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Implementing Talking Circles in a Living Learning Community

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Implementing Talking Circles in a Living Learning Community

Shaniqua Jones, MA

Capstone Document Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctorate of Education in Interdisciplinary Leadership

Governors State University

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Abstract

Restorative Justice is a collaborative decision-making process that has been integrated as an alternative approach to historic means of justice systems globally for thousands of years (Walker, 2012). Restorative justice began to impact higher education in 1998 in order to strengthen student ties to their respective colleges and universities by enriching student voices and experiences in various areas of academic and student life, including living learning communities (Darling, 2011). Talking Circles are one of many restorative practices used to facilitate effective dialogue among shareholders because it fosters a similarity of integration, motivation, and values.

The purpose of this research is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles in Prairie Place, a living learning community at Governors State University increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants. I gathered information from students and resident assistants to explore their understanding of application and awareness associated with Talking Circles. The Talking Circles provided a better problem-solving methods, improved communication techniques, and strengthened relationships with others (i.e. family, peers, and supervisors) among all participants.
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Chapter 1. Autobiography – Introduction to the researcher

I was introduced to Restorative Justice in 2012. Over the span of six years, I have been successful in completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a minor in Social Work, Master of Arts degree in Criminal Justice, and currently completing a Doctorate of Education in Interdisciplinary Leadership with a concentration on higher education. When I graduated in 2013, I was selected as commencement speaker, which was a prestigious honor that a student can receive at my institution. My diverse academic, personal, and professional background has allowed me to identify, understand, and find alternative methods to resolving student issues.

My journey to Governors State University began as a middle school honors student who was awarded the opportunity to participate in a young entrepreneur program over 20 years ago. I spoke life to the words expressed when I was a young teen in hopes of returning to this institution to experience higher education as a student and vested member, committing to personal development and life-long learning.

Graduate studies fostered a greater understanding of how to utilize and apply the profound philosophy of Restorative Justice, increasing awareness in order to address the internal and external factors that prevent students from completing their academic goals. I had the privilege to serve in multiple roles on campus as a student senator, student leader, graduate assistant, and Restorative Justice Circle Keeper exercising the restorative practice, Talking Circles. Talking Circles paved the way to create a dialogue geared towards building relationships, gaining a better understanding of commonalities and diversification, discuss the realities of social inequalities, current events that tend to divide, promote a call to action, being visible and available, and supporting student based programs on campus.

Through my engagement with students, I concluded that there was a lack of activities
within this institution that supported necessary dialogue for students to express their feelings that were not directly associated with their coursework. On July 18, 2013, I facilitated the very first public Talking Circle on campus, which focused on “Race and Justice”. The faculty of the Restorative Justice Program and the Division of Student Affairs found me to be qualified enough to take on this task. Attendees discussed their personal feelings and reactions to the verdict of the case relating to the death of Trayvon Martin. The Talking Circle provided a forum for attendees to release frustrations and share profound experiences which shaped their views of the current justice system based on what they witnessed and/or lived.

I reflected on the insight gained from that Talking Circle and immediately began to envision avenues wherein my input would have an impact on my community. How could I make a difference? How could I leave a reflective legacy? How could other students and community members apply the philosophy and practices of Restorative Justice into their personal and professional lives? The answers are two-fold. My first response revolved around my final project. I resolved to complete my Masters in Criminal Justice degree and co-create a 15-credit hour Restorative Justice Certificate Program. This five-course certification program provides instruction in the historical, global, and cultural influences on contemporary Restorative Justice programs and practices on a range of evidence-based restorative practices and on Restorative Justice program planning and evaluation techniques.

The second response occurred in the spring 2014. I received the support of the Division of Student Affairs to co-chair a regional Restorative Justice Drive-In Conference on the use of Restorative Justice in student conduct work. The conference consisted of several practice-oriented workshops through which participants acquired hands-on practice and skill development in Restorative Justice techniques. These techniques enabled them to confidently practice Restorative Justice in their families, communities, and workplaces.

My passion for Restorative Justice has afforded me the opportunity to speak and present
across the Chicagoland area on the proactive and reactive approaches regarding restorative practices, such as building meaningful relationships, promoting accountability, and operating in a safe environment. I recognize the importance of promoting sustainability in higher education as a contribution that may bridge the gap between service learning and subsidiary learning in order to maximize the academic experience for students as well as administration, faculty and staff. I chose a living learning community in order to support students who reside on campus and determine whether the implementation of Talking Circles will improve their internal and external connections as well as provide another resource to the faculty and staff of the living learning community for programming purposes.
Chapter 2. Introduction to the Project

Restorative Justice relies less on traditional judicial processing, and more on victim, community, and offender-centered practices that hold offenders accountable for their actions. Restorative Justice practices ensure that the consequences of harms and offenses meet the specific needs and desires of victims and community members, while attending to the improvement of wrongdoer competencies so as to prevent future harmful behavior on the wrongdoer’s part (Zehr, 2002). Administration of living learning communities (LLC) are in need of an avenue to ensure that student voice and enhancement of their personal and social experiences are explored in a more innovative way. There is a lack of scholarly research addressing the initial proactive impact of Restorative Justice and restorative practices in higher education among those in LLC.

The implementation of Talking Circles, a restorative practice is a separate entity of Restorative Justice. Talking Circles is a communicative, relationship-building tool to use in all communities. Talking Circles seek to move past disagreements by the establishment and maintenance of relationships. Therefore, this scholarly capstone project will explore the impact of utilizing Talking Circles as a restorative practice in a LLC.

Zeller (2006) noted that “campus residential environments may well become the setting where the deepest learning interactions will occur, as students and faculty are able to fully exploit the potential of living learning opportunities” (p. 59). Kuh (1996) refers to this as a “seamless” learning environment, one where the academic (in-class) and out of classroom activities are fully integrated and mutually supportive to promote higher levels of student learning.

Prairie Place, the LLC selected is located at Governors State University and has been identified as the research site. The LLC is divided into three themes: civic engagement, global citizenship, and sustainability, which has the potential—if facilitated with a specific subject manner—to reflect the principles of Restorative Justice practices. There are three faculty-in-residence assigned for each of the LLC themes.
Students reside and attend classes together on campus daily. How can we as educational leaders and practitioners promote community among those who live, learn, and socialize with one another? Restorative Justice practices build community through a meaningful dialogue among all residents of the LLC to discuss internal (academic) and external (non-academic) factors. LLCs are designed to have “students live together in a community of scholarship, enriched by a high level of faculty participation and academic and cultural programs brings about closer integration of students’ living environment with their learning environment” (Blimling, 1993, p. 265), reflecting the goals of the research site.

