

IMPLEMENTING TALKING CIRCLES IN A LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Capstone Defense – March 30, 2016



Autobiography

- I was introduced to the philosophy of Restorative Justice (RJ) and Restorative Practices (RP) as a graduate student under the leadership and guidance of my mentor
- My passion for RJ and RP has afforded me the opportunity to speak and present across the Chicagoland area
- As a doctoral candidate, I have applied my knowledge of RJ and RP and want to share aspects of that journey with you



Introduction to the Project

- **Statement of the research problem:** Extant literature on the impact of Restorative Justice in higher education focuses more on reactive measures as an educational sanction rather than a proactive approach to building relationships and communities (Darling, 2011).
- **Statement of the purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study was to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure in a living learning community increased the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants.

Research Question

- To what extent does the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure increase the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants in a living learning community?

Review of the Literature

- History of Restorative Justice

- Deriving from indigenous cultures from thousands of years ago

- Maori people of New Zealand
 - Native American tribes in the U.S.
 - Mayan people of Guatemala

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 1995

- Global effectiveness

- Restorative Practices

- Mid-1970s – first victim-offender reconciliation programs in Canada and Midwestern U.S.

- Other program deemed restorative: Prisoner Rights & Alternative to Prisons, Conflict Resolution, Victim-Resolution , Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs, Victim-Offender Mediation, Victim Advocacy, Family Group Counseling, Sentencing Circles, and other practices

- Restorative Justice in Higher Education

- 1998 – the University of Colorado-Boulder was the first institution to implement Restorative Justice

- Student conduct = reactive measures

- Sexual harassment
 - Racist behavior
 - Alcohol violations
 - Other offenses

Review of the Literature

- History of Living Learning Communities
 - Late 1800s in Oxford and Cambridge universities in the British tutorial systems
 - 1927 in the Experimental College by Alexander Meiklejohn at the University of Wisconsin
 - Residence hall v. dormitories
 - Evolution of the college dorm
 - Yale and Harvard
 - Student enrollment increase
 - Need for highly effective learning environments



Conclusions from Literature

- Restorative Justice is utilized as a reactive measure in higher education via campus misconduct
 - Led by student conduct officers
- Restorative Practices are utilized as reactive measures in higher education with the possibility of leading to proactive approaches afterwards.
- Living learning communities and the higher education institution are not directly addressed as one unit (Example: the LLC is apart of the University yet the LLC is discussed as a separate entity and not as a whole).

Conclusion of Literature Continued

- Living learning communities are continuously evolving to meet the needs of an ever-changing global society that provide more common space to study and socialize which furthers support the inquiry and application of Talking Circles.
- Historically, Student Affairs and Academic Affairs have worked separately in regards to Restorative Justice and restorative practices.
- Moving forward, Student Affairs and Academic Affairs need to work in unison to provide Restorative Justice and restorative practices as a proactive measure and in some cases, reactive.
- The use of Talking Circles in a living learning community as a proactive measure increases academic and social experiences.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 1

Chickering (1969) provided an overview of the development issues that college students faced (Evans et al, 2010).

Chickering's Seven Vectors

1. Developing competence
2. Managing emotions
3. Moving through autonomy toward interdependence
4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships
5. Establishing identity
6. Developing purpose
7. Developing integrity

