 1.9 times more likely than Black students to be placed in gifted programs (Warren 2018). Students are systematically denied access to a higher quality mathematics education based on their racial and socioeconomic identity. Battey argues that access to mathematics education stratifies society because a quality mathematics education is a gatekeeper to elite universities and higher paying jobs. Socio-economic freedom is difficult to achieve without a solid mathematics background; thus, a quality mathematics education can significantly impact a student's life outcome.

Math Corps Cleveland serves a population of primarily young, Black students. While the socio-economic status of Math Corps participants is not reported, many students come from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and may be coming from communities traumatized by racial disparities. The students' racial identity also means that they are less likely to receive a quality education in mathematics. Math Corps provides these students a strong mathematics education, including both foundational and advanced math courses. The results of pre and post math tests required of campers, show that the campers significantly improve upon their mathematical abilities over the course of the summer, scoring a median test score of 80% at the end of the summer, compared to a median test score of 27% in the beginning (Math Corps Website). In addition to a quality mathematics education, Math Corps provides its members with a sense of belonging and community to foster their social success as well as their academic. Math Corps' summer program and culture directly responds to the inequities and trauma of the education system in the United States.

History of Research

This ethnographic study and research build off and contributes to literature within Anthropology of Education, an applied subfield of Anthropology that seeks to understand how teaching and learning is socially and culturally organized. Anthropologists define education as humanity's unique methods of teaching, learning, producing, and transforming cultural knowledge for interpreting and acting on the world (González 2010: 249). Since education is such a fundamental part of cultural transmission, anthropologists have long been engaged in studying education. When anthropology first emerged as a discipline in the late nineteenth century, anthropologists recognized the contribution of the field to studying pedagogy, school curriculum, and the culture of childhood (Eddy 1985). Maria Montessori's Pedagogical

Anthropology published in 1913 was one of the most significant body of works published at that time.

Anthropology of education, or educational anthropology, truly emerged from cultural anthropology as a distinct subdiscipline during the professionalization of the field in the 1920s (Eddy 1985). In the United States, from the 1920s to 1954, notable anthropologists including Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, E.E. Evans Pritchard and Bronislaw Malinowski engaged in research related to formalized systems of education and the enculturation of the child. Anthropologists saw the value of this study, as they could apply the knowledge produced by their research in application of educational problems (Eddy 1985). For example, Malinowski argued that the scientific knowledge produced from an engaged study of education could be applied to practical problems such as the planning of administrative and educational policies for native populations in British colonies (Eddy 1985). Additionally, in *Coming in Age of Samoa*, Margaret Mead argued that a cross-cultural comparison of the United States with other societies could illuminate our own methods of education (Eddy 1985). Throughout the 1920s to 1950s, numerous anthropologists engaged in research relating to education, culture, and children and applied their results to contemporary problems and policies.

During the 1950s, anthropologist teams George and Louise Spindler, and Rosalie and Murray Wax started to look cultural transmission and acquisition within families, communities, and in schools (Henze 2020). These anthropologists also started to raise important questions about the inequitable treatment of minority children in schools in the United States (Henze 2020). These topics were emphasized at the 1954 Stanford Conference which led to the increase communication between anthropologists engaging in this work and the institutionalization of Anthropology of education as a subfield (Eddy 1985; Henze 2020). The Council on

Anthropology and Education (CAE) was established in 1968, and by 1970 it was included as a section in the American Anthropological Association. In 1970, the Council on Anthropology of Education established their journal, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*.

Anthropology of education blossomed as an institutionalized discipline in the 1960s and 1970s as social issues at the time, including the Civil Rights movements, racial desegregation, and immigration in the United States causes many anthropologists to ask “how do nondominant groups organize their education in the community and home, and how does this education contrast or conflict with the educational practices of schools?” (Levinson and González 2008: 12; González, 2010). To answer these questions, educational anthropologists employed ethnography as their foundational methodology. The ethnography of education, or the use of ethnographic research methods in investigating educational issues was popularized by George and Louise Spindler and Dell Hymes (Heath 2011; Henze 2020). Ethnographic research is a qualitative methodology that integrates both first-hand empirical observations and theoretical and comparative interpretations of culture and social organization (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; 1). The key methods used in ethnographic research include fieldwork and participant observation as they provide insight on interactions of individuals and groups within society.

Hymes believed that ethnography had important ties to social justice, in what Heath (2011) refers to as an “ethnographic sensibility.” Hymes believed that ethnographies or ethnographic research could enable people to “to see more deeply into one another’s ways of behaving and believing” which would create more meaningful communication, greater appreciation of cultural differences, and empathy (Heath 2011, 399). Anthropologists in urban schools could provide this ethnographic sensibility and challenge structures of injustice. As a result of Hymes’ intense belief in the power of ethnography of education, collaborative

partnerships were built between anthropologists and school officials. While anthropologists conducted their fieldwork in urban schools, educators also received ethnographic training (Heath 2011). Ladson-Billings (2006) a prominent anthropologist of education, known for her work on critical race studies and culturally relevant pedagogy, argues that educators should be trained like anthropologists. Many education researchers and professionals are trained in ethnography as ethnographic research has become an important tool for educational change.

In their 1985 article “Applying Ethnography in Educational Change”, Schensul et al. argued that ethnographic research can be a tool for educational change as it can help inform educational policy. The authors argued that the role of local communities in determining education policy were not included in conversations on the education system. This exclusion is significant for minority and low-income groups who have unequal access to basic services. Schensul et al. argued for the creation of collaborative community research centers, that would provide local communities with valuable ethnographic research skills to use in advocating for educational and social change (Schensul et al. 1985). The authors believed in the power of intersection of applied research methods and community bases.

Since the 1990s, there has been a movement within anthropology of education towards research that takes more of an activist stance. This continual forward direction of activism has resulted in a diverse, intersectional subdiscipline in engaged in questions of power and justice. The current mission statement of the Council of Anthropology of Education states that it’s goal is “to advance anti--oppressive, socially equitable, and racially just solutions to educational problems through research using anthropological perspectives, theories, methods, and findings” (CAE). Villenas (2019) further argues that anthropology of education has an “anti-racist mission and political and pragmatic goals for research that seeks to change unjust and oppressive

conditions and facilitate a praxis of liberation” (69). Anthropology of education advocates for research that is responsive to oppressed groups and that promotes interdisciplinary research practices to facilitate racial and social justice learning in educational settings. Example research topics that include such activist research agendas include racism and whiteness in schools and the marginalization of students of color, Indigenous youth, and im/migrant and transnational youths (Villenas 2019).

The study of zero tolerance policies and restorative justice fall under the anthropology of education because of their implications for students of color. Discipline structures merit anthropological study because of their social and cultural conceptualization and their impact on student populations. Zero tolerance policies are a form of structural violence against Black students, and as restorative justice has been identified as a response to zero tolerance policies it has merited ethnographic studies and critiques from anthropologists. In “Restorative Justice, Reintegration, and Race: Reclaiming Collective Identity,” Utheim (2014) analyzes restorative intervention in context of racial inequality and a collective color-blind ideology, ultimately arguing that restorative intervention must take into account counter realities and broaden its cultural reach to be a worthy practice. Restorative intervention can only disrupt the harm caused by zero tolerance policies if it also directly names and includes racial inequality in its dialogue. This study further builds on the anthropological study of restorative justice by analyzing through a social movement understanding.

Niesz (2019,131) writes that “anthropologists of education have long known that communities and social networks are contexts for the cultural production of meanings, identities, and worldviews that are distinctive to their time and place.” Niesz considers social movements to be a special type of such social networks, and that in “addition to being contexts for cultural

production, their members seek to promote their knowledges far and wide through movement activity aimed at transforming society” (2019, 231). Social movements can be understood as consciously defined social networks of individuals, groups, or institutions linked together through a collective identity or ideology engaged in political or cultural conflict (Staggenborg 1998; Jasper 1998; Tarrow 2011). Knowledge from social movements that capture individuals’ beliefs and interests lead to social, cultural, and political change. Niesz believes the education processes involved in the production of social movement knowledges are worthy of attention from anthropologists of education. In this thesis, Math Corps is studied as a social movement organization within the restorative justice movement. This study offers valuable insight as to how discipline is culturally conceptualized and acts as an ethnographic example of how collective identity is established in a movement culture. This study utilizes an anthropological approach to engage in research that is responsive to oppressed groups.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Zero Tolerance Policies

Zero tolerance policies were introduced to public schools in the United States during the 1990s after the adoption of the Gun-Free Schools Act to address serious drug and weapon offenses (Lind and Nelson 2015). Zero tolerance policies in school discipline refer to practices that mandate predetermined consequences that are typically severe, punitive, and exclusionary. Zero tolerance policies respond to specific incidents of student misbehavior and do not take in to account the context or root cause of the behavior (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force 2008). While zero tolerance policies can vary from school to school, exclusionary punishments, such as out of school suspension and expulsion, are the most commonly used forms (Lind and Nelson 2015). While the policies were originally adopted in schools to address serious incidents and prevent crime, over time zero tolerance responses have expanded in use and encompass minor disciplinary infractions and violations (Lind and Nelson 2015). The increasing use of zero tolerance policies in schools has contributed to the ‘school to prison pipeline’ and has created an entrenched punitive culture of control in public schools (Noland 2011; Lind and Nelson 2015; Schiff 2018). The school to prison pipeline refers to the entry of young students into the criminal justice system as a result of the intersection of harsh school disciplinary policies and law enforcement policies (Nelson and Lind 2015; Kaba 2017).

The Gun-Free Schools Act, passed by Congress in 1994, mandated that any student caught bringing a weapon to school would serve a yearlong suspension. The overuse of zero tolerance policies can be in part contributed to the widespread adoption of the broken windows theory (Lind & Nelson, 2015), which views crime as disorder and claims that if the disorder is not controlled it will lead to more serious criminal activity. The theory emphasizes the

importance of cracking down on smaller offenses to discourage more serious crimes. Schools adopted this type of policing and began applying zero tolerance responses to minor misbehavior offenses such as disrupting class or being disrespectful to the teacher. The implementation of zero tolerance policies has shifted the responsibility for disciplinary violations from the school to the justice system, as students are increasingly excluded from classrooms and turned over to the juvenile justice system (Schiff 2018).

Zero tolerance responses are a form of structural violence against students. Structural violence is a term conceived by Johan Galtung (1969, 171), that is used to describe violence built into structures that shows up as “unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances.” Galtung defines this violence as the inability for humans to meet basic needs. Structural violence occurs when social structures, including ones that are economic, political, religious, or cultural, prevent individuals from reaching their full potential (Farmer et al. 2006). Racism and sexism are just two examples of structural violence because, in addition to any physical aggression, they harm individuals’ ability to meet their needs, such as equitable access to education or economic success.

Since structural violence is embedded and normalized in longstanding structures and institutions, they appear to be almost invisible (Gilligan 1997). Examples of structural violence include inequity in access to resources, health care, education, and political power. Structural violence is linked closely with social injustice and is used to understand the “social machinery of oppression” (Farmer et al 2006.) Zero tolerance policies, normalized in U.S public schools, are a form of structural violence because they negatively impact students’ ability to meet their educational and social needs, and disproportionately target Black students.

Zero tolerance policies disproportionately target and harm Black students. National research shows that Black students are suspended and expelled at three times the rate of White students (Schiff 2018). Black girls are subject to even greater disparity as they are suspended at six times the rate of white girls (Schiff 2018; Department of Education Office of Civil Rights 2016). Black students are more harshly disciplined than White students for more minor and subjective infractions such as “insubordination,” “disrespect,” and generally disruptive behavior (Losen, 2014; Losen and Gillespie 2012; Schiff 2018). Such behavior among White students is commonly overlooked, reflecting racial disparities in school discipline. (Losen 2014; Losen and Gillespie 2012; Schiff 2018, 124). While Black students only make up 15% of public-school enrollment in the United States, they account for 31% of students referred to law enforcement, and 36% of school related arrests. Comparatively, White students represent 49% of public-school enrollment, but only 38% of students referred to law enforcement, and 33% of school related arrests (Department of Education Office of Civil Rights 2016). Such racial disparities are seen as early as preschool, where Black students account for 19% of enrollment but 46% of one or more out-of-school suspensions, compared to 42% and 28% for White students respectively (Department of Education Office of Civil Rights 2016).

Racial bias is ingrained in disciplinary responses as Black students from a young age are targeted, excluded, and policed in their classrooms. Research shows that schools with a high percentage of Black students and students from low-income families are more likely to have tough security measures such as metal detectors, random “contraband” sweeps, security cameras, and security guards (Nance 2013). Disabled students are also more at risk being harshly targeted through school discipline. Students with disabilities are nearly 3 times more likely to be arrested than students without perceived disabilities, and this risk is multiplied at schools with a police

presence (American Civil Liberties Union 2018). There is no evidence to suggest that zero tolerance policies increase school safety, nor do they foster academic achievement (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force 2008). In fact, these types of policies actually put students at a greater risk for decreased connectivity to school, poor academic achievement, increased rates of dropout, and entry into the school to prison pipeline, especially as these policies are more likely to increase student's participation in illegal behavior (Schiff 2018).

Applying exclusionary policies arbitrarily is a poor use of school resources as it results in lost instruction time, lowering academic achievement, and as it negatively impacts relationships between schools and families (Schiff 2018). Students are damaged socially by zero tolerance policies, as harsh discipline responses affect a student's social reputation, put them at a greater chance of being held back a grade, can cause social isolation and psychological problems which increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency (González 2014; Schiff, 2018). Punitive suspension and expulsion policies decrease students' access to education and put them at risk of becoming involved in the justice system. In the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Black students are likely to be suspended 1.7 times the rate of White students (Warren 2018). In Cleveland, Black youth are disproportionately overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. While 42% of the total youth population in Cleveland is Black, the juvenile institution population is 90% Black (Warren 2018). Zero tolerance policies are a form of structural violence oppressing Black communities by negatively impacting Black students' academic, emotional, and economic success, ultimately impacting their life outcomes.

Culture of Control

Zero tolerance policies not only exclude students from school, they also reinforce a “culture of control.” Kathleen Noland (2011) uses the term culture of control in, *Police in the Hallways: Discipline in an Urban High School*. Noland provides an ethnography of a Bronx high school where she describes police and student interaction, showing how the convergence of the school and prison systems have created a culture of control in schools that negatively impact low income students of color. Noland draws on David Garland’s (2001) work, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*, which looks at the history of crime control and criminal justice in Britain and the United State. While Noland does not explicitly define culture of control, she provides an understanding of it through the following description of the school.

Hallways were heavily patrolled. Police officers and agents would routinely confront students for taking too long to get to class, shouting too loudly, or wearing a hat. Additionally, many spaces within the school had taken on precinct, or even prison, characteristics. The security apparatus— for example, metal detectors, scanners, and cameras— transformed the physical spaces of the building, and their use became a normal part of daily routines. Police and prison language was commonplace. Students got “picked up” in the hallways and “did time” in the detention room. Many were getting arrested and summoned to juvenile or criminal court (for anyone sixteen or older), often for what seemed like minor infractions (Noland 2011,5).

Noland describes how police exert an authoritative influence and control on the school, and how minor disciplinary infractions immediately become a police matter. Noland writes that the culture of control in the school left it “devoid of any culture of learning,” and that it “had become a kind of auxiliary penal institution in which some of the city’s most marginalized youth spend their days under heavy police surveillance” (2011, 5).

A culture of control may be invisible in schools as it can be embodied by an authoritative or hierarchical schooling model which states that students must conform to the rules or they will be excluded from the community (Noland 2011). In this model, discipline is used as a means of social control. The argument that school discipline is used to control the classroom is not a new one. Timothy Sieber (1979) outlined the purpose of discipline in formal education in his discussion of “client service” models of schools in the 1970s. In this model, students are viewed as outsiders who are assigned little in the way of formal rights and obligations (Sieber 1979, 274). Simply put, students are not respected and are not seen as a part of a community, so discipline is organized and applied through a series of set outcomes or punishments to control them.