2.1 Statement of research problem
According to Darling (2011), 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. As educational leaders and practitioners, we must provide proactive programming that promote community that foster a similarity of integration, motivation, and values among students that reside in a LLC. The proactive approach of Talking Circles focus on the day-to-day interactions of the student’s personal and social experiences.

Darling (2011) developed a compilation of formats and best practices in order to use Restorative Justice in higher education, which focuses on nine prestigious colleges and universities across the United States. In his compilation, Darling noted that since the beginning of higher education in the U.S., discipline was thought of as a barrier to successful learning. On the other hand, Clark (2014) argues that although restorative principles have been employed successfully across the globe in criminal proceedings and K-12 education settings, most colleges and universities have not yet embraced this practice. Clark felt that restorative principles were not punitive enough and too soft on punishment.

Both authors agreed. There are over 2,000 public and not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities in the United States than 2% have implemented some form of Restorative Justice
processes and the number continues to increase (Clark, 2014; Darling, 2011). Darling (2011) found that Restorative Justice in higher education not only views student violations of conduct policy as an opportunity to learn and gain knowledge about one’s self, others, and how to find meaning when resolving conflict. However, impartial views placed on Restorative Justice and restorative practices can cause a lack of proactive use within higher education institutions. “In all social situations, our narratives are an essential aspect of living restoratively because, by telling our story, we not only develop a deeper sense of self, but also expand and deepen our connectedness to each other (Zehr & Toews, 2004, p. 392).” The purpose of implementing Talking Circles at Prairie Place is to determine whether the proactive measures increase the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants.

2.2 Statement of the purpose of the study
The purpose of this study is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure at Prairie Place, a living learning community at Governors State University increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants.

2.3 Operational definitions
For the purpose of this research, the definitions below offer insight into terms chosen to help guide the readers through the rational for the research topic chosen. In order to understand the importance, the reader must first understand the terminology.

- **Civic Engagement** - Civic engagement is acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities. This includes a wide range of activities, including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good. Civic engagement encompasses the notions of global citizenship and interdependence. Through civic engagement, individuals—as citizens of their communities, their nations, and the world—are empowered as agents of positive social change for a better world (Jacoby, 2009).
• **Faculty-in-Residence** – individuals that have offered a formidable counter-balance to modern trends in the professoriate. Faculty-in-Residence have generally consisted of faculty members who, in addition to their research and teaching endeavors, have agreed to contribute directly to the residential education of students outside the classroom (Healea et al, 2015, p. 1).

• **Global Citizenship** – tends to be aspirational in spirit, drawing upon a long tradition of thought and feeling about the ultimate unity of human experience, giving rise to a politics of desire that posits for the planet as a whole a set of conditions of peace and justice and sustainability (Folk, 1993, p. 41).

• **Living Learning community** - A learning community addresses the learning needs of its locality through partnership. It uses the strengths of social and institutional relationships to bring about cultural shifts in perceptions of the value of learning. Learning communities explicitly use learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, regeneration and economic development, which involves all parts of the community (Yarnit, 2000, p. 11).

• **Resident Assistant** – student-staff members fulfill supervising and assisting an entire floor of students. The resident assistant is the vanguard of the field of student development (Blimling, 2003).

• **Restorative justice** - Restorative justice is a process where all the stakeholders (shareholders) affected by an injustice have an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected by the injustice and to decide what should be done to repair the harm (Braithwaite, 2004). Restorative Justice involves the utilization of collaborative, community-based or community-oriented techniques for responding to crimes and offenses (Karp, 2013) in this context, as an educational sanction to violations of student code of conduct.
- **Restorative practices** - Restorative practices is a social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making (Ted Watchel, 2013).

- **Sustainability (in higher education)** - An academic institution committed to sustainability would help students understand the roots of environmental degradation and motivate them to seek environmentally sustainable practices while also teaching the roots of today’s injustices in full integration with modeling justice and humaneness (Moore, 2005, p.4).

- **Talking Circles** – is an example of a restorative practice. In a Talking Circle, participants explore a particular issue or topic from many different perspectives. Talking Circles do not attempt to reach consensus on the topic. Rather, they allow all voices to be respectfully heard and offer participants diverse perspectives to stimulate their reflections (Pranis, 2005).

In the next section, the terms in the aforementioned section clarifies the exploration of key themes within the extant literature on the implementation of restorative practices, particularly talking Circles, in a living learning community.
Chapter 3. Review of the Literature

3.1 History and Development of Restorative Justice and Living Learning Communities

This chapter explores the history and development of Restorative Justice and living learning communities in order to understand the purpose of this research. The purpose of this research is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure in Prairie Place, a living learning community at Governors State University increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants. Prairie Place established in fall 2014 is a living learning community at Governors State University, a public state university in the Midwest which makes it suitable for implementation of new programming and ideas. The living learning community consists of three sub-communities: civic engagement, global citizenship, and sustainability. Colleges and universities that are able to make broader commitments to linking residence life and academic initiatives have other options showing great promise for seamlessly connecting in and out of class experiences (Brower & Inkelas, 2010).

The use of Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development as a framework authentically provides the space for shareholders within the living learning community to increase the positive academic and social experiences. The seven vectors of Chickering’s Theory promote positive interactions among all shareholders allowing self-reflection to better understand their personal goals and contributions to the living learning community.

The history and development of living learning communities began in the British tutorial system of education in the late 1800s at Oxford and Cambridge universities (Blimling, 1993). The Experimental College established in 1927 by Alexander Meiklejohn at the University of Wisconsin was the first American living learning community. The intent of this college was to take a holistic approach to meet the needs of undergraduate students by placing them all under
one roof (dormitory) with their academic advisors and library space (Meiklejohn, 1932). The Experimental College had an integrated curriculum designed to help students actively explore the values and idea of democracy and was intentionally designed to facilitate faculty-student interactions (Stassen, 2003).

A significant portion of the literature on living learning communities is quantitative, but the studies that use qualitative methods to investigate student perceptions of living learning communities are lacking (Wawrzynski et al, 2009). This study provides an outlook on student perception on the application and awareness associated with Talking Circles through the use of qualitative methods.

There is a lack of literature to support the effect of restorative practices as a proactive measure in living learning communities. In many cases, restorative practices are used as an educational sanction as a reactive measure to a specific offense or violation. The outcomes from the restorative practices utilized as an educational sanction can eventually develop into positive interactions among shareholders. As students learned more and saw themselves as more engaged both academically and socially, they persisted at a substantially higher rate than did comparable traditional students (Tinto, 2003). Most learning communities incorporate active and collaborative learning activities and promote involvement in complementary academic and social activities that extend beyond the classroom (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 116) which support the internal and external factors of academia. It has been suggested that college housing can serve the function of helping students learn and grow as human beings (Riker, 1965). The physical and social design of these buildings can be designed with the social needs of residents in mind (Blimling & Schuh, 1981). Many residence hall facilities were designed without an
understanding of the importance of environmental influence on student development (Suitor, 2013, p.8).