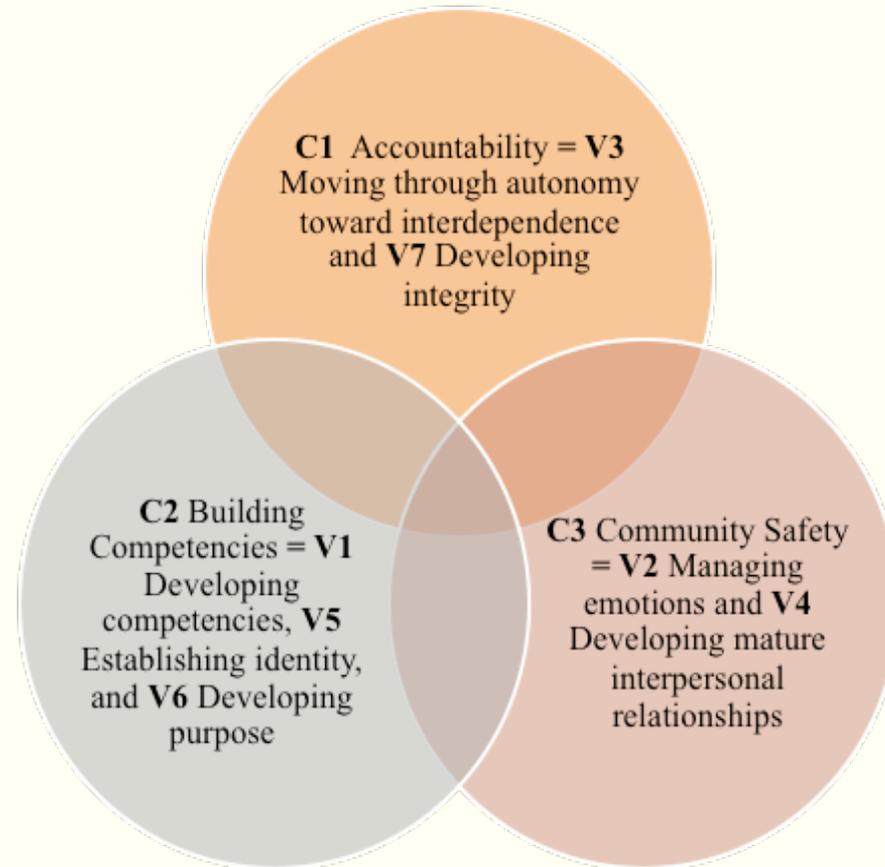


THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - 2

Balanced & Restorative Justice for
Juveniles (The Balanced Approach) –
the overall arching concepts (University
of Minnesota, 1997): The ABCs.



Theoretical Framework – Illustration



In Essence....

“In all social situations, our narratives are an essential aspect of living restoratively because, by telling our story, we not only develop deeper sense of self, but also expand and deepen our connectedness to each other (Zehr & Toews, 2004, p. 392).”

Methodology & Methods

- Grounded Theory offers a flexible set of inductive strategies for collecting and analyzing qualitative data creating theoretical categories that are directly “grounded” in your data (Charmaz, 2003).
- Naturalistic Inquiry (Guba, 1978)
 - Participant observation
 - field notes were created via observations
 - Collection of Artifacts
 - University Housing Handbook – current policies and procedures
 - Programming Manual and Handouts– current programs offered

Methodology & Methods

- Qualitative Survey (Jansen, 2010)
 - Study of diversity (not distribution) in a population
 - Without restrictions as to the number of empirical cycles or the way of generating code
- Methods
 - 32-item, close ended survey with the use of Likert scale
 - Inductively coded and compared to formulate conceptual theories of the meaning and relationships of these emergent themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
 - Construct tables are particularly valuable for qualitative surveys and grounded theory (Miles, et al, 2014).

Description of Participants

Convenience sampling was the nonrandom sampling strategy chosen (Gay et, al 2011) as participants volunteered their time to attend the Talking Circle.

- Gender:
 - 10- Females
 - 7 - Males

- Race/Ethnicity:
 - 14 - Black
 - 2 - Caucasians
 - 1 - Hispanic

- Ages 17-57

- Year lived in LLC:
 - 10 – Year 1
 - 7 – Year 2

- Student Status:
 - 7 – First-Year Students
 - 5 – Sophomores
 - 4 – Juniors
 - 1 – Senior

- 2 participants had prior experience with Restorative Justice and/or Talking Circles; one (student resident) via religious organization and the other (RA) via community college

Description of the Site

- Governors State University founded in 1969
- Prairie Place – Living Learning Community established fall 2014
 - Mission: committed to offering an exceptional and accessible education that imbues students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in a global society. Dedicated to creating an intellectually stimulating public square, serving as an economic catalyst for the region, and being a model of diversity and responsible citizenship.
 - Upper-division institution until fall 2014
 - Transformation: 4-year public institution in 2014
 - Total student head count as of fall 2015: 5,938
- Living Learning Community opened in fall 2014
 - Apartment and semi-suites
 - Consists of three sub-communities:
 - Civic Engagement
 - Global Citizenship
 - Sustainability
 - There are approximately 300 student residents
 - 17 student residents committed to volunteering their time for the purpose of this research