This long-established punitive culture of control has been reinforced and worsened through school hierarchies and zero tolerance responses as evidenced by the fact that suspension rates overall have at least doubled since the 1970s (Losen and Skiba 2010). Additionally, since the 1970s the discipline gap between White and Black students has intensified. In 1973, Black students were suspended twice the rate as White students (Losen and Skiba 2010). Currently, Black students are suspended more than 3 times the rate of White students (Losen and Skiba). The increase in the discipline gap between White and Black students is a direct result of racist zero tolerance policies and cultures of control in low income schools.

The mindsets and attitudes of school officials impact the use of discipline. School officials and teachers with the mindset that “students need to respect me”, use discipline to enforce that respect (Sandwick et al. 2019). This authoritative mindset fails to treat students as worthy of respect, which harms students’ personal development and self -esteem. Zero tolerance policies contribute to a hierarchal model that shifts responsibility from adults in schools onto

students as students are punished, usually through exclusion, for their perceived failure. This misbehavior, or ‘failure’, in many cases is caused by personal and cultural trauma experienced by youth (Schiff 2018). Students who come from communities traumatized by poverty, violence, underemployment, inadequate nutrition, healthcare, and education are ill equipped to succeed in a structured and stressful public-school environment and are subjected to the harshest forms of punishment (Schiff 2018) Since school teachers and staff often lack the understanding and resources to address the root causes, or trauma, of a student’s misbehavior, the student is seen as the problem and is punished accordingly. For example, in a case study of five New York schools, staff members admitted that it is “so much easier to suspend students in response to problematic behavior” and “it does not work but it’s quick” (Sandwick et al. 2019, 20).

Schools in low income communities are poorly funded and not equipped to respond to the traumas of their students. While many school staff recognize the ineffectiveness of exclusionary discipline, the funding prioritization of different school resources and policies has made it the default response. In many public schools in the United States, more resources are directed to disciplining students rather than building relationships with them. Since Colorado’s Columbine High School shooting in 1999, millions of dollars have been invested in school policing (American Civil Liberties Union 2018). Community Oriented Policing grants have allowed for school and police partnerships focused on “school crime, drug use, and discipline problems” (American Civil Liberties Union, 2018). The gun violence crisis in the United States has furthered the case for increased law enforcement presence in school. In 2012, President Obama allocated \$45 million to fund school police in response to the Sandy Hook tragedy (American Civil Liberties Union 2018). A further \$1 billion was added to school security budgets by state legislatures after the Parkland school shooting in 2018 (American Civil Liberties Union 2018),

with most of it going towards the hiring of school resource officers. The increased budget focus on school police has left millions of students attending schools that are overly policed and without adequate guidance counseling and mental health resources. A recent report by the American Civil Liberties Union (2018) found that:

1.7 million students are in schools with police but no counselors.

3 million students are in schools with police but no nurses.

6 million students are in schools with police but no school psychologists.

10 million students are in schools with police but no social workers.

14 million students are in schools with police but no counselor, nurse, psychologist, or social worker.

Schools that use federal and state grants to hire school resource officers do not necessarily see a reduction in serious incidents such as assault, possession and use of drugs and alcohol, or the possession of weapons (American Civil Liberties Union 2018) In fact, law enforcement presence in schools is harmful to youth; research has shown that it contributes to less inclusive school environments, and therefore, making students less safe (Schiff 2018; Weisburst 2018). Rather than reducing the amount of school based serious incidents, in some cases, school police contribute to increased school discipline rates, a decrease in high school graduation rates, and a decrease in college enrollment rates (Weisburst 2018). Additionally, a 2018 study found that more police in New York City neighborhoods actually hurt the test scores of Black male students (Legewie and Fagan, 2018).

Zero tolerance policies and police presence in schools do not make schools a safer place or protect students. Instead these practices are a form of structural violence, reproducing harm against students, particularly Black students. Zero tolerance policies and a culture of control are more prevalent in low-income schools in the United States that are primarily attended by non-

white students. Black students are also disproportionately targeted and disciplined for behavior that is ignored in White students. Zero tolerance policies have systematically institutionalized Black youth, contributing to community trauma, intensifying the ‘school to prison pipeline.’ Zero tolerance policies and increasing police presence in schools is a form of structural violence by attacking student success and negatively impacting students’ life courses. The investment in zero tolerance policies and school cultures that emphasize exclusion and control is racist as it maintains as socially unjust society.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice (RJ) is an alternative system of justice that focuses on repairing harm between individuals and communities. It is a different framework, or lens, in which to understand criminal justice (Morrison 2015). In 2002, the United Nations adopted an official, working definition of restorative justice that was first proposed by Tony Marshall (1996). It 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” (Marshall 1996, 36). The majority of western criminal justice systems are retributive, meaning they primarily focus on punishing the individual, or criminal, which often includes incarcerating the offending individual and removing them from their community. Restorative justice, instead focuses on relationships, seeking to repair the harm done to the community, the victim, and the offender. The primary goal is restoration, not punishment. Australia and New Zealand were some of the first countries to integrate restorative justice into their existing legal systems and social structures (Fronius et al. 2019). In 1989, New Zealand passed the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act (CYPF) which officially established restorative justice practices and principles in its juvenile justice system (O’Driscoll 2008). In addition to legal and criminal systems, restorative justice approaches have been adopted for education settings.

In educational settings, restorative justice approaches work to create a culture that values relationships and proactively addresses conflict (Schiff 2018). The expansion of restorative justice work has led to the emergence of a restorative justice lexicon. The terms restorative strategies, restorative practices, and restorative approaches allow for more inclusive and cross-

disciplinary analysis and understanding of restorative work (Schiff 2018). Looking past a single definition of restorative justice allows us to see the complexity of restorative work and understand it as a cultural movement. This chapter offers an examination of restorative justice in education in the United States and shows how restorative justice practices have the capacity to build communities that are “committed to effectively working against the culture and politics of violence in schools” (Vaandering, 2010, 173).

Restorative Justice: An Indigenous Worldview

Restorative justice emerged as an alternative to western retributive systems of criminal justice, and it has been further developed in western legal and education structures. As a result, restorative justice is viewed as a system, or as a set of practices. However, it is important to recognize that restorative practices used in RJ processes are inspired by and directly taken from different Indigenous cultures. It is important to ground restorative justice in Indigenous thought, so that we recognize that restorative justice is more than just a system but is in fact a worldview and more importantly to give credit to Indigenous peoples as knowledge-producers. I now offer a brief discussion on restorative justice as an Indigenous worldview and as a tool for community resilience.

In North America, during the early colonial period (1600s), there were more than 600 Indigenous tribes each with its own unique traditions and languages. However, despite the great cultural diversity, the tribal communities all shared a common restorative worldview regarding family and community (Hand et al. 2012). While European colonizers promoted a culture based on individual rights and self-actualization, traditional Indigenous communities emphasized that each person was first and foremost part of the community. In traditional Indigenous communities, each individual was respected for their unique contribution to the group, whether

they were a healer, hunter, aunt, or uncle (Hand et al. 2012). Each role was regarded as a life mission and were equally valued. As Hand et al. articulates, “in this worldview, every member contributed to forming and sustaining the community and this extended-family relationship continues to be expressed across tribes in the phrase all my relations” (2012, 450). The following comments spoken during the opening of a Mohican ceremony provide further insight into this worldview, or belief system:

“The People of Mother Earth are also our helpers. They share our feelings, our thoughts, and our searchings but in very different ways. They let us see beauty in the diversity that surrounds us. This diversity challenges us to love those differences given to us by the Creator. All of the ancestors of yesterday are still here in the People. We, and all of creation, are related.” (Davids, 2000)

This relationship-oriented worldview was shared by Indigenous cultures across North America. In his book *Indigenous Healing: Exploring Traditional Paths*, Rupert Ross (2015, 8) describes that Canadian aboriginal worldviews see Creation as a “fluid, transforming, and interconnecting reality,” and that the phrase “all my relations” extends past familial and personal relationships to include rocks, trees, animals and waters. This worldview informs every aspect of Indigenous peoples lives as community relationships were prioritized. As a result, “traditional methods for maintaining harmony and resolving disputes were interwoven throughout life-ways , spiritual practices, childrearing, education, shared responsibility for work, and community survival” (Hand et al, 2012). Traditional methods for resolving disputes were restorative in nature, and involved cultural practices such as peace-making, or healing, circles. These types of practices are used in current restorative justice systems.

Traditional Indigenous groups had their own governing structures such as a restorative justice system. While western justice systems sought to eliminate crime through punishment, restorative justice seeks to restore balance and harmony within each individual affected by the

offensive act; this includes the offender as well as the victim and community (Hand et al.,2012). Restorative justice and practices in Indigenous communities were important cultural tools for mitigating conflict and promoting respect. Unfortunately, Indigenous lifeways, such as traditional methods to resolve disputes, have been severely affected and attacked since the violent colonization of North America. Military presence and legislation affected every aspect of traditional Indigenous life, such as prohibiting self-governance, spiritual practices, and communal land ownership. The forced removal and acculturation of generations of Indigenous children contributed to the violent methods used by white colonists to control and destroy Indigenous Nations and cultures (O'Brien, 1989; Hand et al, 2012). During this period of cultural and physical destruction, the loss of traditional based protective factors led to increased community conflict. Colonial oppression prevented Indigenous communities from addressing this conflict using traditional methods which resulted further conflict and violence (Hand et al, 2012).

Indigenous groups have suffered generations of trauma and cultural loss. Communities have been violently disrupted and are in need of restoration. Indigenous communities in North America have been returning to restorative justice to repair the harm suffered in their community. In 1996 the U.S Department of Justice acknowledged Indigenous Peoples traditional conflict-resolution methods as viable and granted tribal courts the right to practice 'restorative justice' in their communities (Hand et al, 2012). Tribal communities realize that the reestablishment of traditional restorative practices will take time, as traditional values, once lost, must also be reclaimed (Hand et al, 2012). Restorative justice is a tool for community resilience as Indigenous communities turn to restorative practices to heal their communities. Additionally,

restorative practices, like racial healing circles, have the potential to facilitate the decolonization of education (Cross et al. 2019).

The goal of this section was to provide an anthropological perspective of restorative justice and to illustrate that restorative justice is more than just an alternative to current criminal justice and education systems, but instead is a foundation for a just society. Restorative justice and practices are an important part of Indigenous cultures and was actively attacked by colonial violence and legislation. Thus, it is important to interrogate how restorative justice can actually be integrated into existing western structures; I will return to this idea in my discussion of restorative justice in schools.

Restorative Justice in School Culture & Discipline

Australia is thought to have pioneered the use of restorative justice in school settings. In 1994, a Queensland high school first implemented a school-based restorative justice conference in response to an assault at a school event (Blood, 2005; Sherman & Strang, 2007) Funding from the Australian government further expanded restorative justice to over 100 schools, monitored as a pilot study. The study found that restorative justice participants were satisfied with the experience, found it to be fair, and that offenders were more likely to follow agreements reached in the restorative justice process (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001). The study also revealed tensions between the traditional philosophy on school discipline and restorative justice (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001). After Australia's experience, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and other European nations followed in their footsteps, adopting restorative justice practices in schools. Restorative justice practices have become increasingly popular in Canada and the United States as well (Fronius et al. 2019). Restorative practices are implemented in schools, through both individual school initiatives and as a part of district wide school policy, to address

youth misbehavior, rule violations, and to improve school climate (González 2014). In the United States, restorative justice has emerged as a response to the ineffectiveness of zero tolerance policies and disciplinary racial disparities. Programs like the Department of Education's Rethinking Discipline initiative and the School-Justice Partnership Initiative have increased the status and use of restorative justice practices in schools (Schiff 2018; Fronius et al. 2019).

Restorative justice practices (RJP) can foster more equitable school environments as research is beginning to suggest that they have a positive effect on reducing racial disparities in school discipline (González 2014). In schools, restorative practices can be applied as a 'whole school' approach or as an 'incident-driven' approach. González argues that whole school restorative justice approaches work to build a culture based on restorative values such as respect, trust, and inclusion. A whole school approach builds a school culture and climate that fosters fewer incidents of harm. González explains that implementing restorative justice in schools begins with the establishment of a set of norms and values. Students and teachers receive universal instruction that sets up these values, build relationships, which then creates a restorative culture. González argues that more intensive RJP practices can be used to target school wide problems, and if school norms and values are violated, incident driven RJP practices are used to address the harm caused. The following section discusses a case study of RJP implementation in schools.

Thalia González's (2014) study evaluates the impact of restorative justice practices on school culture and student achievement by looking at the implementation of RJP in the Denver Public School system (DPS). González's qualitative analysis of a longitudinal study (2003-2013) contributes to international literature on RJP positive outcomes for students, teachers,

parents, and community members. Restorative justice practices, first were implemented by the DPS from 2001 to 2005, as a method of intervention against the rising rates of suspension and exclusion. This rise corresponds to the increase in use of zero tolerance policies and funding during that period. Implementation of RJP started as a single year pilot program in 2003 at only one DPS school, Cole Middle School. In 2006, it expanded to other schools becoming a multi-school project, with a targeted focus on schools with the highest rates of racial disproportionality in the district (González 2014). RJP continued to grow as a year later DPS established district level processes to facilitate more effective RJP implementation throughout the school system. In 2009, DPS started to shift from viewing and using RJ as preventive practices, rather than as a method of intervention. DPS fostered the growth of RJP in its schools, so that it became more than just a disciplinary approach. González's report found that DPS has come to "regard restorative justice as a district wide practice that promotes positive change in the school culture at all levels" (2014, 157).

The broad aim of restorative justice in education settings is to "develop educational policies and practices that are more responsive and restorative to the needs of the school community" (Morrison, 2007; González 2014, 152). Restorative justice practices emphasize accountability, restitution, and restoration of a school process. Restorative justice involves deliberative processes that facilitate mutual understanding, problem solving, compassion, and forgiveness that repair relationships and create feelings of respect and peace. These feelings are viewed as a positive outcome because they contribute to the social capital of a school community (González 2014 152). González argues that an underlying assumption of restorative justice is that when students misbehave or commit offensive acts, they break the social contract between them and the school community (2014). This contract cannot be restored or repaired if students are

absent or excluded from the school community. Restorative justice prioritizes discipline responses that keep offending students in class. Restorative justice is most effective in schools that adopts it as a continuum model. A continuum model incorporates restorative practices in schools beyond the discipline level. This model, used to respond to harm, builds social capital, improves academic performance, and creates a safer environment. (González 2014, 153). A continuum model includes a diverse array of RJ practices from informal exchanges between teachers and students to formal conferences on student misbehavior.

The continuum model is designed to increase student engagement and transform the school climate from one of exclusion to community. The informal and formal practices work together to foster a restorative culture (González, 2014).

While the continuum model allows for schools to institute different RJ practices, González found that three core practices emerged across the district: restorative justice dialogues, restorative conferencing, and restorative circles. A restorative justice dialogue is a one on one conversation between two members of the school community, usually a teacher and a student. This conversation is centered around the student's behavior and is guided by questions designed to meet the goals of restorative justice. A restorative conference is like a dialogue but in this case, it is mediated by a third party. In a restorative conference, the mediator guides two conflicting parties to answer RJ questions until they reach a resolution. A conference occurs when there is an imbalance of power between two parties. For example, bullying would be a case requiring a conference. The mediator is present in the conference to balance this power.