3.1.1 History and Development of Restorative Justice

There are various historical backgrounds of Restorative Justice. Researchers have exclaimed Restorative Justice deriving from indigenous cultures from thousands of years ago to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of 1995. TRC was organized to help deal with crimes and violence committed under apartheid in efforts to “establish the truth in relation to past events,” pursue national unity, reconciliation, and understanding (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003, p.2). TRC presented the true essence of Restorative Justice. Many theorists caution against establishing firm definitions of Restorative Justice or setting standards for its practice, for fear of closing off innovation or responsiveness to local needs (Zehr & Toews, 2004). Many practitioners have made attempts to narrow the definition to meet the needs of their capacity in the community, schools, or other entities.

The overarching philosophy of Restorative Justice Restorative justice acknowledges that when a person does harm, it affects the person(s) they hurt, the community and themselves (University of Michigan, 2015). Restorative Justice in higher education resembles the models used in other American school systems where the use of this philosophy is an alternative approach to punitive policies.

Restorative Justice is utilized in the criminal and juvenile justice systems as an alternative approach to seek healing and restore relationships to as whole as possible. Daly (2002) mentions the political battles, such as the reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa (p.57), which is utilized by many researchers to define the true essence of the global effectiveness of Restorative Justice.
Braithwaite (2003) describes restorative justice as not simply a way of reforming the criminal justice system, it is a way of transforming the entire legal system, our family lives, our conduct in the workplace, and our practices of politics…it's vision is of holistic change in the way we do justice in the world. Restorative Justice decenters the focus of criminal justice from the offender breaking a law of the state to the harm caused to the victim and community (Olson & Dzur, 2003). Restorative Justice offers victims and their supporters an opportunity to talk directly with wrongdoers, which is reactive in the sense that this form of justice seeks to rectify a wrong that has already occurred whether the responses are formal or informal. Restorative Justice provides a range of opportunities for dialogue, negotiation, and problem solving, whenever possible, which can lead to a greater sense of community safety, social harmony, and peace for all involved (Umbreit, 2006).

Restorative Justice requires, at minimum, that we address victims’ harms and needs, hold offenders accountable to put right those harms, and involve victims, offenders, and communities in the process (Zehr, 2002, p. 25). Restorative Justice (RJ) concepts and practices have been used to resolve conflict in indigenous cultures, including the Maori people of New Zealand, Native American tribes in the U.S., and the Mayan people of Guatemala, for thousands of years (Pranis, 2005). Daly & Immarigeon (1998, p. 4) stated that in the early to mid-1970s is when the first victim-offender reconciliation programs were set up in Canada and the Midwestern U.S., and when few criminologists or practitioners were aware of indigenous justice traditions, the term Restorative Justice did not exist.

While Restorative Justice has been explained as a reactive measure, an alternative approach to the punitive systems across the world, restorative practices emerged to provide balance and equality to all shareholders; victims, offenders, and others. The most important
function of criminal justice is to express social disapproval (Zehr & Toews, 2004, p. 50). In order to fully express social disapproval, all parties must have the opportunity to participate. Programs and practices deemed restorative consisted of: Prisoner Rights & Alternatives to Prisons, Conflict Resolution, Victim-Resolution, Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORPs), Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM), Victim, Advocacy Family Group Conferences (FGCs), Sentencing Circles, and other practices (Daly & Immarigeon, 1998, pp. 6-11).

The aforementioned programs and/or practices were implemented in the 1970s (Daly & Immarigeon, 1998). The objective(s) was to bring closure via a facilitated process that included the victims and offenders. Supporters of the victim and offender were included in the process as well in cases where these parties were deemed to be a vital part of this process. As time progressed, professionals were included as a community resource in order to provide the needed assistance to an issue that was uncovered in the facilitated meeting.

According to Daly & Immarigeon (1998, p. 4) victim-offender mediation, family group conferences, sentencing circles, victim impact panels, and other processes that are now called restorative evolved from different groups of people (often unknown to each other), who were experimenting with alternative practices. To provide an understanding of how restorative practices emerged prior to being coined a term, the practices mentioned frame the foundation for Talking Circles, one of many restorative practices use in a LLC.

**Restorative Justice in Higher Education**

According to Darling (2011), the first institution of Higher Education to implement Restorative Justice was founded in 1998 at the University of Colorado-Boulder (p. 5). Umbreit et al. (2005, p. 263) claim that “restorative justice policies and programs are known today to be developing in nearly every state and range from small and quite marginal programs in many
communities. As America’s colleges and universities struggle to increase and serve a growing and changing student body, a compelling and diverse account of restorative justice will be essential to prepare higher education and student affairs practitioners (Blas Pedreal, 2015, p. 40).

In *The Little Book of Restorative Justice for Colleges and Universities* (Karp, 2013) the basis for Restorative Justice is to repair harm and rebuild trust in response to student misconduct. This book is beneficial as a guide for student conduct officers as a reactive measure. Karp further explains that there are three models of campus practices: conferences, circles, and board. Their practices have emerged from contemporary criminal justice systems, faith-based communities, academia, and indigenous justice practices from Canada to New Zealand (p.24).

Restorative Justice is a philosophy that acknowledges that when a person does harm, it affects the person(s) they hurt, the community and themselves (University of Michigan, 2015). Instead of using punitive measures, the University of Michigan sought ways to repair the harm caused by one person to another and to the community, with the goal of restoring order in the best way possible. As a result of Restorative Justice efforts, various non-profit and higher education institutions have embraced Restorative Justice models to support youth, promote responsibility, and build community (Blas Pedreal, 2015). Restorative Justice has been used as an alternative or complement to traditional disciplinary processes in cases of sexual harassment, racist behavior, alcohol violations and other offenses (The New York Times, 2015).

Restorative Justice is a collaborative decision-making process that includes victims, offenders, and others who are seeking to hold offenders accountable (Karp, 2013). Karp continues on to note that there are three actions executed to hold offenders accountable: (a) accept and acknowledge responsibility for their offenses, (b) to the best of their ability, repair the
harm they caused to victims and communities, and (c) work to reduce the risk of re-offenses by building positive social ties to the community (p. 4).

The ability to foster and maintain a strong presence on campus is frustrating in the sense of the basic level to identify the contributions of similar and diverse people within and to the institutional environment (Joint Task Force in Professional Competencies and Standards, 2010). To move beyond titles; level of education; appearance; etc., more profound dialogue (via Talking Circles) must be presented to rid the barriers preventing growth. In doing so, a staff member [higher education] can transition to a more advanced level ensuring individuals throughout the institution are treated respectfully, justly, fairly, and impartially (Joint Task Force in Professional Competencies and Standards, 2010).