Data Collection Methods

- Qualitative Survey
 - Defining knowledge aims: To what extent does the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure increase the positive academic and social experiences among students and resident assistants in a living learning community?
 - Sampling
 - Diversity; by purpose
 - Convenience Sampling (Gay et al, 2012)
 - The survey reflects a diverse population of student residents of various backgrounds
 - Data Collection
 - Institutional Artifacts
 - Observation Field Notes
 - Meeting w/ LLC Staff
 - Training w/ Residence Hall Director and Resident Assistants
 - Talking Circle w/ Student Residents – Part 1
 - Talking Circle w/ Student Residents – Part 2
 - Qualitative Survey: Two 32-item close-ended survey (Likert Scale)

Data Collection Methods

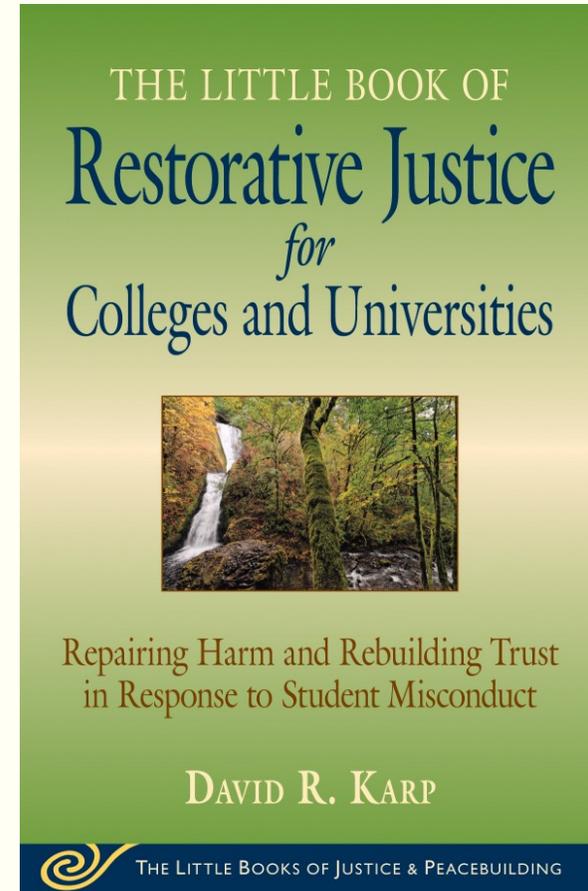
- Qualitative Survey
 - Defining knowledge aims: To what extent does the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure increase the positive academic and social experiences among students and resident assistants in a living learning community?
 - Analysis
 - 1st-level analysis – unidimensional description:
 - Observations
 - Coding field notes
 - 2nd-level analysis – multidimensional description
 - Two 32-item close-ended surveys
 - Categorical variation
 - Grouping items into scales and sub-scales
 - Construct tables w/ themes (Miles et al, 2014)
 - 3rd-level analysis – explanation
 - Analyze multidimensional description (Grounded Theory studies)

Data Analysis

- Field Notes Analysis (Maxwell, 1992)
 - Observation
 - Coding of field notes
- Institutional Artifacts Analysis (Gay et al, 2012)
 - Reviewed documents: University Housing Handbook, Programming Manual, educational handouts and postings of current events
- Surveys Analysis (Qualitative Survey) (Jansen, 2010)
 - Two 32-item close-ended survey