Restorative circles are a space for open communication and reflection. Classrooms can use a restorative circle design to support learning outcomes, define boundaries, and develop positive relationships. Their use is directly related to managing "curriculum, pedagogy, and

behavior” (González, 160). Restorative circles can be used preventively to facilitate conversation and a restorative culture. These circles can also be used as a disciplinary process like restorative conferences to respond to harm. All individuals, directly or indirectly affected by an incident, are present in a restorative circle. In this disciplinary conference, the members are guided through questions that seek to respond directly to the harm, while restoring balance and harmony in the community. The facilitator of a restorative circle seeks to bring about conversation on “what happened”, “what was the impact of the incident”, and “how can you bring about repair” (Vaandering 2010, 158). Restorative circles involve multiple parties to facilitate reflection and conversation.

The continuum model has been found to have the greatest impact in the Denver Public School Systems. The DPS model includes frequent proactive restorative exchanges, personal statements, guiding RJ questions, informal and formal conferences, and large group circles. Regardless of the specific practice, district level administrative support is important for establishing processes and spaces in which restorative practices can flourish. Individual support from teachers, parents, students, and other school community members are also needed to effectively implement RJP and maintain it as a way of being in a school setting. DPS district wide implementation of restorative justice reflects a “paradigm shift that views restorative justice as another tool to effectively educate students” (González 2014, 163). The Denver Public School district has seen positive outcomes from building a restorative culture.

González ‘s study found that from 2006 to 2013, DPS suspensions rates fell from 10.58% to 5.63%. González also found, that while racial disparities must still be addressed, suspensions for Black students fell 7.2% during this period. This is the largest decrease in suspension rates seen by the school system. This potentially represents the narrowing of the racial discipline gap

in this school system. At one specific DPS school, Cole Arts and Sciences Academy (CASA), the suspension rates for all Black students decreased from 16.89% in 2011 to 2012 to 2.86% in 2012-2013, representing a 14-percentage point decrease in the span of one year (González 2014, 156). In addition to reducing suspension rates, DPS implementation of RJP increased academic achievement outcomes. Between 2009 and 2013, DPS showed a significant increase in students scoring proficient and above in statewide tests. ACT scores also increased from 15.4 to 17.6 and the percentage of on time graduation increased from 46.4% to 51.8% from 2009 to 2010 (González 2014). In implementing restorative justice practices, the Denver Public School district also reduced the role of School Resource Officers. The reduction of police presence in schools is a positive outcome as it can disrupt the school to prison pipeline.

The Denver Public School system transformed restorative justice from an isolated program into a district wide philosophy and practice that has promoted academic achievement and student connection. By choosing to ground their disciplinary practices in a restorative framework, schools have had a positive impact on reducing harm and have been able to foster a more equitable and positive school culture (González 2014, 162).

Critiques of Restorative Justice

Restorative justice's potential for creating a more equitable school environment needs to be thoroughly examined. In this section, I will examine critiques of RJ's ability to reduce racial disparities in discipline, as well as the limitations of restorative justice as a disciplinary approach. In implementing restorative justice practices, schools are assuming that there is a significant degree of trust and accountability between its teachers and students. However, in schools with a culture of zero tolerance policies and punitive discipline, this trust cannot be assumed (Lustick 2016). Restorative justice cannot be effectively implemented if the core philosophy or culture of

the school remains unchanged. Lustick (2016) argues that unless restorative justice practices target organizational and institutional change, a ‘punitive mentality’ will persist in schools, impeding any sort of positive outcome associated with restorative justice. A shift in type of discipline, from zero tolerance to restorative justice, will not have a tangible impact on racial disproportionality rates. In other words, this performative shift will not interrupt school’s targeting of Black students. Instead, to create a more equitable environment, Lustick argues that “the beliefs, biases, and institutional forces that marginalize students of color need to be challenged” (2016, 44).

Lustick criticizes restorative justice studies for their conclusions drawn about reducing racial disparities because the studies do not actually explore issues of “racial bias & cultural responsiveness as they pertain to the restorative process itself” (2016, 44). Lustick (2016) argues that racial bias is not typically a focus in studies on school discipline because the studies are founded on the assumption that changing discipline practices will reduce racial disproportionality (Lustick, 2016). Studies have found that those wishing to reduce racial disparities in discipline should seek interventions that focus on the school rather than on individual characteristics or behaviors of students (Lustick 2016, 46). Since school policies disproportionately target Black students and disabled students, it is important that school policies move away from identifying students as problems. Shifting from zero tolerance policies to restorative justice requires more than just a new discipline approach. It is a cultural shift that requires school communities to engage in conversations on systemic racism, structural violence, and racial and cultural biases.

Re-thinking Restorative Justice

Research shows that restorative justice is reimagining school discipline as it helps to decrease suspension and expulsion rates, and entry into the juvenile justice system by creating a school climate that fosters student engagement and success. As shown by the Denver Public School district, restorative justice can be integrated into existing education and justice structures. However, restorative justice is limited by this integration. The full implementation of restorative justice requires resources and years of work that most districts are not willing or unable to commit to (Schiff 2018). As seen with DPS, RJP implementation is a complex, multi-year process of redefining behavior, reestablishing culture, and confronting and entrenched views of order and discipline in school (González 2014).

It is easier to invest in a couple restorative justice trainings and adopt performative policy than it is to actively challenge and dismantle structural violence and inequity in schools. Public schools must give priority to state mandated programs instead, and poorly funded schools lacking resources and stability are unable to effectively implement restorative justice practices (Schiff 2018). These schools are then stuck reproducing narratives of inequity and violence. Within these limitations, how can RJP disrupt existing narratives about exclusionary discipline and punishment and reframe what equitable public education looks like? The answer lies in reimagining restorative justice. Schiff argues that restorative justice practices need to be viewed as more than just as a “strategy for responding to harm, and rather as a movement with potential to confront injustice and disrupt strategies organized from, and resulting in, ongoing domination and oppression of marginalized groups” (Schiff 2018, 129).

Social movements can be understood as consciously defined social networks of individuals, groups, or institutions linked together through a collective identity or ideology

engaged in societal change (Jasper 1998; Tarrow 2011). Schiff (2018) argues that restorative justice should be understood as a social movement seeking to dismantle narratives and structures of violence to create a more just society. Schiff argues that in unjust societies, founded on values of inequality, selfishness, and oppression, structural violence and injustices such as poverty, homelessness, racism, and educational inequity are accepted and unchallenged. Schiff explains that restorative justice practices cannot be meaningfully applied in institutions operating within such narratives of violence and injustice. Instead Schiff argues that

“the goal of restorative justice should be far more intentional - to dismantle cultural narratives and structures that celebrate exclusion and punishment as just responses to harm, over compassionate restorative responses to keep youth in school, off the streets and out of the justice system” (2018, 134).

Schiff argues that restorative justice can challenge cultural narratives by building new structures of thought, communication, and action founded on values of shared power, inclusion, and collaboration. Schiff’s argument directly relates to the earlier discussion on the history and use of restorative justice in Indigenous communities. Restorative justice is more than just a discipline model or public policy, it is a knowledge system that requires a fundamental shift in worldview

Restorative justice must transform itself from a disciplinary approach to a social movement that promotes a culture actively against injustice. In education, restorative justice has been successful in building restorative cultures that foster positive relationships, improve school safety and academic achievement. It has the potential to reduce racial disciplinary disparities in schools and possibly disrupt the school to prison pipeline. But for restorative justice to fully disrupt systemic structures of violence and the targeting of Black students, it needs to be applied far beyond the education and justice system. Working as a social movement, restorative justice is a tool for dismantling a current culture of violence that accepts social injustice.

Math Corps, a national mathematics enrichment and mentorship program for middle school students, is a part of this restorative justice movement. As an organization that primarily serves young Black students, Math Corps was founded because of the injustices in society and public education. Math Corps directly responds to structures of injustice by providing its students a quality mathematics education and sense of community. Math Corps is a social movement organization as its members share a collective identity and common culture while committed to educating its students “to build good lives for themselves and a more just society for all” (Math Corps website). Math Corps can be understood as a social institution within the broader restorative justice movement proposed by Schiff (2018).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Ethnographic approaches can lead to powerful narratives that uncover cultural practices and themes. The use of ethnographic methods allow space for flexibility and changing research directions. I chose to engage in an ethnographic study of Math Corps to fully understand the culture and community of the program. Through this methodology, I was able to observe key ethnographic incidents and cultural practices and values.

This ethnographic investigation took place during the summer of 2019. I used a mixed-methodological approach including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, surveys, and methods of secondary data collection that are detailed further in this section. The protocol for this research was originally approved by Ithaca College's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for one year from 05/30/2019 to 05/29/2020. The protocol approval was extended until 05/29/2021. Math Corps' consent for research is included in the IRB protocol. All participants' names were changed to protect their confidentiality, except for Dr. Steven Kahn and Dr. Carol Phillips-Bey, who are identifiable leaders of Math Corps. Dr Bey is also listed as a co-investigator in the protocol and was a part of the research proposal process leading up to the fieldwork. This research was funded by the Ithaca College Humanities and Sciences (H&S) Summer Scholars Program, under the advisement of Dr. David Turkon. The project was also in part funded by the Fred L. Emerson Civic Engagement Fund.

I spent three weeks on site at Math Corps at Cleveland State University. During this period of fieldwork, I engaged in participant observation, distributed surveys, conducted four semi-structured interviews, and one focus group. Informal conversations with different Math Corps community members also strongly informed my research and I noted these conversations

in my field notes. My identities as both a former member of Math Corps and as an independent researcher reflexively complemented each other, and I was able to grasp a nuanced cultural understanding of the community. Over the course of my fieldwork, I realized that Math Corps is more than just a community but can be understood as a culture. Community, in this case, can be understood as a group of individuals connected to each other through relationships and shared support (Staggenborg 1998). Culture can be best understood as shared communal ideas, values, and worldviews manifested in specific practices, symbols, rituals, and speech I began to frame my research as an ethnographic investigation of the culture of Math Corps. My mixed- methods approach, including participant observation, qualitative surveys, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group worked together to help reframe and answer my research question. During the process of research, my observations on culture and collective identity informed my understanding of Math Corps as a social movement organization. Furthermore, when putting my collected ethnographic data in dialogue with each other, I was able to observe shifting perspectives and tensions regarding discipline in the program.

Research Positionality

My role as an ethnographer in this investigation was informed and challenged by my identity as a previous Math Corps participant. My Math Corps experience first started in 2016 when I joined the summer camp program as a high school teaching assistant. I became invested in Math Corps' mission and its members, so I returned to the program in the following summer as a college assistant. When I joined as a high school teaching assistant, I joined as a White, middle class student from a wealthy but socio-economically diverse school district. I was aware of educational inequity and had worked as a tutor for both Black and White students. I believed myself to be socially aware and critically conscious. When I joined Math Corps, many of the

other teaching assistants shared aspects of my identity, such as my race, class, gender, and schooling, and many did not. As a teaching assistant, I was part of a diverse staff and worked in a structured environment. In this position, I had already formed, or structured relationships as I worked within a team and had students assigned to me. I worked personally with two Black students who had varying math skills, while also developing relationships with the other students in my team and program. In this position, I was actively engaged in issues of race, class, and educational equity. However, I didn't reflect critically on my own identity until I returned the next summer as a college assistant.

As a college assistant, I worked on a staff where my whiteness was very visible as many of the college students in this position were Black. Also different from the teaching assistant position, the college assistant position is more loosely structured, without the same set relationships. Suddenly, I had to face my own racialized identity, and confront my Whiteness while forming relationships in an unstructured environment. First starting as a college assistant, I was uncomfortable. This discomfort came from two places. First, I'm generally introverted or anxious in large group settings, especially with new people. However, this discomfort also came from confronting my Whiteness and the impact of my social identities on my relationships. Over that summer, I developed positive relationships with my fellow staff members and students in the program, and my experience as a college assistant provided me a valuable opportunity for critical reflection.

Returning to Math Corps as an ethnographer, I benefitted from this experience and reflection. As an ethnographer, once again, I was in a position of power where I didn't share the dominant identity of the group, nor did I have structured relationships. I entered my fieldwork aware of the power dynamics imbued in the identities and interactions between myself and my

participants. As an ethnographer, I was now more comfortable in my discomfort and navigating issues of identity. My previous experience working with Math Corps also grounded my research, and I treated my presence at Math Corps as an invitation, respecting the individuals and work of this program. As an ethnographer, I was aware of the power of my position and how at the end of the summer I would be returning to a private institution while members of Math Corps would be returning to an inequitable education. Theorizing about educational inequity is not the same as experiencing it. As a result, I tried not to impose my research agenda and I was conscious of the impact of my presence. While on-site, I spent most of my time with members of the senior staff, the college and administrative staff positions at Math Corps. I interviewed only senior staff members; whose consent was more easily obtained as these individuals were 18 years of age or older. In these interviews with senior staff members, some of whom were individuals I had previously worked with, there was more of a balanced power dynamic as these individuals were in position of power in Math Corps.

My personal experience in Math Corps informed my research questions, and my relationships with Dr. Bey and other Math Corps members facilitated this research experience. As a past participant in Math Corps, I am fully indoctrinated into its culture. As a past teaching assistant, I understand the significance of this position and the challenges that students in this position face. Additionally, as a college assistant, I know how the camp is set up organizationally and can articulate the different tensions and relationships that exist within Math Corps. As a result of this, I drew upon my own personal knowledge of Math Corps in my investigation and analysis.

Having spent two summers in Math Corps as a fully indoctrinated member, I have an emic perspective of this organization. This insider perspective has informed aspects of my

research, and while it is beneficial, it also posed challenges. During my fieldwork and research, sometimes my own personal experience with Math Corps would influence my conversations or argument. In interviews, at times I would share my own Math Corps stories and views. While this practice can benefit the conversation, I did not want to unduly influence the course of the interview or research. In this way, my dual identities as a former Math Corps member and an independent researcher complemented each other. Starting my fieldwork, I already had a defined view of Math Corps. However, as an ethnographer, I was able to identify different themes and tensions within my research and provide an analytical and anthropological perspective of Math Corps. How I navigated these dual identities is further shown in an account of my fieldwork experience.

Fieldwork

The Math Corps summer program runs for six weeks, with additional two weeks for staff training and post-camp breakdown. I was on site at Math Corps for three weeks: the training week, and the first week of camp that directly followed. I then returned for Math Corps' last week of camp. From attending both the first and last week of camp, I was able to see changes in relationships and experience the development of a sense of community. The fact that I was not present for the full duration of the program is a limitation of my research. Had I been on site, I would have been able to observe the formation and changes in relationships, as well as different incidents and events that occurred during the course of the summer. However, leaving and returning to the site was also advantageous to my research. While absent from Math Corps, I was able to reflect on and assess what I had observed and learned. While transcribing my interviews and analyzing my fieldnotes during this time, I uncovered major themes about culture and discipline in Math Corps that are integral to this thesis. My time away actually provided me space to shift my focus and develop new interview questions for when I returned to the site.

Throughout my fieldwork, I balanced my identities as a community member and as an independent researcher. As I was not a full program participant, I would sometimes feel hesitant about being present for certain activities. For example, at the end of each day, there were staff debriefings for both the high school teaching assistants and the senior staff. During these debriefings, the staff members discussed any student issues that arose during the day. During the first week of camp, I attended more teaching assistant debriefings than I did of the senior staff. While I felt a bit awkward silently observing the teaching assistant debriefings, I was more comfortable in that space. As a past teaching assistant, I knew what the space looked like and felt comfortable entering it. However, I had never previously attended a senior staff debriefing. I understood those meetings as more serious and intimate in their discussion of student behavior. I did not know if I would be allowed in that space. I finally gained courage on the third day of camp and asked if I could attend a meeting; and I did. Through my hesitance, and desire to not be an intruding observer, I restricted myself in the spaces I entered and the questions I asked.