**Restorative Practices**

The International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), the world’s first graduate school wholly devoted to restorative practices, distinguishes between the terms restorative practices and Restorative Justice; viewing Restorative Justice as a subset of restorative practices.

Restorative practices are a social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making (Watchel, 2013) while Basar & Akan (2013) explain Restorative Justice as a positive discipline approach towards the search for sustainability in resolving conflicts which further support the claim of differentiating proactive and reactive measures.

Watchel (2013) provides a clear definition of Restorative Justice and practices:

*Restorative justice is reactive, consisting of formal or informal responses to crime and other wrongdoing after it occurs. The IIRP’s definition of restorative practices also includes the use of informal and formal processes that precede wrongdoing, those that*
proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing. Where social capital—a network of relationships—is already well established, it is easier to respond effectively to wrongdoing and restore social order—as well as to create a healthy and positive organizational environment.

Restorative practices meet the objectives of the SP-POV (1949) which pave the way for faculty and students and faculty and administration to work collaboratively in achieving common goals, curricular and co-curricular, the learning of socially desirable processes is thereby enriched. The SP-POV established student affairs administrators to lead in a more organized manner and implement a holistic approach to meet the needs of the student. Because this is an ever-changing global society, structure within higher education is imperative in terms of how services are delivered to the student. Higher education leaders actively participate to connect academics and student development outside the classroom. According to the American Council on Education (1937), the development of students as whole persons interacting in social situations is the central concern of student personnel work and of other agencies of education.

The use of Restorative Justice values, principles, and practices form the discussion and lessons surrounding the application of realistic situations. Therefore, students have the opportunity to apply philosophy to practice in all areas of their lives preparing them ample opportunities to integrate Restorative Justice values, principles, and practices via assignments. Armour (2013) provides the space to learn how Restorative Justice relates to the students’ chosen profession. A sense of moral agency resonates with each student participant of a rigorous, multidisciplinary graduate school course. In this process of learning, students will change the frame of mind for their thought processes in order to transform and broaden their thinking.
Admiration to reflective learning is noted in regards to a dominant pedagogy in professional development and adult education.

Karp (2013) notes that the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education argues that “Student Conduct Programs in higher education must enhance overall educational experiences by incorporating student learning and developmental outcomes in their mission.” The literature on Restorative Justice and restorative practices are predominantly known within student conduct as a reactive measure while this research presents the paradigm shift to view restorative practices, in particular, Talking Circles as a proactive approach. The Student Discipline system of universities in many ways reflects the larger criminal justice system in the U.S. and is based on retributive justice (Darling, 2011, p. 3). Darling notes how higher education institutions have implemented Restorative Justice Principle and Practices in student conduct when a violation has occurred (pp. 6-8). Michigan State University employed restorative practices through a partnership between residence life and student life to help students and staff resolve conflict – to create a more holistic approach campus-wide (p. 8). At the same token, the University of Michigan created and distributed a 20 question survey tool where conference participants said the conference strengthened their sense of community (p.5).

3.1.2 History and Development of Living Learning Communities
A learning community is any one of a variety of curricular structures that link together several existing courses—or actually restructure the curricular material entirely—so that students have opportunities for a deeper understanding of and integration of the material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and their teachers as fellow participants in the learning enterprise (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews & Smith, 1990, p. 19). The evolution from dormitories and residence halls to living learning communities proves to change with the
times and demographics of students serviced. There is a great impact living learning communities have on student experiences and success. Students experienced isolation in dormitories where there was little academic or social coherence to student learning (Tinto, 2003). Residence halls are defined as a place where students live on campus while dormitories are defined as a room providing sleeping quarters for a number of persons (Moeck, 2005).

The Student Personnel Point of View (SP-POV) serves as an important resolution in advancing the interest of student personnel work with a philosophy and objective describing the central purpose of higher education as the preservation, transmittal, and enrichment of culture by means of instruction, scholarly work, and scientific research (American Council on Education, 1937) which encompasses the student as a whole. College and university students are treated as individuals rather than an enrollment statistic. Students are not just bodies filling empty seats. Students residing in LLCs are connected to academic and student affairs transitioning to more actively involving students in learning. Gablenick et al (1990), describes living learning communities as changing the manner in which students experience the curriculum and the way they are taught.

Yale and Harvard sought to bridge the gap between classroom learning and the campus environment (Borst, 2011). During this same time frame, several acts were passed during the early-to-mid 1940s and 1960s which provides a more detailed synopsis of how student enrollment increased. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act in 1944 (G.I. Bill), the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the Higher Education Act of 1965 increased college enrollment by bringing federal assistance to individuals to attend college (Rhatigan, 2009) while the redrafting of the SP-POV in 1949 reflected the major changes in American life following World War II concentrating on “the whole student”. Addressing the needs of “the whole student” requires a
greater understanding of the students served as a holistic approach, including the development of programs such as implementing Talking Circles as a proactive measure to increase the academic (internal) and social (external) experiences.

With the G.I. Bill in full effect, many servicemen and their families flocked to college campuses to take full advantage of their educational benefits. In the 1950s and 1960s, there was an upwelling in political and civil rights debates in America, with the college campus taking center stage in the debate over equality. Political ranks on the forefront of discussing affirmative action. Meanwhile, massive state and federal spending sparked a boom in dorm construction, as minorities and disadvantaged students began flocking to campuses nationwide. Institutions were experiencing a rise in enrollment over the next several years. Large higher education institutions discovered the possibility of living learning communities to purposely create smaller communities within the institution to “humaniz[e] the scale of higher education” (Smith, 2001, p.3).

State and federal funding for higher education decreases while the demand for college degrees continues to increase. Tuition rates have risen—as has the need for better living learning communities to justify the higher expense. Over the next few decades, colleges began to offer unisex residence halls (place where students live on campus) where men and women could socialize at liberty. To promote student success in college, there was a need for structure of “highly effective learning environments” (Smith, 2001, p.5). Living learning communities (LLC) offer unique living and learning opportunities to campus residents. Research shows LLC students have higher cumulative grade point averages (GPAs) as a result of increased interaction with faculty and increased interaction with faculty (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University).
Tinto (2003) notes three commonalities of the various research conducted: (1) shared knowledge; (2) shared knowing; and (3) shared responsibility (p.2). The first commonality is that the students have the opportunity to experience high levels of cognitive complexities. The second commonality is to promote cognitive development; social and intellectual enhancement among students. The third commonality refers to collective accountability where all shareholders have a responsibility to one another.

To be effective, learning communities require their “faculty”, that is the academic and student affairs professionals who staff the learning community, to collaborate on both the content and the pedagogy of the linked courses (Tinto, 2003). Schroeder (1994) identified four essential principles (involvement, investment, influence, and identity) that define a learning community in college residence halls. Spitzberg and Thorndike (1992) noted that traditionally community has been defined as a small group of people living in a common area with shared values, practices, and goals.