Validation of Findings

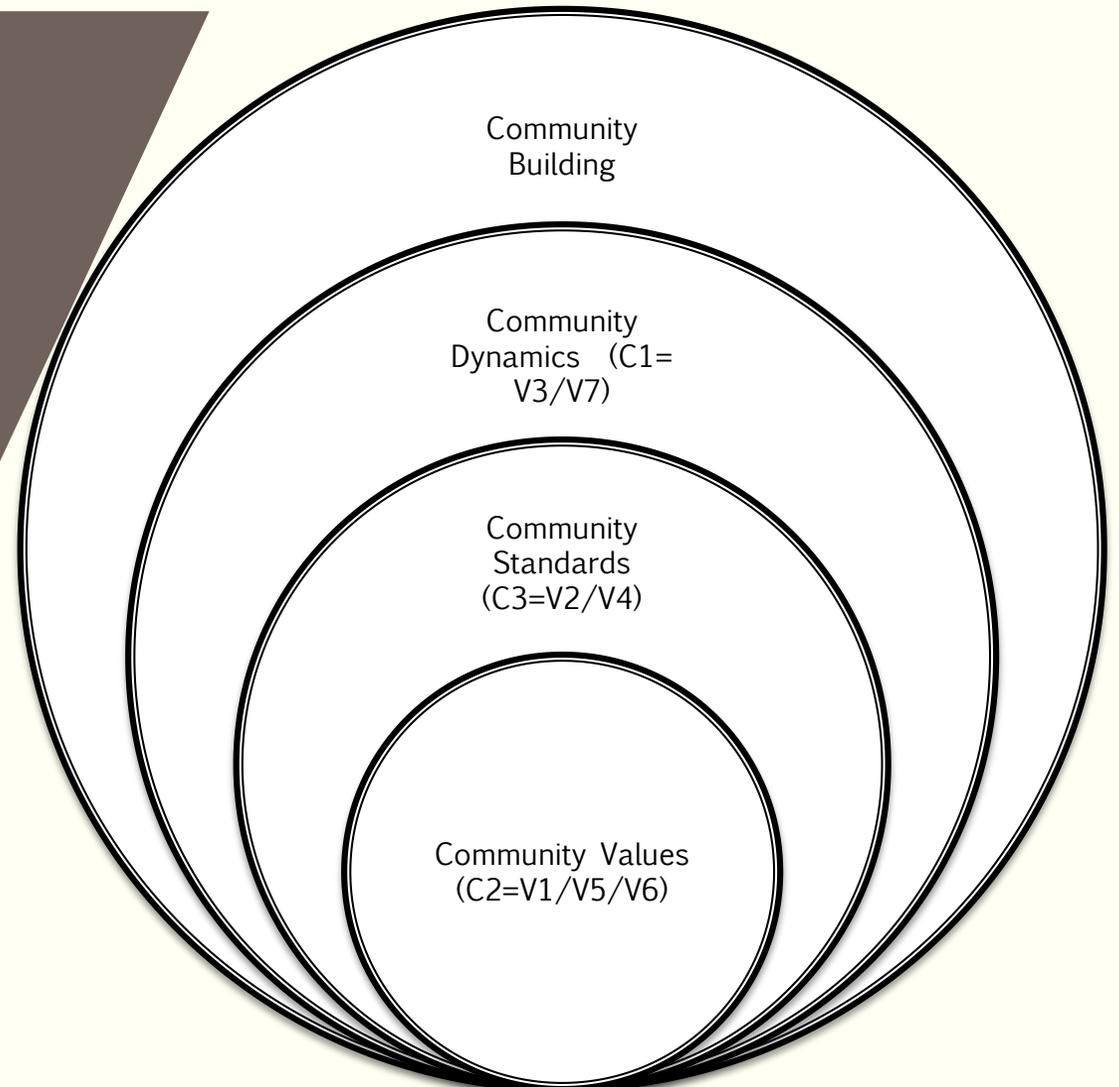
- Triangulation of Data (Gay et al, 2012)
 - Field Notes
 - Interview
 - Institutional Artifacts
 - Surveys Analysis (Qualitative Survey)
 - Member Checking
 - Peer Debriefing (Guba, 1981)



Themes in Voice

The following themes emerged from the Talking Circles; including the Resident Assistants and Residence Hall Director:

- Community Building
- Community Dynamics
- Community Standards
- Community Values



Findings of the Study

- 10 of the 17 participants strongly agreed that Talking Circles will build stronger communities in living learning communities
- The highest ranking statements in both Talking Circles with student residents were:
 - I have a voice
 - I promote the quality of life
 - I understand the importance of sharing the body of knowledge with others
- Resident Assistants have more day-to-day interactions with student residents and has requested additional training which allows to converse with ease
- Talking Circles aid in building community
 - Chickering's Theory of Identity Development – 7 vectors
 - The Balanced Approach – 3 concepts
 - Community Dynamics – a blend of the internal (academic) and external factors (i.e. family, work, etc.) that requires self-sufficiency
 - Community Standards – acceptable conduct within the community in order to remain safe
 - Community Values - beliefs and ideas shared by the community by utilizing skills and resources to develop personal and organizational purpose
- Proactive in approach – participants were willing to share their experiences once they were comfortable and understood the process. Participants were open to share knowing that the Talking Circle was positive and not based on an issue(s).