Before this fieldwork experience, I had developed and applied ethnographic research skills through an ethnographic methods course. I conducted semi-structured interviews in this course and learned how to analyze ethnographic data. While this experience gave me the grounding in which to conduct this ethnographic investigation of Math Corps, I was slightly unprepared for the anxieties of fieldwork. I thought that because I was familiar with Math Corps, it would be a more comfortable experience. Yet despite my previous experience and established relationships with staff members, I felt like an outsider. As I spent more time on site, this feeling subsided. However, my hesitance, stemming from inexperience in conducting fieldwork and personal timidity, affected how many individuals I reached out to for interviews. I relied on my relationships within Math Corps, reaching out to staff members that I had worked with in

previous years. Additionally, when choosing which teams to observe, I chose the ones lead by individuals I had an established relationship with. My personal connections greatly benefitted my research, and despite my own anxieties, I was welcomed as a member of Math Corps.

Participant Observation

Participation in this study was open to any past or current participant or staff member of Math Corps at Cleveland State University. Math Corps on average has 150 to 180 participants in its summer program. Recruitment statements and informed consent forms were first widely distributed to staff members, participants, and their guardians by Dr. Bey before my initial arrival. During fieldwork, I was on site at Math Corps from about 9:00am to 4:30pm each day. During the day I would participate in and observe various Math Corps activities. During my first week of fieldwork, camp training took place in the main auditorium. On the first day of training, I explained my presence and presented my research question to the group, passing out informed consent forms. During training, I would sit apart from the group, observing and taking notes on what was happening. For example, I focused on what values were being expressed, who was part of the training, how the group behaved, and how new Math Corps members versus experienced members responded. For example, I noted how veteran, or seasoned, Math Corps members would take on a leadership role, encouraging the new members to follow their practices, such as filling in every seat in the first few rows of the auditorium.

During camp, I would arrive and set up in Math Corps' senior staff, or administrative, office. I would attend the morning assembly and then go to a specific team's class and team time. During the morning assembly, I would take note of the language and messaging of the assembly and observe how the audience was participating. For example, I took note of who was engaging in Math Corps hand signals, and the interaction between the high school students and middle

school students. After morning assembly, I would attend class and team time with a select team. I actively engaged with the members of this team, participating in icebreakers and occasionally helping with math homework. During lunch, I would find a quiet place to write up my notes and reflections in my field notebook. While I would keep my notebook with me throughout the day, I would refrain from intensively writing in it while in the company from others because I did not want it to be an alienating process. In my notebook, I would sketch drawings, trying to map the relationships in Math Corps (Figures 4.1 and 4.2 are formalized versions of these sketches.) I would also write down key quotes and notes on what I was observing, such as the absence of college assistants from different meetings and the frequency of their interactions with other staff members. Through such observations, I became aware of the tension that existed between different positions in the program.

After lunch, I would either attend more classes or spend time in the senior staff office, which was a hub of activity. Throughout the day I would in engage in informal conversations, develop new questions, and work on scheduling interviews that would take place before, during, and after the camp day. After the camp day ended, I would attend staff debriefings and conduct interviews. Since I was in the Math Corps office frequently, most of my conversations took place with senior staff members. This gave me valuable insight to Math Corps' organizational philosophy, operations, and decision-making process. After the end of Math Corps each day, I would return to where I was staying, and type up the notes I took that day into a narrative reflection. I would also reflect and write about how I was personally feeling. I used these reflections to identity key areas of observation and reorient myself in this research process.

As I typed my fieldnotes into a more cohesive narrative, I was able to transform observations into reflections. For example, during training one day the teaching assistants were

asked what they would like to export from Math Corps into their schools, and they answered with “Love and safety”, “Support”, “Respect”, and “Equality.” This observation ignited further reflection on the educational realities of Math Corps members, as well as how is Math Corps part of its members lives throughout the school year. This reflection informed further observations and questions about what members can export from Math Corps.

My observations and fieldnotes were very rich and providing valuable information that would inform my research and contextualize many of my interview questions. For example, during my second week of fieldwork, I attended a senior staff meeting where the staff members were discussing the dismissal of two students for violating Math Corps’ rules. During this meeting, I took note of the language and arguments used in the discussion and the reactions of the different Math Corps staff members to this dismissal. This was a key incident in transforming my research question and this incident is discussed further in Chapter Five.

Surveys

Surveys were administered to middle school students and completed with their consent. The purpose of the survey was to document the middle school students’ perspective of Math Corps. The students were asked to describe Math Corps and its values, their relationships in Math Corps, and whether they intended to return the following summer. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix B. A total of 25 surveys were completed. While a rich data source, only a few quotes are pulled from the surveys to illuminate certain discussions in this thesis.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews were a key methodology in answering my research question. Semi structured interviews were conducted with four members of Math Corps’ senior staff, which includes college students and administrative positions. Additionally, I received one

written response to my interview questions from another member of the senior staff. I found it easier to interview members of the senior staff because I had more direct access to them and I already had established relationships with them. Each interview participant has been assigned a pseudonym. These interviews were useful as I was able to ask questions directly related to my research question, and about themes and incidents I observed. I began each interview asking the participants to describe their current and past involvement in Math Corps, as in how long they have worked in Math Corps and in what roles (See Appendix A for a full list of interview questions). The interview participants are described below:

1. Kaleb, a CI, has participated in Math Corps for more than five years. He spent his first three years as a high school teaching assistant. He then worked as a college assistant. During the summer of my fieldwork, he was working as a college instructor (CI). College Student
2. Stella, GS, has participated in Math Corps for more than three years. Her first two years she worked as a college instructor. During the summer of my fieldwork, she was working as a grade supervisor. Occupation: Educator
3. Stephen, GS, has participated in Math Corps for more than three years. His first two years he worked as a college instructor. During the summer of my fieldwork, he was working as a grade supervisor. Occupation: Educator
4. Joseph has been a part of Math Corps for more than three years. During his first summer with the program, he worked as a college instructor. During his second year, he was a grade supervisor. During the time of my fieldwork, he was not an active staff member, but was visiting camp to help set it up. Occupation: Educator
5. Elle, CA, was the source of the written interview. She has been a part of Math Corps for over six years. She has worked as a teaching assistant, a college assistant, and a college instructor. During the time of my fieldwork, she was working as a college assistant. College Student

Since each interviewed participant has been involved with Math Corps for varying lengths of time and have held different positions, the interviews provided a range of perspectives. For example, Kaleb has the perspective of growing and working in Math Corps as a high school

teaching assistant, college assistant, and college instructor. Additionally, in their interviews, Stephen and Stella provided perspective on being grade supervisors and as working as educators.

While I worked from a list of open-ended interview questions, I let the interview participants' response guide the conversation, asking different questions in response to different themes or threads expressed. I took few notes during the interviews, treating the structured time almost like a conversation. Interviews lasted between twenty and forty minutes and took place at different times throughout the camp day. Each interview took place during my second week of fieldwork. Each interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed into a word document. After transcription, I would analyze each interview and physically highlight different quotes and key words. In organizing my field notes and reflections, I would attach different interview quotes to observed themes and incidents. Once I had conducted all four interviews, I analyzed them in comparison to each other and highlighted common themes. This analysis was useful for developing questions for the focus group.

Focus Group

A focus group was conducted with three participants during my third week of fieldwork. I decided to conduct a focus group to explore questions about Math Corps' culture and discipline practices. The focus group took place one morning before the camp day started. The focus group was open to the group college instructors and grade supervisors. I selected this target population because the college instructors and grade supervisors have direct relationships with students and are involved in the discipline process. The purpose of this focus group was to understand how these staff members view the culture of Math Corps as well as its discipline practices. How the staff members view Math Corps' culture and discipline practices, specifically compared to public schools, is insightful in understanding Math Corps as a social movement. The participants were

drawn from a group of ten college instructors and two grade supervisors. Only three individuals participated in the focus group: Kaleb, Stella, and Stephen. As a result, their views are not fully representative of Math Corps or its culture. However, their personal perspectives and experiences show how they share a collective identity as actors within a social movement.

Additionally, since their interviews took place at the beginning of the summer, this focus group allowed me to see how their personal views changed or evolved over the course of the summer program. The focus group lasted for forty minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed. The focus group transcription was analyzed similarly to the interviews. I highlighted key words and themes and compared the focus group to the previous individual interviews. When looking at the arguments expressed in the focus group, specifically at how the participants contrasted Math Corps to public school systems, I analyzed it in terms of zero tolerance policies and restorative justice. An examination of zero tolerance policies and restorative justice in schools offers an interesting framework in which to understand Math Corps' culture and discipline practices.

Math Corps Data

In addition to the ethnographic methods, other sources of data were also used. Most importantly, the Math Corps Website and the Math Corps Cleveland Website provides comprehensive information on the history, mission, results, and locations of the program. This information is valuable at looking how Math Corps markets itself as a social movement. The websites also provide detailed sections on the goals and leadership of the organization. The use of this data is supplementary as I keep my focus on what I observed and learned through interviews during my fieldwork.

Chapter Four: Results

In this chapter, I use my ethnographic data to present an overview of the structure and culture of Math Corps. I begin this chapter by describing the roles and relationships within Math Corps before discussing the hierarchical structure and daily schedule of the camp. I then turn to the culture of Math Corps, using my observations and interviews to discuss specific cultural practices and values in the program. The results from my ethnographic data in this chapter show the presence of a collective identity and movement culture within Math Corps, which is crucial to understanding it as a social movement organization. A discussion of the relationships and culture within Math Corps is also essential in understanding it in terms of restorative justice.

Roles & Relationships

Math Corps is a six-week math-based summer program that employs college and high school students to serve as role models, educating and empowering students in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. While the hierarchy of positions in Math Corps serve an administrative purpose, more importantly, the hierarchy works to foster meaningful connections between staff and campers. The individual positions work in conjunction to form a social network. This social network is used to communicate shared values and is also used as a mechanism of growth and recruitment. There are three levels to Math Corps: the campers, the high school teaching assistants (TAs,) and the senior staff. I will discuss the positions in each level and the program's growth and recruitment strategies below.

Campers:

Math Corps uses the term camper to describe its summer program participants. Campers are middle school students from the Greater Cleveland area entering seventh, eighth, and ninth

grade in the fall. Students participating in Math Corps come from a variety of educational institutions in the area including public schools and charter schools. Campers are selected through an application-based process. During the summer program there were approximately 100 participating campers which can be broken down by grade level. There were four teams of seventh grade students, referred to as 7's, and four teams of eighth grade students referred to as 8's. There were two teams of ninth grade students referred to the Bridge program as these teams bridge the transition from campers to teaching assistants. The teams are named as Teams 1, 2, 3, 4 (seventh grade), Teams 5, 6, 7, 8 (eighth grade), and Bridge 1 and 2. There are ten students in each team, so during my fieldwork there were approximately forty 7's, forty 8's, and twenty students in the bridge program. I observed that more than Black students made up about ninety percent of the camper population.

During the program, campers take two math classes. The first class is foundational and prepares them for their math classes in the fall. In the second math class, the campers are challenged with advanced topics to further enrich their mathematical study. In addition to these courses, campers have structured team time where they review their math lessons and work on problems with their teaching assistants. Additionally, the campers participate in rotating daily afternoon activities such as chess, engineering, yoga, and creative writing.

High School Teaching Assistants (TAs):

Math Corps provides academic enrichment and mentorship opportunities for local high school students in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade. High school students in the Greater Cleveland area apply to work as teaching assistants and are paid a stipend. Neither fully a camper, nor fully a staff member, high school TAs are a core component of Math Corps' summer camp. High school TAs serve as role models to the younger campers and act out one of the core

values of Math Corps; students teaching students. There are usually five teaching assistants assigned to one team and each teaching assistant works directly with two campers. Each summer there are approximately forty to fifty teaching assistants.

As teaching assistants, the high school students provided valuable assistance to campers during math classes. During lecture, teams would be in a class together, creating a larger classroom environment that benefited from added assistance from the TAs. While an instructor led the course, the high school students provided campers with individual attention, and could meet their different needs and challenges during the lesson. Additionally, high school students worked individually with two students during team time, checking their homework and reinforcing the math the campers learned during the lesson. The high school students are considered to be "big sisters" and "big brothers" who help bring the campers into the Math Corps family.

Outside of lecture and team time, the high school students were encouraged to spend time with campers before the morning assembly and to even keep in contact with students outside of camp. TAs were also responsible for attending a daily nine am meeting led by a college instructor where they prepared for the day. TAs also attended an after-camp debriefing which was led either by the Dean of Students or a grade supervisor.

The high school students developed their teaching assistant skills during a week of training that took place directly before the first week of camp. During this training, the high school students were indoctrinated into Math Corps, learning the philosophy and expectations of the program while they reviewed the math their campers would be taught. While the primary purpose of training was to prepare the high school students for their position, it was also an

important form of community development and cultural transmission. I discuss this further in my section on Math Corps culture.

In addition to working as teaching assistants, High school students also attend their own basic and advanced math classes. Kaleb described how a teaching assistant experiences two sides of the camp:

“Being a TA you’re one on one with students but you’re not with them the entire day. So being a TA is like you see half of the camp, and you have your whole other half of the camp. Being a TA the camp is still a little bit meant for you, while it’s all about the kids, it’s still a little bit meant for the TAs too, since they’re still kind of kids too. So I was a TA, so the camp was a little bit for me, rather than me being a main role in it.”

Kaleb pointed out that the TAs are still students. In addition to their responsibilities as TAs, the high school students had their own homework and journals to complete, and their own rules to follow. Campers and high school students were required to keep journals for Math Corps during the summer program. These journals were an important source of information that were read by the grade supervisors and Dean of Students to gain insight into the daily lives and growth of their students. Stella, a grade supervisor, emphasized the special relationship that TAs have with campers, sharing:

“TAs they’re always there for the kids. I’m reading their journals now, and I think a lot of them... they say that their kids. They say my kids are doing great, my kids need help with this. So it tugs on your heart thinking they have that special relationship with them. So I think they also have a relationship as a friend and a teacher so I think that’s great, at such a young age as a high schooler because they have so much responsibility.”

The TA role provided high school students a leadership position where they could learn and grow. Through a model of students teaching students, high school students are posed to

create close relationships with their campers which can encourage these campers to become future teaching assistants.

College Assistant (CAs):

The Math Corps senior staff includes two college student positions. The college assistant and college instructor positions are open to graduating high school seniors and current undergraduate college students. The college assistant role is to ensure that the program runs smoothly and that each student is having a safe and enjoyable experience. Math Corps employs approximately 15 college assistants each summer who work to support other staff members. College assistants work with the site coordinator to prepare and organize the camp site. They assist the Director and Dean of Students by carrying out the program's daily operations, and regularly communicating daily events and issues to the program coordinator. CAs' find themselves wearing many hats during the summer camp, as they can be found working as hallway supervisors, classroom assistants, tutors, and lunch assistants. In addition to their task-based work, CAs are expected to interact with as many students as possible, acting as role models and mentors.

Kaleb described his experience as a CA and how differs from that of a TA or CI:

“So when I was a CA, a CA is a little more behind the scenes. So while you still feel the appreciation, you don't feel it all the time. So like being a CA, you have to put everything in place, you have to make sure kids are getting lunch, you have to make sure the journals are getting to the right place. It's a lot of on your feet [type] work being a CA, but I loved it because I love moving around a lot, so I loved being a CA, I loved it so much.”

While TAs and CIs spend the day with campers in specific teams and scheduled activities, CAs move more freely around the camp. Stella emphasizes the importance of the CA's role:

“And I love the CAs because they're kind of like the man behind the scenes you could say. They basically do everything the camp needs to thrive, they provide lunch, breakfast, tutoring and homework club. And all those types of things. And I love their special bond with the kids too because they're usually, they're not in the classroom as much, except for afternoon activities, but they still have a special relationship with basically every single child and not just a specific group. “

While often described as working “behind the scenes,” CAs are a very visible part of Math Corps. CAs welcome campers when they arrive in the morning and see them when they leave. CAs monitor the site's hallways, sit in classrooms, and help facilitate afternoon activities. College assistants develop close relationships with students, and their visibility reflects a positive, safe environment especially when compared to the presence of school resource officers in schools.