Arthur Chickering (1969) provided an overview of the developmental issues that college students face and went on to examine environmental conditions that influence development serving as the foundation for extensive research as well as practical application (Evans et al, 2010). For the purpose of this research, the environment is Prairie Place, a living learning community at Governors State University. Talking Circles will be utilized as a practical application to determine if its implementation as a proactive measure increases the positive personal and social experiences among student residents and resident assistants.
3.2 Conclusions drawn from the literature

Based on the literature, restorative practices are utilized as reactive measures within higher education. Historically, Student Affairs and Academic Affairs have worked separately in regard to Restorative Justice and restorative practices. The literature focuses on the use of Restorative Justice and restorative practices interchangeably to handle campus misconduct. The use of Restorative Justice in higher education is predominantly handled by student conduct officers when an offense has occurred on campus. In many cases, living learning communities are addressed as a separate entity of the higher education institution. To meet the needs of student residents in an ever-changing global society, living learning communities continuously evolve that provide more common space to study and socialize. Prairie Place, the LLC is ideal for a proactive restorative program due to the diverse population of students served as well as the connectedness among those who learn, live, and socialize in this public square. There are approximately 300 student residents arriving at Prairie Place from various parts of the world each academic year. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methods used for the exploration of this research.
Chapter 4. Methods

4.1 Theoretical perspective guiding the research study

The purpose of this research is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure in a living learning community at a state university in the Midwest increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants.

Balanced and Restorative Justice forJuveniles (The Balanced Approach) is a framework (University of Minnesota, 1997) for Juvenile Justice in the 21st Century based on specific values and principles, that defines this mission of juvenile justice and guides the activities employed to translate these values and this mission into practice. Restorative Justice provides an alternative to the punishment and offender rehabilitation approaches to delinquency, although it does not eliminate the appropriate use of confinement and treatment (Bazemore et al, 1997) that includes all shareholders who are/were affected to meet an agreement on how to become as whole as possible after the incident that occurred. Although, the Balanced Approach framework is geared more towards the mission of juvenile justice, the overall arching concepts are accountability, building competencies, and community safety. The concepts of the Balanced Approach as a framework stabilizes the connectedness among all shareholders of the LLC.

The combination of the two frameworks; The Balanced Approach which focuses on the reactive measures taken to right a wrong compliment the proactive measures of Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development in exploration of taking a holistic approach to promote creativity and ground-breaking vigor by increasing the kinds of personal interaction that spark new ideas and lead innovative solutions to knotty problems (Bok, 2015). Chickering’s theory has had significant impact on the development of proactive and intentional interventions in higher education (Evans et al, 2010, p. 81).
Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development is useful in terms of assisting a diverse student population in navigating through the systems and resources in place to achieve individual personal goals. Psychosocial and Identity Development Theories address developmental issues occurring in the lives of students (Gohn and Albin, 2006). This allows the student affairs professionals to be viewed as empathetic to the needs of the whole student. Being able to understand the dynamics involved with each student creates a supportive atmosphere based on true concern. The external factors play an important role as the student makes efforts to achieve academic success.

Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development is one of the foundational student development psychosocial theories. Student development is a term that is used extensively in student affairs practice (Evans et al, 2010, p. 6). The term student development was criticized to be too vague. Therefore, in 1967 Sanford defined development as “the organization of increasing complexity” (Parker, 1974, p. 47) while Rodgers (1990) defined student development as “the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education” (p.27).

The seven vectors of Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development encompassing the creation of identity focuses on (Gohn and Albin, 2006): (1) developing competence, (2) managing emotions, (3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (4) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (5) establishing identity, (6) developing purpose, and (7) developing integrity.

This particular theory responsibility lies in evaluating the impact of innovative curricular practices on student development (Evans et al, 2010). Being able to understand the dynamics involved with each student creates a supportive atmosphere based on true concern. The external
factors (which can be barriers for student success) play an important role as the student makes efforts to achieve academic success. Chickering’s theory has had a significant impact on the development of proactive and intentional interventions in higher education which is easy to understand and use. The purpose of this study supports Chickering’s Theory and the analysis by focusing on the proactive interventions (Talking Circles) in the LLC within a higher education institution. The Talking Circle is simplistic shaped to meet the needs of the community at hand through meaningful dialogue.

The response to innovative ways to address concerns of professionals in the field of juvenile justice was to provide a framework utilized to develop and enhance their skills. The mission is the “Balanced Approach”, and the advocate’s consideration of a new philosophical framework, “Restorative Justice”, to guide broader policy development and reform in juvenile justice (University of Minnesota, 1997).

The use of Talking Circles in the living learning community compliments Chickering’s Theory by providing a landscape to each one of the seven vectors. Talking Circles, one of the restorative practices are not meant to replace other approaches, but to precede them with the hope that other approaches will not be necessary (Karp, 2013). Restorative Justice is widely known as being an alternative approach to the traditional criminal justice system. There are many contradictions relating to the use of Restorative Justice as a philosophy or as a framework implicating two different connotations. As a philosophical framework, restorative justice is neither punitive nor lenient in focus (Bazemore et al, 1997).

According to the Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice (IBARJ) project, the three concepts of The Balanced Approach are defined by the following: (1) accountability – creating an obligation for the offender to make amends; (2) building competencies – being more capable
than when they entered as a rehabilitative goal; and (3) community safety – explicitly acknowledging and endorsing the responsibility to promote public safety and security.

The illustration below illustrates the relationship between Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development and the Balanced and Restorative Justice frameworks. See Appendix A.

Researchers have investigated the relationship of psychosocial development and a number of academic, co-curricular, and life experience variables (Evans et al, 2010); academic satisfaction and classroom performance, on-campus versus commuter students; involvement, and previous life experiences. These variables provide a structural foundation between the two frameworks. Chickering’s Theory has generated a number of student affairs applications, particularly in the area of programming (p. 77). As an environmental intervention Chickering’s Theory use in a “residential learning contract” was utilized to outline learning outcomes in regards to living in university housing (Krivoski & Nicholson, 1989). At the same institution, Chickering assisted in the design of a university learning center where the primary goals included fostering collaborations among faculty and student affairs professionals, addressing needs of diverse learners, linking theory and practice, and learning technologies (Evans et al, 2010, p. 79).
4.2 Qualitative approach to inquiry

The purpose of this research is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure in a living learning community increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants.

The researcher conducted a thorough observation of the Restorative Justice Scholar Practitioner facilitating a Talking Circle with student residents of the living learning community. This qualitative approach to inquiry is best to highlight the interactions observed in the Talking Circle. Qualitative research is defined as the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest (Gay et al, 2012, p.7). The implementation of Talking Circles in a living learning community is the phenomenon of interest.