Strengths & Limitations

- Strengths:

- Preparation meeting with LLC staff prior to conducting the research provided clarity as well as an informal training
- The LLC Director and Residence Hall Director was very accommodating leading up to the research by providing institutional artifacts and in-house programming information
- The participants found the Talking Circle to be useful on a daily basis especially when entering a new environment such as a LLC
- Resident Assistant would like to continue using Talking Circles as a communicative tool

- Limitations:

- Administration and LLC staff (i.e. Director, Assistant Director, Residence hall Director, Faculty-in-Residence, and Housing Representative) should be included as a research population
- Longitudinal study would allow me to become more immersed with the population studied in order to explore what types of topics/issues/themes found

Implications of the Study: Organizational

- Micro level:
 - To witness colleges and universities utilizing restorative practices as a proactive measure
 - To increase positive academic and social experiences among all shareholders

- Macro level:
 - Restorative practices as a proactive measure will extend beyond the LLC
 - Internal/external collaborations and partnerships
 - Restorative Justice and restorative practices will not be used interchangeably
 - Restorative practices used to welcome students, check-in, communicate news, and address concerns; if any.
 - Restorative Justice and restorative practices listed and utilized in the student conduct code (educational sanction)

Implications of the Study: Professional

- Create a unique position implementing restorative practices within the campus community
 - In proactive situations, all shareholders will have the opportunity to participate in the restorative practice as well as facilitate the process in order to increase academic and social experiences.
 - Example: used to welcome new and returning students, check-in, communicate news, and celebratory purposes
 - In reactive situations, achieving intended goals will consist of:
 - allowing shareholders involved in specific offenses/violations the opportunity to resolve an issue in a restorative manner (i.e. circle, conference, mediation);
 - provide a safe and comfortable environment to all shareholders involved within an infraction; ensure that there is a strategic plan in place to administer follow-up within a timely manner;
 - address underlying issues in an authentic approach to resolve issues;
 - and provide an array of resources to all shareholders based on the dynamic of needs.
 - Example: plagiarism, verbal disputes, petty theft, drug use

Implications of the Study: Personal

- Mantra: A journey not shared is a soul not healed
 - 12: A Memoir To My Younger Self by Shaniqua Jones – Shaniqua Jones Publishing, LLC.

Mrs. Shaniqua Jones
Book Signing

Sunday, May 15, 2016 | 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Grape & Grain Co.
18031 Dixie Highway | Homewood, IL

Shaniqua has written her first self-published book, 12: A Memoir to My Younger Self for the purpose of narrative healing. 12 enlightens us on the journey that has led to the present day accomplishments. Her early years as a young church goer, rebellions teen years, abuse, medical issues, and other obstacles have prepared her for the road to come. She is a living testimony and has gifted us with her journey through written expression. We look forward to the journey ahead!

drshanjonesbooklaunch.eventbrite.com



Conclusions

- Chickering's Theory of Identity Development supports this research as providing the foundational component for examining student residents and their living learning community. The Balanced Approach framework is proactively utilized to shift from a reactive approach in combination with Chickering's Theory.
- **Grounded Theory – the proactive use of Talking Circles promote community building as it relates community dynamics, standards, and values.**
- To what extent does the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure increase the positive academic and social experiences among students and resident assistants in a living learning community?
- All participants agreed that Talking Circles build stronger communities in living learning communities.
- The utilization of Talking Circles in a living learning community confirmed the importance of using Restorative Justice and restorative practices as a proactive measure in higher education to increase academic and social experiences; useful as a communication tool that focuses on the dialogue and not the response.

Questions

Please take this time to address all questions. Thank you.

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Acknowledgments

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to this process. I am forever grateful to experience this portion of the journey. I have learned to appreciate each moment and to remain humble in all I do. Our paths did not cross by accident.

May the journey continue.

In gratitude,

Shaniqua Jones, MA.

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