College Instructors (CIs):

Math Corps employs ten college instructors each summer. This position is a part of the senior staff and is only available to graduating high school seniors and current college students. The role of a college instructor is demanding as they are responsible for leading a team of 15 students (10 campers and 5 TAs), and unlike the TAs, the CIs remain with their campers for the entire day. A college instructor's responsibilities include facilitating and supervising team time, which includes designing individual lesson plans, observing TAs as they work with students, and guiding TAs in effective teaching methods. Additionally, while teaching and tutoring students, they inject fun into work and maintain “a safe, positive and encouraging learning environment” (Math Corps Website). CIs are also expected to correct homework, monitor student behavior,

maintain homework and attendance records, communicate any student issues with grade supervisors, and actively participate in staff debriefings, all while acting as a positive role model for the entire camp. All my interview participants had worked as college instructors, so while the interviews are skewed in that respect, they provide thoughtful and in-depth insight into the challenges of this role.

Stephen, who worked as CI and grade supervisor, succinctly explains the role:

“So a CI is a college instructor and we work with the kids all day. We kind of are like leaders for the campers and we make sure they get from class to class, and that they’re doing each and every important part of Math Corps from hand signals to taking notes to being focused in class, and we’re just working with that all day.”

Stella, who has worked in the same positions as Stephen, similarly explained what a college instructor’s day looks like. As a CI:

[Y]ou kind of are just there for the kids in any type of way, academically and personally, and also for your TAs, I believe. When I was CI, I still talked to my TAs basically every single night to just check in on them. And also, just in the fall and spring to say hey you guys...need any help...what can I do for you guys... just to check in.”

Kaleb worked as a teaching assistant for four years, and as a college assistant for one year, before he became a CI. In his opinion:

“Being a CI, this is the most challenging role, I heard that you have to be attentive to the kids the most. You lead the group, so you are the leader to the TAs and the students. You have to make sure you’re on top of your stuff the whole entire day. You’re with the kids the whole entire day so you have to make sure you have to match your energy and keep your energy up. So that’s what I’m struggling with it, trying to get better on, keeping my energy up for the second half of the day.”

I interviewed Kaleb during the first week of camp, so he wasn't yet an experienced CI, but other interview participants also spoke about the energy that this role demands. Joseph, who worked as a CI and grade supervisor, explained how individuals in this role are "the backbone of camp."

Grade Supervisors:

The grade supervisor is an important administrative role in Math Corps. The grade supervisor is responsible for supervising one grade level of approximately forty campers, as well as supervising the mentoring and tutoring conducted by the high school and college students assigned to that grade level. During my field work, there were two grade supervisors; one who supervised the 7s, and the other did the same for the 8s. The two supervisors divided the responsibilities of overseeing the Bridge program (the ninth-grade level). A grade supervisor's responsibilities include "supervising team time, coordinating before and after camp tutoring, communicating with parents, supporting the Dean with discipline, reading student journals, assisting with lunch monitoring, and teaching a class and/or activity" (Math Corps Website). The grade supervisors communicate directly with the Dean of Students and work closely with the college instructors. When I interviewed Joseph, a previous grade supervisor, about his role, he told me how he initially had no idea what the position entailed. He explained:

"I had no idea what the grade supervisor position was. I didn't have much of an idea what to do during the day or what the day to day stuff of the camp was. And I kind of just made it my job title to make the camp run as smoothly as possible and help where I can."

Joseph told me that he would sit in on and observe classes, and would then later offer advice on classroom organization, management, and teaching methods to the college instructors. He made it his role to simply be there and support the camp. Stephen similarly shared his experience as a grade supervisor for the 7s:

A grade supervisor is more of the senior staff. We see more of the big picture type of thing every day. And we work with all of the sevens...we'll grade the quizzes. We'll maybe make decisions or give pointers to the other CIs, things along those lines.”

Stephen also taught Modular arithmetic art to campers as one of their afternoon activities.

While I was on site, I observed the grade supervisors help lead the morning assembly, walk around the camp, and sit in on classes, respond quickly to any student problem, and effectively communicate with students and their family members. I've seen the grade supervisors reading and responding to student journals and leading TA debriefing sessions, and I've observed the grade supervisors participate in the Math Corps joke of the week. This position provides support to the other senior staff members and responds to administrative needs so that the program and relationships can blossom and thrive.

Site Coordinator:

The Math Corps summer camp is hosted on Cleveland State University's campus. Since Math Corps does not have a fixed site throughout the year, the site needs to be prepared and then taken down before and after the summer camp. The site coordinator and the college assistants are tasked with preparing the camp site. The site coordinator is responsible for the program's day to day operations and leads the team of college assistants. The site coordinator schedules college assistants' shifts and assigns them daily tasks. The site coordinator is in charge of assigning college assistants to welcome kids in the morning and supervising their leaving at the end of camp day. The person in this position oversees the supply and distribution of camp materials, such as making sure there are enough copies of homework and maintaining the organization of the staff office. The site coordinator also makes sure that afternoon activities are staffed and prepped. When I worked as a college assistant, I would have different tasks assigned to me daily

by the site coordinator. Sometimes I would run and get copies, act as a hall monitor, help facilitate chess games for campers, and even tutor campers after camp. Like every other role, the site coordinator is an essential administrative role, and the camp would not run smoothly without it.

Instructors:

What more can be said, someone must teach the math! Instructors are assigned to teach various math classes from foundational topics like Arithmetic and Algebra to advanced ones such as a Discovery course, Logic, and Proof. Instructors are assigned courses based on their level of mathematic studies and teaching experience. Math Corps has developed their own mathematic teaching methods, so instructors new to the program must be willing to learn and use this method. The instructors are responsible for planning instruction, teaching the course, preparing, and grading assignments and assessments, and managing student behavior. They are important in communicating both mathematical and cultural concepts to the students, and the classroom becomes a distinct cultural setting as campers use hand signals and specific phrases such as “my esteemed colleague” when answering questions. The instructors lead the college instructors and high school teaching assistants in the classroom to create a positive learning environment for the middle school students.

Dean of Students:

The Dean of Students is one of the most important positions in Math Corps. The Dean is responsible for helping to ensure that every student has a safe, rewarding, and academically successful experience while learning and developing the values, habits, and attitudes for long-term success. The Dean teaches, supports, and implements the goals and philosophies of the

Math Corps to both students and staff. The Dean works with the Director of the program to discipline students. The Dean supervises the Teaching Assistants, and is essentially their boss, as the person in this position is responsible for guiding the TAs as they grow from a student into a teacher. The Dean of Students reads the teaching assistants journals, supervises them, and leads the teaching assistants' (TAs) debriefings where the TAs share highlights and concerns about their campers. The Dean of Students plays an important role in fostering the Math Corps culture in both students and staff, and so the person in this position must have deep knowledge and experience of the Math Corps culture. Since the Math Corps at Cleveland State University is still a relatively young extension of the Math Corps in Detroit, a Detroit staff member usually works with Math Corps Cleveland in some capacity for the summer program. Most often, the Detroit staff member is the Dean of Students because of the experience and cultural knowledge that they can bring to the position and to the rest of staff. This relationship between the Detroit and Cleveland Math Corps shows that the sites are deeply and culturally connected. The Dean of Students is a respected position and during the morning assembly the entire camp claps and bows their heads to the Dean of Students. This action is not to say that the Dean of Students deserves more respect than any other community member, but it is a way of emphasizing the importance of this person's position.

The Director:

The Director of Math Corps oversees the entirety of the program. This position is at the top of the Math Corps hierarchy. The Director serves as the philosophical guide for Math Corps, leading the morning assemblies and communicating the Math Corps values. The Director also works as an instructor. From fostering relationships with donors and university staff and faculty, to establishing relationships with public schools, and keeping in contact with the Math Corps

family, the Director is responsible for Math Corps' continued existence. Dr. Kahn is the Director of Math Corps in Detroit, and Dr. Bey, who helped establish the Cleveland site, is the Director of Math Corps Cleveland. This position is more than a job or title; the position is the embodiment of the values of Math Corps. Describing the Director of Math Corps Cleveland and another staff leader, Kaleb remarked:

“[T]hey live by the Math Corps philosophy, it's not only a day, it's not only that they have that philosophy throughout the summer, they live by it.”

The Director leads the morning assemblies, engaging the entire camp in cultural practices, jokes, and serious conversation on social justice. During the senior staff debriefing, the Director facilitates tough decision-making conferences and guides the development of young educators. The Director is the philosophical leader of Math Corps.

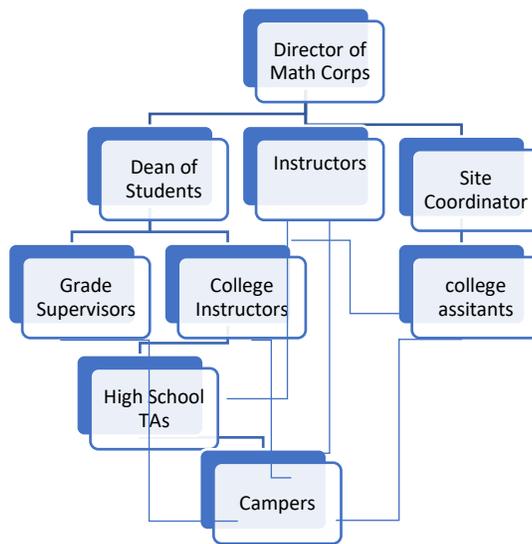
Relationships:

The potential of Math Corps lies in its relationships. In order to understand the culture of Math Corps, there needs to be an understanding of how the different positions in Math Corps work together. These positions are the foundation of the program and ensure the smooth operation of the camp. The different positions provide spaces and roles for individuals to grow into and there is a visible hierarchy to these positions. The campers, high school students, the college student positions and rest of the senior staff, all exist on different levels with increasing responsibility. Figure 4.1 is a visual illustration of this hierarchy. While there are distinct positions and roles within Math Corps, each is interconnected and an essential element of the Math Corps community. Figure 4.2 represents how relationships flow through Math Corps. Each position interacts and interconnects with one another as they are all part of one central

relationship centered around the campers. Figure 4.2 demonstrates that relational perspective of the community.

All the roles, but especially those of the college instructors and high school assistants, exist to create a sense of belonging among the campers. These relationships and sense of connection among them are viewed as essential in conveying the values and lessons of Math Corps to the campers, forming a distinct Math Corps culture. An in-depth look at each position shows a web of relationships forming a connected community. It is important to note Math Corps does not employ any type of security guard or School resource officer. Instead, College assistants work to safely supervise the students. This maintains a positive atmosphere and demonstrates that Math Corps does not view its students as a threat. The community measures for student safety prevents relationships from being disrupted or harmed.

Figure 4.1 (Below)



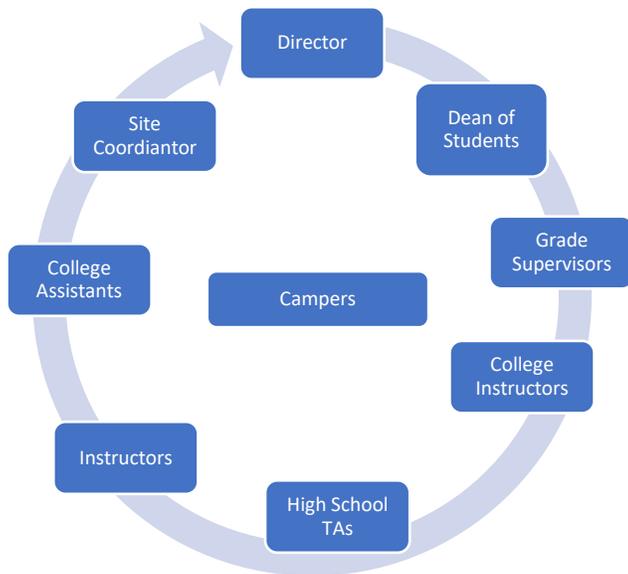


Figure 4.2 (Left)

Recruitment & Growth

In this section I discuss both the recruitment of Math Corps participants and the senior staff members. I define participants in this specific section as both the middle school campers and the high school students. The senior staff includes the college instructors, college assistants, instructors, and administrative roles. Math Corps uses personal and professional relationships to recruit participants and employees. Math Corps' recruitment, especially of its administrative roles, shows that it is a place of growth and development for its participants and staff.

Math Corps targets students in the public-school system and reaches out to potential participants through both in-person and online tools. Math Corps has established relationships with certain schools and the Director of the program has visited schools to pitch Math Corps. Math Corps also uses online tools such as their website, social media, and email to reach and connect with a wider population. For example, I first learned about Math Corps through an email from the guidance department at my high school. Math Corps also grows through its

relationships. Many people who join Math Corps do so because they have a friend or family member who are already a part of the program. While entry into Math Corps is application based, access to the program is not restricted. Prospective campers are asked to write a short essay, send in their report card, and a letter of recommendation if their math grade is below a C-. Math Corps accepts students with varying levels of math skills. Similarly, high school students applying to be a teaching assistant must submit a short essay, a report card, and a letter of recommendation if their most recent math grade is below a B-. Additionally, they have to complete a short interview and if they are accepted into the program, they must take a diagnostic math exam which is used to place them in a math class. Both returning campers and high school teaching assistants are given priority consideration, since Math Corps considers itself a lifetime program and seeks to foster long-term relationships.

Math Corps senior staff members include college instructors, college assistants, instructors, grade supervisors, a site coordinator, Dean of Students, and Director. Staff members are recruited differently than campers and high school students, and their application process is much more rigorous as they are responsible for the well-being and safety of all students. Staff members are expected to be “dedicated, enthusiastic individuals who are passionate about working with children” (Math Corps Website). College students applying to be either a college instructor or college assistant must submit a short essay, a resume, employment references, and their semester grades as a part of their application. Most of the college instructors and college assistants are past participants, meaning they were a part of Math Corps as a camper or high school student and worked as a CI or CA previously. For example, after my first summer as a high school teaching assistant, I returned the next summer as a college assistant. Other CIs and

CAs are college students from the math department at Cleveland State University, which hosts Math Corps, and have heard about the camp that way.

The other staff members, including the instructors, site coordinator, program coordinator, Dean of Students, and grade supervisors, are recruited similarly through either their own past involvement or through a mutual contact. During my fieldwork, the grade supervisors that summer had previously worked as college instructors. One of the instructors that summer had also worked previously as a college instructor and as a grade supervisor. At least five of the ten college instructors during my summer fieldwork had previously worked at Math Corps in some capacity. I had even worked with some of them during my past participation at Math Corps.

One of my interviewed participants, Joseph, who had worked as a college instructor and grade supervisor in the past, shared how he became a grade supervisor:

“my partner CI and all the other CIs that year were really great in helping to draw me into that program and draw me into family and the Math Corps type philosophy and so the second year once I graduated and had a degree, they offered me the job. So, I couldn’t be a college instructor anymore because I wasn’t a college student, but they thought I did well enough they offered me the position of grade supervisor which I was surprised. I was very honored that they thought of me to do it.”

He was offered the position again and would have been the grade supervisor during my fieldwork, but he had to turn it down due to other obligations. However, Joseph still made himself available during the first week of camp to help set up. His experience shows how the program values their community members and their relationships. Math Corps’ recruitment for its administrative positions reflects both its desire to maintain relationships and foster personal development. Such strategies for recruitment reflect the importance of having staff members in these stable leadership roles who are already familiar and indoctrinated into the Math Corps

philosophy and culture. It also shows how Math Corps provides academic enrichment and mentorship for its staff members, providing opportunities for them to grow, and many of them seek to do so. In one of my interviews, Elle, a college assistant who had worked in a variety of roles, shared that while she originally started Math Corps because she was struggling with math in high school, she kept returning because:

“I realized I wanted to be an educator and loved and wanted to spread the word of [Math Corps].”

And when asked about how connected she feels to the Math Corps community, Elle shared:

“I have been involved for a while and I love it. I really want to keep the vision alive and move up in Senior Staff.”