Pascarella (2006) spoke to the importance of qualitative research in contributing to a better understanding of “why the intervention or program has the effect that it does” (p.515). There are common research methods for the social sciences, which include but are not limited to interviews, observations, questionnaires (surveys), and documentary analysis. For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected qualitative research to expand the body of restorative justice research in higher education where the specific aspect is the use of Talking Circles as a proactive measure.

Grounded theory methods 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). In order to authentically tell the shareholders’ story, qualitative research in the form of grounded theory will be utilized. Naturalistic inquiry (Guba, 1978) minimizes constraints on controls and on dependent variables offering alternative strategies for problems when the experimental approach is questionable which is credible and deal convincingly with
standard methodological. Triangulation of data establishes validity promoted by openness and fairness. There is a small sample size of participants for this research; 17 total participants between two Talking Circles. Although qualitative samples tend to be purposive rather than random (Miles et al, 2014), convenience sampling was the nonrandom sampling strategy chosen (Gay et al, 2012) as participants volunteered their time to attend the Talking Circle.

Additionally, peer debriefing was utilized to “support the credibility of the data in qualitative research and provide a means towards the establishment of overall trustworthiness of the findings (Spall, 1998, p. 280).

Peer debriefing allows the researcher to review findings with an impartial peer to discuss the research and findings, and how researcher bias may or may not be a factor in outcomes. Peer debriefing helps to keep the researcher in check and on track for a valid and credible project as well as allowing for personal support to the researcher to be shown (Spall, 1998). I also utilized peer debriefing because researcher bias can distort results and affect the outcome of the inquiry so every attempt has been made to limit and minimize researcher bias through review of the work, unbiased questions, no leading of answers, and peer debriefing (Chenail, 2011).

In this research, I utilized a former professor who introduced me to Restorative Justice and restorative practices. The former professor is the managing director for justice programs of a major research corporation in the division of safety and security. In his previous position, he was the Academic Program Coordinator for a graduate criminal justice program for over a decade. Given the fact that he has a shared understanding of the focus of research, time was better spent not on introducing the field, the use of Restorative Justice and restorative practices, in particular the use of this philosophy and practices in higher education, but rather on the exploration of what I found. He had the ability to provide insight on ways that I could enrich my work and gave me a
different perspective from his vantage point as a former professor. He is also familiar with qualitative research as his doctorate was completed several years ago, and he has an extensive background in this type of methodology. He has provided personal and professional support throughout this endeavor and who I have a high level of trust, which are all important facets of a peer de-briefer (Spall, 1998). Following the data collection and peer debriefing, there was a thematic analysis based on the information provided during the course of the research. The next section will cover the description of the participants.

### 4.3 Description of participants

Prairie Place, the living learning community at a state university in the Midwest chosen for this study consists of students ranging from the ages of 17-57. These student residents come from different socio-economic backgrounds, different cultural experiences and diverse identities, academic classification from first-year, sophomore, junior, and senior student statuses. There were 17 total participants; 10 females and seven males. The participant’s racial identity consisted of 14 Blacks, two Caucasians, and one Hispanic. 88% of the student residents who participated in this research previously resided in-state; Chicago, University Park, Tinley Park, Richton Park, Kankakee, Park Forest, Calumet City, Chicago Heights, and Matteson. There were two student residents that previously lived in Indiana and North Carolina.

### 4.4 Description of the site

The site is Prairie Place, a living learning community at Governors State University, a public state university in the Midwest. Prairie Place was established in fall 2014. The living learning community consists of three sub-communities: civic engagement, global citizenship, and sustainability that are closely related to the restorative practice, Talking Circles which are described as offering participants the opportunity: (1) To make a lasting impression as an
individual as well as a member of the living learning community in addressing the dynamics of the community-at-large (civic engagement); (2) To gain a better understanding of commonalities and differences as a multifaceted web of influences and interdependencies (global citizenship); and (3) to utilize this form of communication as a resource in the living learning community and other areas of academia, student life, and beyond the public square of education (sustainability).

Currently, Prairie Place staff entails of six resident assistants, one assistant hall director, one hall director, and two faculty-in-residence. The living learning community consists of apartments and semi-suites opposed to common areas such as common kitchens. This is not your typical living learning community. At the beginning of every academic year student residents complete a Roommate Bill of Rights in order to avoid conflicts. The Bill of Rights should be revisited throughout each semester among all student residents to build community through sharing experiences.

4.5 Data collection method

The data collection for this project involved document review and analysis of the data from two 32-item, close-ended survey (Jansen, 2010) given to each participant, field notes from participant observations (Maxwell, 1992), and institutional artifacts (Gay et al, 2012). Close-ended surveys illustrate one way in which qualitative and quantitative methods could be combined in the same study (Krause, 2002) which supports the purpose of qualitative surveys (Jansen, 2010) and the use of the Likert scale. Qualitative survey is an application of grounded theory that does not count the frequencies of categories/values, but searches for the empirical diversity in the properties of members, even if the properties are expresses in numbers (Jansen, 2010). The scores from the Likert scale allowed the participants to express the extent of
agreement or disagreement with a specific statement related to their experiences as a student residing in Prairie Place, a LLC as well as their Talking Circle experience.

All qualitative data derived from the informal interviews, observations from staff meetings and trainings facilitated by the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar, close-ended surveys, and documentary analysis were examined. Since there is a lack of significant literature on this topic and because of the use of close-ended surveys, the research expects that there will be emergent themes.

4.6 Procedures

As a part of the informal interview process, the researcher accompanied the Restorative Justice Scholar Practitioner and the Project Director to the staff meeting of the living learning community prior to conducting the Talking Circles and observations. The researcher asked the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar to convey the goals of the Talking Circle which include: defining Restorative Justice and the role that shareholders play in the group dialogue format; discuss common ground established among shareholders (participants; describe why participants will be seated in a circle; discuss how participants will engage and interact with one another (e.g., speaking with a Talking Piece and without interruptions from each other with a commitment to confidentiality); and explain how each Talking Circle will conclude with the assess process (Pranis, 2005). The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar shared the connections between traditional programming in living learning communities and Restorative Justice Talking Circles practices. For example, the programs focused on the themed floors (civic engagement, global citizenship, and sustainability) will simultaneously be enriched by Talking Circles rather than distinctly.
The researcher discussed her role and why it is important for the study to have an external trainer facilitate the Talking Circles in order observe the experiences. Student residents have been asked to participate in this study to see the affects if any, that Talking Circles have.

The researcher has shared any commonalities and unique differences that were found due to the range of ages and academic levels. The researcher also explained, there may be different responses based on the different types of programming offered where some may experience a greater understanding of Restorative Justice Practices than other participants. The principal investigator discussed how participants will complete a close-ended survey to assess the impact that the Talking Circles has, if any, on their academic and social experiences within the living learning community and perhaps, how the awareness and application of both are used in other entities on campus (classroom and campus programs).

The data derived from a pre and post 32-item, close-ended survey (Jansen, 2010) given to student residents of a state university in the Midwest. The 32-item, close-ended survey was given in a pre/post format, with one administered prior to participation in the Talking Circle and one administered after the students completed the second Talking Circle. The researcher observed the face-to-face interaction (Maxwell, 1992) in the form of a circle while the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar facilitated in order to provide accurate reflections of participants’ perspectives.

Findings were compiled and reported to offer recommendations to integrate Restorative Justice, particularly the practice of Talking Circles into the living learning community identified for this research project. I have assessed the impact the Talking Circles had on their awareness and application of this particular restorative practice, better problem-solving abilities, improved
communication techniques, and relationships with others (i.e. family, peers, supervisors). The next section discusses how data will be analyzed.

4.7 Data analysis

The purpose of this research is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure in a living learning community increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants. Qualitative survey consists of three levels. The first level analysis is the unidimensional description: observations and coding of the field notes. The second level analysis is the multidimensional description: the two 32-item closed-ended surveys with categorical variation, grouping items into scales and sub-scales, and Likert scores that were calculated from each participant and transformed into construct tables (Miles et al, 2014) to conduct the difference of means for the before and after measures of each Talking Circle. The Likert scale was utilized to answer the two 32-item close-ended survey completed by the student residents of the living learning community addressing the claim of diverse background characteristics in order to determine validity. The third level analysis is the explanation: analyzed the multidimensional description which are the themes that emerged from the research (community building, dynamics, standards, and values) (Jansen, 2010).

The close-ended survey was divided into three parts; demographic questions, Talking Circle impact questions, and implementation of Talking Circles. The interviews and field notes from observations were utilized to complement emerging themes that derived from the two 32-item closed ended surveys.

Therefore, data derived from the surveys will be 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
type (Miles, et al, 2014).

I utilized the findings from that analysis to offer recommendations for the implementation
of Talking Circles to enhance the environment and enrich the academic and social experiences of
shareholders in the living learning community and possibly, in other entities across campus.

4.8 Strategies for validating the findings
There were several strategies utilized to validate the findings. Maxwell’s criteria for
validity of qualitative research notes theoretical validity – the ability of the research report to
explain the phenomenon that has been studied and described (Maxwell, 1992). The narrative
account of field notes derived from the formal meeting with the staff of the living learning
community as well as the dialogue in the two Talking Circles observed in this study. The other
narrative account is the results from the 32-item close-ended survey completed by student
residents.

According to Gay et al (2012), triangulation of data is the process of using multiple
methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to obtain a more complete picture of what is
being studied and to crosscheck information (p. 393). The researcher collected and analyzed
institutional artifacts (e.g. the living learning community mission statement, biographies of
faculty-in residence and resident assistants, university housing handbook, and programming
documents) in order to learn more about the goals and objectives of the living learning
community as it relates to implementing Talking Circles. Member checks (Guba, 1981) were
conducted by the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar after each Talking Circle to reiterate
the purpose as well as the comfortability in experiencing this restorative practice. In the next
section I will discuss the findings from my research on the implementation of Talking Circles in a LLC.
Chapter 5. Results

The purpose of this research is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure in Prairie Place, a living learning community at Governors State University increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants. The overarching themes that emerged from this research revolves around four key areas that I have coined as the Jones Theory of Restorative Community Practices. See Appendix E.

1) Community Building – creating and maintaining through sharing and developing the dynamics, standards, and values within a common place.

2) Community Dynamics – a blend of the internal (academic) and external factors (i.e. family, work, etc.) that requires self-sufficiency

3) Community Standards – acceptable conduct within the community in order to remain safe and respect the values of all shareholders

4) Community Values - beliefs and ideas shared by the community by utilizing skills and resources to develop personal and organizational purpose

Each section in this chapter is divided into parts by the two meetings and/or trainings with Prairie Place staff and the two Talking Circles with student residents and a resident assistant.

Talking Circle with Living Learning Community Staff – Part 1

The semester prior to conducting the research, the researcher accompanied the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar and the Project Director in order to provide clarity of the research to be conducted. This meeting took place in circle, which allowed the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar to facilitate an informal training. The living learning community staff consisted of: Director, Assistant Director, Residence Hall Director, and the Housing
Representative. The Director had many questions regarding the research to be conducted and the potential outcomes. The Assistant Director was familiar with the restorative practice, Talking Circles from a prior appointment at a higher education institution. The use of Healing Circles was utilized at the former place of employment.

Because of the familiarity, the Assistant Director was able to provide the meaning of Talking Circles that were relevant to the current programming in place. The Residence Hall Director provided institutional artifacts relating to the programming and processes from the previous academic school year. Training dates and times were addressed as well as the importance of this research. The researcher discussed how the brief training to the Resident Assistants provides opportunities to learn self, others, and how to utilize the Talking Circle as a communication tool to build relationships.

Talking Circle with Living Learning Community Staff – Part 2

Prior to the new semester, the Resident Assistants, Assistant Director, and Residence Hall Director participated in one-hour training on Talking Circles. Each participant completed the consent form and received the informational letter. The Assistant Director did not complete the consent form. The Assistant Director chose to observe the training only. The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar facilitated this training while the researcher observed the process. There were a total of five Resident Assistants, the Assistant Director, and the Residence Hall Director. One of the Resident Assistants was unable to attend. Ironically, the Resident Assistant who was unable to attend was the one who supported and initiated the Talking Circle with student residents as a part of programming for the current semester. This Resident Assistant had prior experience with Talking Circles through the previous (community college) higher education institution attended.
The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar asked a series of questions and provided instruction throughout the entire training. The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar asked each participant to choose a card from the center of the Talking Circle. The participants were asked to introduce themselves and explain why they chose the card. The answers regarding the cards chosen were a combination of: reflection, passion, relaxation, and appearance.

After the first round of questions, which were answered counter clockwise, the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar introduced the talking piece. The talking piece is utilized to regulate the dialogue of the participants (Pranis, 2005) allowing the person holding the talking piece the opportunity to speak without interruption. All other participants of the Talking Circle are invited to listen.

The next set of questions was to answer one of the following: what did you do for the New Year and/or how are you feeling? The responses were: love, spent time with family and friends, it is a new day, food and drinks, spirit, passion, movies, and sleep. The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar asked, “On a scale of 1-10, how knowledgeable are you on Restorative Justice and/or Talking Circles?” The responses were as follows See Table 1.