Her statement reflects a deep commitment to Math Corps’ philosophy and program and her desire to grow within it. Math Corps leadership is built for the most part, from its members. The original Math Corps site, Detroit, has been seeing this on a much larger scale. Now in its 28th year, the Detroit program has seen past campers return as instructors which demonstrates how the program has positively impacted students’ life courses. The following are general qualifications for the administrative and instructor positions:

Baccalaureate degree required
Experience working with students in grades 7-12
Mathematics Education background preferred
Mathematics certification preferred

Past participation in Math Corps is not enough to be qualified to hold an instructor or administrative role in the program. Individuals in these roles must have a college degree and relevant experience, demonstrating that they are dedicated to Math Corps’ mission. Math Corps Cleveland is currently in its eighth year, and as it continues to grow, it will be interesting to see how the rate of return changes. Past Math Corps campers have already returned as high school

teaching assistants. A few of the high school teaching assistants during my summer fieldwork were campers during my past employment in the program. Math Corps' recruitment strategies, return and growth of participants, indicates that the Cleveland site is heading in the same direction as Detroit. Math Corps' recruitment, especially of its administrative roles, shows that it is a place of growth and development for its participants and staff. Math Corps values relationships and community, and seeks to recruit from within because intimate knowledge, experience, and belief in the Math Corps culture and philosophy is essential to success in the role and program.

Daily Schedule:

Math Corps begins to welcome students to the camp at 8:30am, although the camp day officially starts at 9:30am. College assistants' welcome students into the building and help serve a light breakfast while students can play games, socialize, and go over homework. High school students are expected to socialize with campers before attending their 9:00am team meeting with their college instructors. The morning assembly promptly starts at 9:30am, officially starting the day. The morning assembly is one of the most important parts of the day as it sets the tone for the rest of the day. The entire camp begins the day together as the Director shares important announcements and stories. Math Corps address difficult topics in its morning assemblies such as the dismissal of a student, bullying, and relevant social issues. Math Corps does this because it recognizes the challenges and injustices its students may face. On Thursdays, a staff member leads the camp's roll call, a joyful, rhythmic practice that energizes the community for the last day of the camp week. Math Corps explicitly expresses its values and messaging with its students during the morning assembly. The celebration of perfect homework scores and

highlighting students' acts of kindness fosters a positive climate for student success. The messages and practices intentionally remind students to choose kindness and seek support.

After the morning assembly, which lasts for about thirty minutes, the camp breaks as some teams head to their math lectures, while others head to their classrooms to enjoy team time. While the instructor teaches the campers, high school teaching assistants sit among the campers to provide added focus and assistance while the college instructors supervise. After having both lecture and team time, teams break for lunch. After lunch, the high school students leave their teams attend their own math classes. Campers remain in their teams, attending a discovery math class, before ending the day with an afternoon activity such as chess or robotics. The middle school students are dismissed at 2:30pm, although they may choose to stay for after camp tutoring. Once the campers are dismissed the high school students attend a daily debriefing usually lasting 15 minutes. The senior staff debriefing begins after the TA debriefing ends. The senior staff debriefing lasts much longer and is an important Math Corps process. I discuss both debriefing practices more in-depth in Chapter Five.

Math Corps Culture

In "Rethinking the Object of Anthropology and Ending Up Where Kroeber and Kluckhohn Began", Richard A. Schweder (2000,437) writes that culture is “community specific ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient,” and is socially inherited. Culture encompasses goals, values, and worldviews and is manifested within specific practices, laws, ritual, and speech of groups (Schweder 2000). With its own core values, beliefs, and practices, Math Corps represents a consciously defined, developing and self-monitoring culture of “greatness” internalized by its members. Math Corps explicitly defines self in opposition to the unjust norms of inequity and injustice in society. The data collected from my observations and interviews reveal that staff members of Math Corps share a collective identity that is developed through shared cultural practices and values. In this section I show how the social network and structure of Math Corps facilitates cultural transmission.

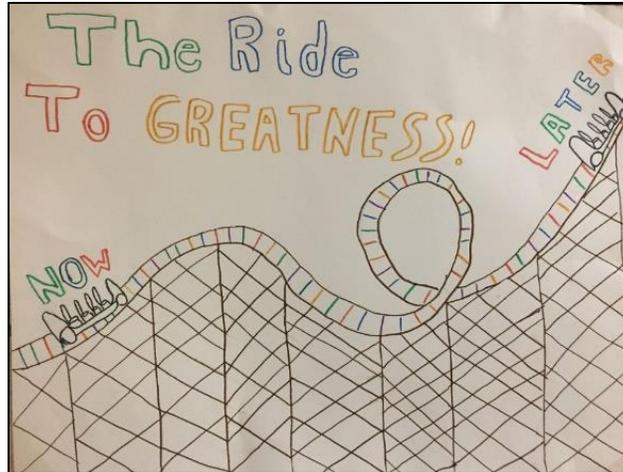
Dr. Bey, the Director of Math Corps Cleveland described the culture as composed of values of kindness, high expectations, integrity, caring, and fun. She stated that it is, “a culture that is a projection for what would be a great world.” In stating this, Dr. Bey separates Math Corps from the rest of the world. Through membership to Math Corps, participants and staff members are united in this separation. Another Math Corps leader described the culture as an “intense belief in the uniqueness and greatness of kids, ushered through a community of support, kindness, and positivity.” Math Corps has consciously created language and practices that defines this “greatness.”

Dr. Stephen Chrisomalis, a linguistic anthropologist at Wayne State University who serves as Math Corps’ Director of research, has studied Math Corps’ cultural model of greatness using ethnographic data and corpus analysis. Chrisomalis defines greatness as a “generalized,

metaphorically-driven concept that is regarded as motivating success within the program and more broadly in students' lives." (2013 156). Chrisomalis defined eight conceptual relationships of greatness in Math Corps' speech and gestures:

GREATNESS IS VISIBLE
GREATNESS IS FOUND/REALIZED
GREATNESS IS INSIDE A PERSON
GREATNESS IS UNIVERSAL
GREATNESS IS DEMANDED
GREATNESS IS A STRUGGLE
GREATNESS IS BELIEVED
GREATNESS IS A PATH (2013, 158).

Math Corps' staff and students use these greatness metaphors to talk about student's successes and failures. Chrisomalis argues that greatness is conceptualized as an inner resource which encourages a positive and reflective mindset. Students use this cultural model to organize and grow from their success and failures both in their academics and personal development. This model of greatness is transmitted through Math Corps' speech patterns, gestures, and visual symbols (Chrisomalis 2013). Figure 4.3 is an example of one such visualization of greatness.



(Math Corps Poster at CSU, Figure 4.3)

*Greatness is a linguistic and cultural model for fostering **long term positive growth**. This metaphor is both verbalized and visualized throughout camp and has become a part of Math Corps' members vocabulary. Stella described the Math Corps culture as: "full of kindness, greatness, it brings literally everyone together in all sorts of ways."*

Kaleb also regularly used greatness in his vocabulary. When talking about 'fighting for your greatness,' he shared a personal experience from his time as a TA when he had made a mistake. Kaleb shared the impact his conversation with the Dean of Students about his mistake had on him:

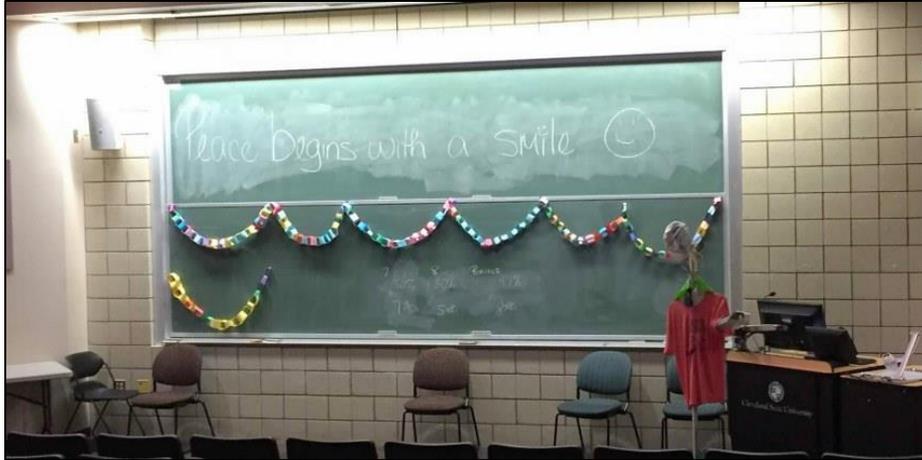
"I realized [what] the path of greatness [is about] and how it's [when] you make mistakes, and you bounce back. And for me it's all about bouncing back. And yeah, I don't try and beat myself up for making bad choices, but I try to bounce back and persevere through that. That is something I take with me from now on, I always think about that."

Kaleb's story shows how greatness is about growth, and how mistakes are an essential part of this greatness. In Math Corps, mistakes are tools for self-development and failure is expected.

Kindness Chain

Math Corps uses relationships to help its students achieve greatness. The language and practices within Math Corps are intentionally developed and used to and encourage students' sense of compassion and self-belief. Each summer the Math Corps camp creates a kindness chain that is displayed in a public and communal space. Strips of multicolored paper join to create the kindness chain. Each link, or strip of paper, carries a written message of kindness that the writer witnessed or received. Every member in the program can add to the kindness chain. Examples of these links of kindness include, "helping me with my homework", "sharing their lunch with me", and "making me feel better." The kindness chain grows throughout the course of the program, as new acts of kindness are celebrated.

The kindness chain (Figure 4.4) is a physical representation of the cultural values of Math Corps. The growth of the chain represents the growth of its members throughout the summer linked together through kindness. The kindness chain was a routine ceremonial practice as the Dean of Students read select kindness strips aloud during the morning assembly each day. The colorful presence of the chain at the front of the assembly was a daily reminder that Math Corps is a place of positive self-growth and actions. When students enter the camp each day, they were greeted with the kindness chain. The kindness chain also reinforced Math Corps' emphasis on relationships. While each link represents an individual act or person, each act of kindness is joined in the chain. The kindness chain serves to recognize everyone's greatness while reinforcing the importance of relationships and community. In this brightly colored visual form, kindness is imbued with power as a cultural tool.



(Math Corps kindness chain at CSU, Figure 4.4)

Stella believed the kindness chain to be truly representative of the values of Math Corps and has taken the practice with her to other classrooms. Additionally, Stephen spoke on the significance of the kindness chain:

“Well it’s my hope that it’s changing the kids minds to realize that even the smallest little thing is something nice and that it can have a ripple effect in the world. And not a lot of kids are thinking like that right now and it’s really hard to convince them to think that way, and I think this is a good start. And I don’t know if we’re going to get all the kids to think like that or if we’ll get one of them, but if we get some of them, I think it’s a win.”

Stephen saw the kindness chain as a tool that promotes the growth or transformation of the campers. Stephen’s discussion of the kindness chain also demonstrates that is viewed as a tool to counter an outside culture of unkindness or violence.

Signals

In addition to the kindness chain, Math Corps has developed a series of hand signals that also act as a significant cultural practice. These signals were used as a form of active listening and support during assemblies, classes, meetings, and other activities. The signals started in math

classes as an academic symbol to show support but have since become a vehicle of cultural transmission.

In his personal interview, Kaleb provided a verbal description of these signals:

“We have [these] little jazz hands, those are signals if you agree with [another member], or [it’s] applause but not really applauding. [That signal] I think it’s so important because people listen in different ways and can be looking down and listening, so doing the signals it shows that you’re listening and taking into consideration what they’re saying. The support signal, that’s probably my favorite one, it’s just so... When someone’s crying or telling a personal story, when you see that support and hands, it’s just like wow, you’re actually supporting me. When you do a signal, this takes energy out of you, when you do a signal. So it’s not like you’re just sitting there, when you do a signal you’re taking energy out of yourself from sitting down to support me. So that’s really deep to me, I really like that signal a lot.”

Kaleb’s description of the signals shows how the practice is charged with energy and emotion. During my time on-site I was able to observe how these signals developed greater meaning over time. During the training week, more experienced Math Corps leaders such as Kaleb lead the others in using the signals. Similarly, during the first week of camp, the campers used the signals when prompted by their high school teaching assistants and college instructors. The prompted use of signals reflects that the practice is unfamiliar, or has little meaning, to the signalers. During the last week of the program I observed that the campers would use the signals on their own initiative. I observed campers using signals to celebrate their peers during the morning assembly and to support their classmates during a challenging math lesson.

The signals are one of Math Corps’ most effective tools in fostering community through a shared cultural practice. The use of these expressive gestures is powerful and infectious that many Math Corps members take the signals with them into their own lives outside of the

program. In his interview, Kaleb spoke about a time when he wanted to use the signals outside of Math Corps. He shared:

“Me and my friends went down to the beach and we were all vulnerable and telling [each other] about things [we’d] been through the past years. And they were telling me some hard stuff and I just wanted to like support them, but they don’t know what it means. But that just shows love because I wanted to support them so much.”

When Kaleb said that he wanted to “support them”, he meant that he wanted to express Math Corps’ support signals. Kaleb equated the Math Corps hand signals as actively expressing support or love, demonstrating how these signals are imbued with emotion or power. Taught as specific hand movements, these signals become an instinctive, emotional, and bodily part of Math Corps’ participants lexicon. Kaleb’s experience showed that the signals are a distinct cultural practice to Math Corps as his friends would not have understood the meaning of the support signal.

In the focus group interview, Stephen, who is an educator, discussed his attempt to introduce the signals into his different teaching experiences. Stephen shared that in his classrooms:

“We did [the signals] for a little bit. It faded eventually but that’s because I gave up on it sort of. But I think that’s something you can take from it. I’ve even done it at a college level, and it worked.”

Stephen’s experience highlighted that the signals can be introduced in outside settings, but that to be successful there needs to be community support. For the signals to work, the collective community needs to recognize and value an agreed meaning of the signals. The signals have power in Math Corps because they are introduced to the staff members while they are learning the values and philosophies of the program. Furthermore, members develop a deeper

attachment to these signals as they spend more time in Math Corps. The signals have a deeper meaning to Kaleb, who has spent years growing with Math Corps. As shared cultural practice, the signals are also an expression of collective identity to Math Corps.

A sense of family:

Math Corps and its members refer to itself as a family. During my fieldwork and interviews, family was almost always one of the terms people used to describe this program. The identification of Math Corps as a family show that its members take ownership of a collective identity. Math Corps fosters this sense of family or identity, through its relationships, but also through specific, intentional practices, or rituals, like family meal day and family debriefing.

A sense of family is one of Math Corps' guiding principles. This sense of belonging is cultivated through the structure of the program and its relationships, as well as through communal practices like family meal day. Running from Monday to Thursday, the end of Math Corps each week holds special practices for its members. From Monday to Wednesday, the lunch hour is divided based on team. During this hour, college assistants and college instructors monitor the campers, while teaching assistants usually eat together separately. On Thursday, this regular lunch time structure is replaced with an entire camp picnic. During this picnic, known as Family Meal Day, Math Corps provides a full lunch for every member to enjoy together. This lunch, weather dependent, usually takes place outside or in a gymnasium, providing space for participants to play games. During the first week of camp, family meal day took place inside due to inclement weather. The college assistants helped serve pizza while other Math Corps members ate, talked, and played boardgames. The boisterous meal room was crowded as campers and staff members moved tables and seats to eat and play games such as chess. Kaleb described the importance of this communal lunch hour:

“The family meal day, that’s probably the best tradition we have here because that’s when you just get to be family, you get to be family because you eat together and eating together is one of the most sacred things, it’s pretty deep if you invite someone over for your family dinner. So when you eat with all your students and the TAs and all the CIs and all the staff, that’s great because you see everyone smiling and having a good time.”

Kaleb highlighted the anthropological significance of eating together.

Commensality, or the practice of eating together, is an important practice that signifies unity and sharing (Tuomainen 2015). Families are commensal units as family members partake in a shared meal together at a specific place, and family meals are important in sustaining cohesiveness (Tuomainen 2015). Math Corps is a commensal unit as its members engage in routine shared meal tradition. The family meal day reaffirms social relationships in Math Corps that creates this sense of family. In their survey (Appendix B) three individual campers each used family to describe Math Corps:

Camper response to question 3:

They have good Family like vibes. The only expectation they have is that you do your work. I love being here because it’s positive.

Camper response to question 4:

Yes, because it’s fun and we are family. Why would I leave my family.

Camper response to question 5:

I would say it’s like a family. I’m comfortable when I’m with them a lot.

These three individual responses can not be used to collectively represent campers’ attitudes towards Math Corps. However, these three responses show that a sense of belonging is

fostered in some campers, and that Math Corps messaging is internalized by its members. This sense of family is important in incentivizing campers to return to the program.

In addition to the family meal day, family debriefing is an important tool for the well-being of the community. On Thursdays in lieu of TA or senior staff debriefings, Math Corps hosts a staff-wide debriefing. During this debriefing only positive highlights are shared. It is a sacred place of reflection, where staff members celebrate their students and each other. Family debriefing can be a very emotional experience as individuals share how the Math Corps family has supported them. As teaching assistants celebrate their campers, as the work of the college assistants is recognized, and as college instructors thank their teaching assistants, the family debriefing reaffirms these relationships. Many members choose to return to Math Corps each summer because they see it as a family reunion. For instance, in the focus group when asked what Math Corps is about, Stella quickly answered:

“I think just family. And I want to come back and I want to see new people and I want to see my old friends, and I just want to be a part of it.”

The structure of Math Corps allows its members to grow within it, to return year after year in positions of growth to reconnect with each other. As members introduce their friends and family to the program it becomes even more of a family affair. Furthermore, graduating members, or past members like Joseph, return as visitors. In her written interview, Elle remarked that:

“Once you’re in [Math Corps], you are a lifelong member. You become a part of a great support system for one another.”

This lifelong membership status is a result of Math Corps' commitment to using math and community to positively impact the life outcomes of its students. Below is an excerpt from Kaleb's interview, where he described what family means in Math Corps:

Because once you're a part of the family, you're a part of the family. It's like nowadays, people are not being accepted for who they are, some people get kicked out of their families, some people don't like you because you believe in something the wrong way that they don't agree with, but in Math Corps you're a part of this family for life no matter if you think that or not, no matter what you do. Even if you get kicked out of camp because of violence, you can still come back next year and try again. And say if you went to jail for doing something wrong, you can always have a family here at Math Corps. It's just that people, the community backing you up. It's so important, and teenagers especially need a community backing them up through their rights or wrong, just a community backing them up with love.

Kaleb's words are extremely powerful, as he shared his belief in Math Corps. To him, Math Corps is a place of acceptance where membership isn't conditional. However, as Kaleb shared, individuals can be dismissed from Math Corps for breaking its rules. Yet despite this dismissal, members are considered to be part of this community. Kaleb mentioned that whether "right or wrong," teenagers need a "community backing them up with love." What, then, does discipline look like in a culture invested in the long-term growth of its participants? This is discussed further in the next chapter.

The results presented in this chapter show that Math Corps can be understood as a social movement community. Staggenborg (1998) uses the term social movement communities (SMC) to encompass all actors who share the same goal of a social movement. This includes movement organizations, independent movement adherents, institutional movement supports, alternative institutions, and cultural groups (Staggenborg 1998; 182). Feminist Health Clinics and Women's Music Festivals are examples of organizations within SMC that provide a service to the

community. Community, in this sense, refers to relationships maintained through social networks (Staggenborg 1998). Within social movement communities, movement culture, which includes symbols, rituals, values, and ideologies, are shared within movement communities to a collective identity. Staggenborg argues that “groups and individuals within movement communities are linked by culture (and through it by collective identity) social networks, and participation in movement activities” (1998; 182).

As shown in this chapter, Math Corps is a social movement community as its different members are linked together through social networks, common culture, and collective identity. The relationships in Math Corps and the open hierarchal structure for growth and development fosters and maintains strong social networks. Math Corps is linked together as a community through these relationships, and members develop Math Corps, or family identity, through participation in shared activities such as Family Meal Day and debriefings. Math Corps has its own movement culture including its values of greatness and kindness as exemplified through the kindness chain, the use of Math Corps hand signals, and ritual activities such as the roll call in morning assembly. The individual members of Math Corps are linked together through this common culture and collective identity, and each Math Corps site further represents a link within this movement community. Understanding Math Corps in terms of a social movement community allows us to understand it as more than just a summer program.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter builds off the results discussed in Chapter Four. In this chapter I discuss how discipline is conceptualized in Math Corps by analyzing a specific ethnographic incident in context of zero tolerance policies and restorative justice. This chapter highlights the tensions within Math Corps discipline practices, and its impact in forming a collective identity, while ultimately showing that Math Corps can be considered a social movement community within the broader restorative justice movement.

Discipline

In *Schoolrooms, Pupils, and Rules: The Role of Informality in Bureaucratic Socialization*, R. Timothy Sieber discusses discipline in the context of two schooling models; the “client service” model and the “people-processing” model. In the “client service” model of education, students are treated as clients, or outsiders, to the school organization. In this model, students are assigned little in the way of formal rights and obligations are expected by the staff to be ignorant, or culturally incompetent, of the norms of the school. As such, discipline is used to conform students to these rules. Furthermore, since formal education is seen as a service, discipline is applied with the short-term goal of restoring classroom peace so that business as usual can continue (Sieber 1979). To achieve this, discipline is best organized and applied through a series of set outcomes or punishments. Thus, while discipline is used to conform students to the norms of the organization, or school, they are continually viewed as outsiders. Zero tolerance policies in schools can be viewed as an intensified version of this discipline model, as students are viewed as problems, harshly punished, and severed from the community through set outcomes or punishments. However, zero tolerance policies must be understood as now more than just a disciplinary practice but instead as structural violence.

In contrast to the “client service” model, the “people-processing” model focuses on the socialization of students. Wheeler (1966) argues that the goal of this model is to change the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and skills of those who pass through it. Schools subscribing to this model, focus on long-term growth for systematic changes within their clients. In the “people-processing” model these clients become recruits who gain status within the organization (Sieber 1979). Discipline, then, is applied intentionally with the goal to socialize the student into the school organization. Rather than using set outcomes, teachers in this model will choose sanctions based on how best they incorporate the student into the school organization (Sieber 1979). Math Corps can be analyzed as a “people processing” model of education as the program focuses on the long-term growth of its participants while systematically changing their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and skills. Furthermore, participants in Math Corps are viewed as recruits who gain full status as community members.

In Math Corps, discipline is viewed as a tool to help participants grow while meeting the expectations assigned to them. These expectations include:

All students are expected to meet high academic standards regardless of past performance. As a way of channeling students to be the best version of themselves, we expect and know they will always be present, punctual, respectful (in both behavior and language), and with homework completed daily (Math Corps Documents).

To help students meet these expectations and develop strong values as individuals, discipline is intentionally applied through the use of relationships. The different positions are set up to support one another and the participants. For example, the grade supervisors best support the college instructors by responding to student misbehavior. During my fieldwork, when a camper didn’t do the homework for the day, they would be sent to the senior staff office where

they were provided with the homework and asked what happened. Rather than being treated as a problem, the student was given the opportunity to talk with senior staff members while completing the given homework. While the senior staff would make a note of the incident, the student was not punished. The following is one of the core principles of Math Corps, and is directly related to how discipline is conceptualized and applied within the program:

Always approach misbehaving or under-performing students in a positive way. Begin with the fundamental assumption that this student is a good person and a good student. Ask why this student, who we know has the ability to behave and achieve at the highest levels, is failing to meet the standards we know he/she can meet. Is there something troubling him/her? (Math Corps Website)

This principle guides staff members on how they approach and maintain positive relationships with the campers. Rather than providing a set outcome on how to deal with a misbehaving student, this principle calls for staff members to look beyond the behavior and recognize that the student is not the problem while working with them to identify the root of their misbehavior. This principle is counter to zero tolerance policies which definitively identify and remove misbehaving students. During the focus group, Stella who works as an educator, explains what she sees as the difference in discipline between public schools and in Math Corps:

“In discipline in a regular school, you have this chart that the principal or administrator basically goes off. So, if you do a certain thing, you have this specific outcome. And here we basically take every individual on an individual basis. And I also think in the regular schools, teachers if they see a problem, they just kick the student out. They usually don’t have a talk with them and that sort of thing. And here we want them to be in the classroom as much as possible.”

Stella’s comparison between regular schools and Math Corps is significant. Math Corps can be compared to schools because the program was created as a direct response to the educational and social failing of schools to underserved communities. Thus, when comparing

Math Corps to schools, the significance of the comparison isn't in the difference in structures of the institutions but in their culture and impact on students. In schools, zero tolerance policies are a form of structural violence as they are disproportionately used against Black students who are treated as disruptions and 'kicked out' of the classroom. In Math Corps, who serves many Black students who may be coming from such school environments, the prioritization of relationship and student well-being over punishment is of profound importance.

Similar to restorative justice models, Math Corps invests in and privileges the power of relationships to create a safe community for its participants. While this is not a radical concept, the current unjust structures of society and schooling treat it as such. The complex web of relationships in Math Corps creates a network that holds up its participants while acting as a foundation for a preventive and restorative model of discipline. For example, the multiplicity of relationships present within a math lecture in Math Corps serve to maintain community, foster academic success, and respond to student behavior.

While the instructor leads a math lesson, the teaching assistants and college instructors help to provide individual support and attention to each student which keeps them focused and catches them from "falling through the crack." While teaching assistants help to answer student questions and encourage their learning during the lesson, the college instructor can respond to any student needs, and the instructor continues the lesson. In a lecture setting, a student is rarely removed from the classroom. The multiple teaching assistants and staff members within the classroom can quickly respond to any student misbehavior. Furthermore, the space that teaching assistants take up within the classroom is significant. Rather than standing and moving around the classroom in a supervisory capacity, the high school students sit in between the campers and are also working on the math problems. Thus, the high school students are modeling classroom

behavior to their students. This preventive model of discipline is further exemplified in the use of staff debriefings.

Debriefings as Restorative Tools:

The relationships in Math Corps facilitate an open channel of communication which is best seen in the intentionally created spaces or forums for teaching assistants and staff members to voice concerns on student behavior. These forums are called debriefings, and they occurred daily to actively bring staff members together for discussion. The debriefings support and strengthen Math Corps' community as these forums work to support and maintain staff and student relationships.

Teaching Assistant Debriefing:

The Dean of Students and grade supervisors facilitated the teaching assistant (TA) debriefings. During the TA debriefing, the high school students would give updates on their students, express concerns, and ask for advice. The Dean and grade supervisors facilitated these conversations, sometimes asking the entire classroom to share feedback and advice for a student. The debriefings served as a space for mutual learning and reflection, and as the summer program progressed, the high school students became much more vocal advocates for their campers. For example, at one debriefing I attended, a high school student expressed concern for their student's test taking anxiety. The TA had observed that student would do well on homework and in class, but that the student would test lower than their ability. The TA shared that they thought the student might have testing anxiety and asked if the student could take the test in an individual setting rather than with the rest of the class. Other TAs echoed the same concern for their

students. The leading facilitator asked for the names of these students and planned to accommodate them.

This is just one of many examples of how the high school TAs advocated for their students. This example shows how the TA had developed a strong relationship with their student, as well as strong teaching skills. The senior staff might not have been aware of a student's test taking anxiety if not for communication with the TA. The web of relationships in Math Corps facilitates the success of all its students. Furthermore, this open forum is consistent with restorative values of community, inclusion, and cooperation as the different positions worked together for the success of the campers. Additionally, the response to students' suffering from test anxiety reflect an equitable or just mindset.

Senior Staff Debriefing:

Similar to the TA debriefing, members of the senior staff gathered each day for the senior staff debriefing. The meeting would take place after the TA debriefing, allowing for senior staff members who attended the previous meeting to be present at the senior staff debriefing and to communicate what was shared earlier. The senior staff meeting took place in the camp's central office, and while any senior staff member or even visitor was to free to attend the meeting, the primary focus of this daily debriefing was to discuss the students. Therefore, the college instructors, Dean of Students, grade supervisors, and the Director were the key players in this process. Much like the TA debriefing, this forum served as a place for staff members to reflect on how they day went and to talk about disciplinary issues. Facilitated by the Director, topics of discussion ranged from updates on student attendance, homework, test scores, and student concerns and discipline issues. Taking place around a large rectangular table, the discussions I observed employed restorative practices. When an incident occurs at camp that requires

disciplinary action, the senior staff would engage in a long reflective process. Joseph shared what that process looks like:

“We take each situation as it arises and consider what was going on, what were the thoughts of the room, did we talk to everyone involved, and then we go around the table and talk about is this the right option for the student and we really take the time. Everyone who knows that student is in the room to talk about what we can do to help the student.”

This is a restorative process as it focuses on what needs to be done to repair harm and restore the community, rather than it immediately turning to punishment. The staff members focus on what is best for the student and what will help them realize their ‘greatness.’

Disciplinary action put into place is meant to make students understand their choices. Joseph shared that:

"We also want them to realize that they have so many choices they can make with so many outcomes and their choices affect different people. I know in our meetings when we dismiss people or suspend someone for a day, our whole conversation revolves around their choices and how it affects other people."

Joseph’s comments spoke to the heart of the restorative justice model of discipline.

Actions affect relationships, and when an individual does harm, it affects the entire community.

Restorative justice is about restoring relationships, and in Math Corps relationships are foundational in the conversation on discipline.

My discussion now turns to a specific ethnographic incident that illuminates the tensions between zero tolerance policies and restorative practices in discipline in Math Corps while also engaging in dialogue questions of liminality and identity construction.

Dismissals:

“There hasn’t been a year where someone has not been dismissed from camp.”

This phrase was repeated throughout training to both the high school teaching assistants and members of the senior staff. The Director of Math Corps made sure to emphasize this point as they imparted the philosophies and policy of Math Corps onto the staff members. However, despite the awareness of this practice, staff members were still unprepared when two campers were dismissed on the third day of camp. Campers are dismissed for two reasons: Attendance and Violence. If campers miss more than three days of camp, they are dismissed for the summer. This attendance policy is in place because the shortened four-day Math Corps week intensifies missed days. However, this policy is more flexible than the second. Math Corps employs a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to violence in the program. If students are engaged in an act of violence, even if it is considered horseplay, they are dismissed from the camp for the rest of the summer.

This zero-tolerance policy seems harsh, punitive, and a stark departure from Math Corps' restorative values of community and inclusion. The dismissal of students seems to conflict with very cultural core of Math Corps, as how does the expulsion of campers serve to help them or to restore the community? When first confronted with these questions, it can be difficult to understand these practices as anything but harsh. It can be equally hard to accept the value of these policies while still renouncing zero tolerance discipline models. If the goal of Math Corps is to help each camper realize their own greatness; how can they accomplish this if they "give up" on some campers? Many of Math Corps' staff members asked these same questions as they were confronted with a dismissal case during the first week of the summer program.

The Incident

I was sitting in the senior staff office, when two Black, female students were brought in by their college instructor. The girls were separated, and each sat at an end of the long table. I

recognized the two girls as students a part of a group I had walked to lunch earlier that day. I recognized that they were friends and sitting in the staff office they kept looking over at each other. As the two girls sat there, the college instructor talked to a senior staff member about what happened. The details were fuzzy, but apparently the two girls had engaged in act of violence or horseplay during an afternoon activity. The two girls were instructed to both individually write down what occurred. While doing this, one of the girls asked the Dean, who was also present in the room, whether they would be dismissed. New to the program this year, the Dean shared that he didn't think so, but didn't provide a definitive answer.

The next day, the two girls were absent from camp. I attended the senior staff debriefing that afternoon and observed that the discussion was a resumed conversation about the dismissal of the two students. While the students were absent from camp that day, the group had not yet come to a definitive decision on their dismissal for the summer. Some of the senior staff, who were completely new to Math Corps, were distraught by the decision and fought to keep the children within the program. College instructors worried about the fate of their students, voicing their concerns such as:

“I don't want to give up on them”

“What if Math Corps is the only good in their days?”

While some of the staff members believed the best interests of the students meant keeping them in the program, veteran Math Corps members and the Director of the program shared that the dismissal was an important part of the students' development. One new college instructor shared that they had woken up in the middle of the night, thinking about this situation, worrying about the students. To that, the Director of Math Corps responded, that he was a “a Math Corps soul now.” Despite some staff members' misgivings, the two students were

dismissed for the summer. The Director communicated to the staff members, that this dismissal wasn't them giving up on the students, in fact the dismissals were actually an "act of love" or a "second chance" for these students. As staff members voiced their fear of losing these students, more experienced staff members encouraged them to remain in contact with the students, and they wouldn't be lost. Math Corps would remain in touch with these students, and they could return the next summer. The next day the campers and their parents visited Math Corps for an exit conference.

This ethnographic incident highlights key points about how Math Corps conceptualizes discipline. As a "people-processing" model organization, Math Corps uses discipline as a tool to achieve the long-term growth, or 'greatness', of its participants.' Math Corps dismissal practices can also be constructed in terms of identity and liminality for both its student and staff members.

Long Term-Growth:

Math Corps' cultural model of 'greatness' identifies growth as a key value of the organization. This value is exemplified through Math Corps cultural practices such as the kindness chain and the structure of the organization, and its capacity for members to return each year. Throughout the summer program, Math Corps hopes to instill in its members values and skills that will help them continue to grow on the "path to greatness" even beyond the program. For certain students, dismissals are an important liminal stage on their path to greatness.

The practice of dismissals can be examined as a tool of enculturation and rite of passage. As such, the period of absence from the camp is one of liminality. Anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) defined liminality as a transitional period where members of a community are amid a rite of passage. During a period of liminality, individuals are on a threshold, where they no longer share their previous identity, but have not yet transitioned to their new status. In Math Corps,

dismissal initiates a period of liminality for some campers, as their absence from the camp acts as a period of reflection and growth. Dismissed campers enter a stage where they are no longer participating in the summer program, but they are not necessarily severed from the Math Corps community either. The dismissed campers enter a “liminal” period where they must reflect on their actions and experience growth before they reenter Math Corps as full community members.

This reflection is initiated by an exit conference between Math Corps, the student, and their guardian. During this exit conference, campers along with their parents have a conversation with the Director of Math Corps and the Dean of Students where they discuss the reason for the campers’ dismissal, and to reaffirm that the camper is still considered to be a part of Math Corps. During my interview with Joseph, he shared what these exit conversations look like:

“We go in with the mindset that ‘hey we have expectations and this year you didn’t meet them, and hey that’s part of growing and growing up.’ We still tell them you’re still a part of the Math Corps family, you’re still welcome back next year, we want to see you next year and we hope that you’re up to meeting the expectations of the camp next year, but unfortunately this year you weren’t ready.”

The Director of Math Corps Cleveland stated that dismissals are never easy and that “they are usually filled with tears.” These conversations can also hold a lot of emotion such as anger from campers and their parents. However, in these moments the Math Corps staff must remain calm and not respond with any anger as they “need to maintain these relationships, so that the campers may return.” These comments show that even in the practice of dismissals, relationships are prioritized, and campers are still considered to be a part of the Math Corps family. These exit conferences initiate the period of separation and liminality for the dismissed student, while maintaining their relationships. Since Math Corps considers its dismissed campers

to still be a part of the Math Corps family, the zero-tolerance practice is not at odds with the culture of the program. While the dismissal is still an expulsion or suspension, it is instead viewed as a long-term, culturally encoded practice seeking to transform the camper. Arguably, the zero-tolerance policy exists within a restorative culture, begging the question, whether the policy or the culture is more impactful?

An important question regarding the dismissals, is whether students actually return to the program once dismissed. During my fieldwork, I spoke to an instructor for the current program, who had served as a college instructor during the previous summer. When she was a college instructor, much to her dismay, many of her campers were dismissed. When she returned to Math Corps for this year, she found that all her campers, even the ones that had been dismissed, had returned to camp. These campers had exited their liminal stage and had reentered again as full members of the community. Additionally, the Director of Math Corps shared with me that some TAs who have been dismissed previously returned as strong advocates for Math Corps rules and practices. Considering this, the dismissals are viewed as successful tools for growth having created a period for reflection and healing.

Yet for all the campers who do return to Math Corps, there are those that do not. Math Corps never wants to dismiss a student from the program, arguing that the dismissal of students reflects a failing of the staff rather than the camper. When there has been harm or violence in the community, Math Corps sees its network of relationships of having failed. For example, if students are dismissed for horseplay in the cafeteria, the question becomes where was the staff to step in and intervene before the situation escalated and had to result in a dismissal? Math Corps believes that there should have been a preventive act, and so while the student may have made a mistake, the camp has also failed as there is a community consciousness regarding student

behavior and success. While this reasoning doesn't identify the student as the problem, the dismissal, or removal, of the student says differently. The dismissal identifies the student as acting counter to the policies and values of Math Corps, and so the student is removed. From a Math Corps perspective, dismissals are seen as difficult, but a necessary means of growth.

However, the student perspective is missing. Two individual camper responses to the survey (Appendix B), show that some campers understand the values of Math Corps and their impact.

Camper Response to Question 1: Be Kind, Prevent Violence, Give whatever you're doing your all.

Camper response to Question 3: No Violence!

The campers' response show that they understand that violence has no place in Math Corps. Math Corps uses dismissals in order to keep violence outside of Math Corps and the practice underscores the importance of the message to campers. If campers do not see their friend return for camp the next day, they understand the seriousness of their actions. Violence can take away students' lives, and so the missing student is a reminder of that seriousness. The students are addressed about the dismissals during an assembly, and the senior staff shares with the message on the importance of safety and non-violence. These two individual responses still don't, however, provide the camper response to the practice of dismissals. Further research into the number of students who are dismissed and return to the program would add valuable insight to the efficacy and impact of the practices. A longitudinal study of campers between the time they are dismissed and their return to the program would also illuminate this period of separation and reflection, showing whether or not it is actually a liminal period.

Senior Staff: Identity & Growth

The ethnographic incident also served as a rite of passage for many Math Corps staff members. My ethnographic data, in particular my focus group with Kaleb, Stella, and Stephen, illustrates the impact that the practice of dismissal had on the staff members. The incident can be analyzed as a rite of passage for them, and as an important part in the construction of their identity as educators.

Kaleb, Stella, and Stephen were all present at the senior staff debriefing. During the discussion, Kaleb was opposed to the dismissal of the students. Kaleb's opposition is significant, because while he is a veteran Math Corps member, this was his first summer as a college instructor. During his interview, which took place before this incident, he shared that students who are dismissed are still a part of the Math Corps family. While Kaleb was familiar with the practice of dismissals, he had not been in a role where had to directly face that decision. Thus, the first camp dismissal was a challenge and rite of passage for Kaleb as a college instructor. During the focus group, when asked about the practice of dismissals, the group brought up this first incident and the impact that it had on them. Stella shared that she was the person who saw the situation between the two girls, and that she wasn't even thinking about dismissal until it was brought up by the Director. She, and others in the room, couldn't imagine dismissing a camper for the summer. However, she shared the impact of the decision to dismiss:

Stella: But then it is an act of violence and horseplay so then we did end up dismissing, and kind of throughout the six weeks you can see everyone in that room change their viewpoint of violence and how we love these kids by sometimes having to dismiss them.

Stephen: Now that you mention that, it's funny because it's like we almost changed the CIs more than we've changed the kids so far-

Stella: Yeah

Kaleb: That's true

Stephen: All of the CIs are new, because that was the first time we experienced anything like that, so that was a learning curve for the CIs too.

The excerpt from the focus group articulates the significance of the practice of dismissals on the staff members. It shows that discipline not only affects students, but it also affects the staff members and can have a significant impact on their experience or identity as educators. When asked further about the process of dismissals, Kaleb, who was resistive in the first incident, shared:

“It's all about taking that time to make the best decision for that kid's future. It's like Stacy said we don't go by a chart of discipline but go case by case and see what may help them out in the future.”

Kaleb's response shows a shift in his viewpoint and a future-oriented mindset. When further asked about the incident changed college instructors, the following conversation took place:

Kaleb: So like, first dismissal most of the CIs are really strongly against it because it may seem petty to dismiss a kid, even for myself, to dismiss one for pulling hair. But you realize as you go by, by it, as each case arises you realize wow this could really lead to something else. This is a start of violence and we don't want to breed any violence so it's [the dismissal] necessary.

Stella: And when I was in that room when the hair situation pulling happened, all the kids were like they just pulled each other's hair, it wasn't that big of a deal, but when they do actually see the kids got dismissed they do think something like wow that is a big deal, maybe we shouldn't be doing horseplay in this environment.

Stephen: So I think a lot of what we're seeing here so far, things that were normal in school, or are normal in school, and the new CIs haven't experienced anything like this, and it's one thing to come here and sit and listen and talk to Dr. Kahn talk for four or five days straight, but there's nothing like actually experiencing it. So once we started experiencing stuff the realization set in and

there was a much bigger or better understanding of what we're trying to do here, and I think that's what changed the CIs for the better.

This excerpt of the focus group interview is extremely informative and significant. Kaleb identifies that it may seem petty to dismiss a kid for hair pulling, but that in the long-term it's about preventing violence. So again, Kaleb illustrates a value based and future oriented mindset towards the decision. Stella's comment shows that the dismissal decision also impacts the students and Stephen's comment distinguishes Math Corps from the culture of regular schools. Stephen's comment "there was a much bigger or better understanding of what we're trying to do here," shows that Math Corps conceptualizes itself as more than just a summer program. Stephen's discussion of the transformation of the CIs for the better also speaks to an aspect of identity construction. The first few senior staff debriefings act as a liminal space for Math Corps staff members as they interrogate their own beliefs and perceptions about discipline before becoming "Math Corps souls."

The focus group, especially the shift in Kaleb's perspective, demonstrates how discipline is conceptualized and framed through cultural values and in terms of impact. For example, Math Corps' reasoning for dismissing students is identical to the reasoning of zero tolerance policies: small incidents lead to bigger incidents. Math Corps employs aspects of zero tolerance policies and reasoning, does that inherently mean that Math Corps cannot be considered part of the restorative justice movement? Zero tolerance policies in schools in the United States are form of structural violence, because they are disproportionately and punitively used against Black students (Schiff 2018). These policies directly contribute to the school to prison pipeline. While Math Corps uses zero tolerance policies to dismiss students for acts of horseplay or violence, the organization is constructed as a safe learning community for primary Black students. Students'

dismissals are viewed as a part of long-term growth and are used to maintain the non-violence culture and messaging of the community. As such, Math Corps is fundamentally different from structures of zero tolerance policies and cultures of violence in schools. Discipline must be viewed as more than just specific policies, practices, or programs. Instead discipline must be understood within its greater socio-cultural context.

Math Corps is a social movement organization within the broader restorative justice movement. Schiff (2018) conceptualizes restorative justice as a social movement seeking to dismantle narratives and structures of violence such as zero tolerance policies that maintain unjust world. In their place, restorative justice seeks to build new structures based on values of compassion, shared power, inclusion, and collaboration. Ultimately, the goal of restorative justice should be to disrupt injustice and work towards a more just society (Schiff 2018). While Math Corps employs some restorative practices, the organization is linked to the restorative justice movement through its restorative culture and commitment to building good lives for its participants and creating a more just society for all. Math Corps improves the lives of its participants by providing a quality Mathematics education and sense of community that sets its participants on a path of academic and social success. By providing its students a quality mathematics education and culture of kindness, Math Corps directly counters unjust structures of education that actively harm its students.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study shows that Math Corps is a social movement community within the broader restorative justice movement. Linked together through social networks and a common culture, members of Math Corps share a collective identity. This collective identity, or membership to the Math Corps family, is an important tool as Math Corps expands its reach as a social movement. As an individual movement, and as part of restorative justice, Math Corps seeks to transform the world into a more just society for all. Math Corps disrupts unjust structures by providing a quality mathematics education to its members while also promoting a culture of kindness, greatness, and growth. Members of this movement community believe in the power of the Math Corps culture, as Stephen shared that “Math Corps culture breaks the regular culture,” and also expressing the need to “change what they’re doing at school to the Math Corps culture which [can] hopefully [change] everything else.” The strong conviction in the culture of Math Corps speaks to the power of the organization as a movement community and the power imbued in shared, cultural practices.

As a movement community, Math Corps is producing and transforming cultural knowledge as it recruits students and staff members into the Math Corps way. This study contributes to anthropology of education, and the anthropological study of social movements, through the examination of this movement culture in context of structural and social issues such as zero tolerance policies. This ethnographic study, barely covers the cultural knowledge produced by Math Corps. Additionally, this study only captured staff members viewpoints of the movement culture and discipline in Math Corps. Further research into the perspectives of Math Corps’ campers, especially how they conceptualize the Math Corps culture and discipline practices, would illuminate the impact of these practices. Additionally, this study only focused

on the Math Corps Cleveland site. It would be interesting to engage in large-scale study of multiple Math Corps sites and examine how the movement culture differs dependent on location. An additional worthwhile point of research would be to systematically study restorative justice as a social movement, and identify and connect the individuals, communities, and actors within that movement. For example, studying other restorative justice movements in the Cleveland area. How would a shared goal be expressed, and would there be conflict or tension between different actors?

The discussion of zero tolerance policies and restorative justice in context of the discipline and culture of this ethnographic study shows how discipline is conceptualized and constructed through structural and cultural forces. Zero tolerance policies are forms of structural violence and create punitive cultures of control. In order to disrupt the structural violence of zero tolerance policies, that culture must first be disrupted. Thus, restorative justice, to be an effective response to zero tolerance policies, must be conceptualized as a social movement or a movement culture to transform school cultures and communities. This ethnographic study of Math Corps provides valuable insight onto how a movement culture and collective identity is constructed, and how they are used to transform individuals' point of views and beliefs. This study is an original contribution to the field of anthropology of education, as I used an anthropological approach to examine restorative practices as a response to oppressive structures.

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Appendix A: List of Interview Questions

Interviews were semi-structured. I worked off this list of interview questions which were asked to all interview participants. Depending upon the interview, additional questions were also asked.

- How long have you participated in Math Corps Cleveland?
- Why did you first join the program?
- Why do you choose to return to the program?
- In what ways have you participated in Math Corps?
- What has been your experience in each different level of participation?
- How would you describe Math Corps?
- How would you describe the Math Corps Community?
- How would you define yourself within that community?
- What are the best features of the Math Corps community? What are some areas for improvement?
- How would you describe your relationships with other Math Corps participants?
- How do your relationships differ with students, TAs, CAs, CIs, and staff members?
- Are you in contact with Math Corps community members outside of the program? If so, how?
- Does Math Corps effectively build a community and/or foster community learning?
- How has participation in Math Corps impacted your personal life and academics?
- How would you describe the impact of Math Corps Cleveland on its community members?

Appendix B: List of Survey Questions

1. What are the three most valuable things you have learned/will take away from Math Corps?
2. How would you describe Math Corps?
3. In your own words, what are the values and expectations of Math Corps? What do you think of them?
4. Are you planning on returning to Math Corps next year? Why or why not?
5. How would you describe your relationship with your TA and CI? How often do you talk?
6. What about Math Corps do you think should be changed/improved?