Table 1: Knowledge of Restorative Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Scale 1-10</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Director</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Took a course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never really heard of the terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never really heard of the terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discussion in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Never heard of the terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar continued the training discussing a paradigm shift from traditional punitive systems to Restorative Justice. The use of Talking Circles can be used proactively to build and/or improve relationships and community. The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar asked the participants to answer the following question: In your living learning community, how would you like for everyone to treat each other on their best day? Write the value down and place in the center of the circle. See Table 2.

Table 2: Daily Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar</td>
<td>Kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Director</td>
<td>Human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar (RJPS) suspended the Talking Piece for an open discussion requesting feedback to the question, “do we behave like this all time?” All participants replied, “No!” The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar asked, “Why?” The participants answered: fear of different personalities, judgment, hurt, taken advantage of, lack of knowledge, and lack of exposure. The RJPS explained how we should make a conscious effort to model the values discussed. The Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar requested each
participant to close their eyes and imagine a safe place of unconditional love and acceptance. The RJPS proceeded with the use of the talking piece. The responses were See Table 3.

Table 3: Safe Place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar</td>
<td>Home in the living room listening to music surrounded by the plants and fish tank. The family is home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Director</td>
<td>Lake in Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Peace and calming smells of imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>With dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Lake Shore Drive hearing the waves against the rocks while thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>The heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>In the van</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The RJPS continues on to explain Restorative Justice as being the ability to speak from the heart and listen to the whole story. Restorative Justice our perspective – a perspective. Leadership roles are mentioned and the question the RJPS asks the participants is, “why did you chose this position?” The responses were See Table 4.

Table 4: Purpose for Choosing Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>1) Financial; 2) Grow to become a leader; 3) To step outside of comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>1) Like to help people; 2) Pay it forward; 3) Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) Financial; 2) Wonderful experience with RA at previous institution attended – pay it forward; 3) Role model for the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>1) Missed similar roles of leadership and did not want to pass this opportunity; 2) Make an impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Hall Director</td>
<td>1) Pay it forward; 2) value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>1) Become more diverse in thinking; 2) Experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The RJPS opened the discussion requesting feedback on how the Talking Circle experience has been. The participants responded that they felt connected, together, more vulnerable, open, comfortable, resourceful, learned about each other, building relationships, and building community. Two handouts were given to all participants to utilize as a reference. See Appendix B. The RJPS continues on to discuss that everyone in the Talking Circle is equal. There are contributions from all participants of the Talking Circle – building social capital. The values of the Talking Circle are finalized allowing the participants to create a document listing.
all of the values. As new participants come to the Talking Circle, ask if they would like to add any additional values.

The RJPS asks, “Can you imagine using this process? The responses were See Table 5.

Table 5: Imagine Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Director</td>
<td>Yes; sharing more vulnerable things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Yes; with difficult family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Yes; getting together with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Yes; maybe difficult to use with family due to disconnect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Yes; with family to help break out of their shell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Yes; to build stronger bonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Justice Scholar Practitioner</td>
<td>Yes; with marriage as an equalizer using a “special” talking piece. Using this process with family takes work to create this space; especially with a group not as connected. Start small with topics and amount of people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were a total of 17 participants between the two Talking Circles facilitated by the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar.

Talking Circle with Student Residents – Part 1

Part one consisted of 16 total participants. Each participant signed up to volunteer for the Talking Circles that took place in a one-week timeframe. The participants came in one-by-one
making it difficult to facilitate the Talking Circle in a timely manner. To that extent, there was a
discussion on the definition and purpose of the Talking Circle as well as brief introductions of
participants. Each participant completed the consent form, received the informational letter, and
the 28-item, close-ended survey. See Appendix C.

Talking Circle with Student Residents – Part 2

Part two consisted of seven total participants; six from previous Talking Circle and one
new participant who learned about this Talking Circle through word-of-mouth. Each participant
completed the consent form, received the informational letter, and the 32-item, close-ended
survey. See Appendix D. The Talking Circle started with the RJPS opening with requesting the
participants to pick a picture of an animal from the center of the circle. Once the participants
selected their picture, the RJPS asked all participants to stand-up for an exercise. The exercise
consisted of increasing the number of balls thrown to someone in the Talking Circle round-by-
round. When the participant threw the ball to someone in the Talking Circle, the one throwing
the ball would have to say the participant’s name who is receiving the ball. To make the exercise
even more enjoyable, the RJPS decided to reverse the route of receiving the balls; meaning the
participants had to remember the name of the participant who originally gave them the ball. By
the end of the exercise, there were several balls circulating around the Talking Circle. This was
one of the ice-breaking exercises. There was plenty of laughter by all participants including the
RJPS.

The next question led to participants sharing where they lived prior to attending the state
university in the Midwest, prior higher education institutions attended, student status, and
academic major. The pictures selected at the beginning of this Talking Circle was discussed by
using the talking piece. Each participant was asked to share the reason why they chose the
animal chosen. This question prompted many to revert back to childhood memories and the importance of reflection.

“How would you like to be treated?” asked the RJPS. The responses were See Table 6.

Table 6: Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RJPS</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Resident</td>
<td>With care and consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Resident</td>
<td>Respected and with dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Resident</td>
<td>Mutual respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Resident</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Resident</td>
<td>Kind and respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The RJPS discussed the relationship between values and the Talking Circle. One of the participants shared his definition of values, which was to treat people the way they want to be treated. There is freedom to speak from your perspective respectfully. The relationship between respect and Talking Circles were discussed in respect to speaking in order to understand others. One of the participants added that one should speak to edify and not to entertain negativity. The discussion went on to examine the importance of utilizing the values mentioned in order to not speak out of anger. The RJPS informed the participants to reiterate the values of the Talking Circle when a new participant joined. The RJPS also directed the participants to ask the new participant if he/she would like to add any values. The RJPS detailed the steps to the Talking
Circle: (1) get acquainted; (2) build relationships; (3) address issues, if any; and (4) plan to address the agreement.

Before checking out of the Talking Circle, participants were given the opportunity to provide final remarks regarding this experience. The participants requested more frequent Talking Circles in order to maintain the bond created. There was a consensus that more time was needed to delve into deeper dialogue. Words to describe this Talking Circle experience ranged from powerful, resourceful, and knowledgeable to great impact and supportive. The Talking Circle was proactive in approach allowing participants 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).

Ten of the 17 participants strongly agreed that the Talking Circle will build stronger communities in the living learning community. 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

Talking Circles aid in building community through the use of Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development (seven vectors) and The Balanced Approach (three concepts). When asked by the RJPS how to best describe the Talking Circle experience, the participants agreed the experience to relate to community building. The field notes created by the researcher’s observation complimented the results from the two 32-item close-ended surveys.
The themes in voice which derived from the informal interviews; field notes from observations of meetings; training with Resident Assistants; Talking Circles with student residents; and the two 32-item close-ended surveys were. See Appendix E.

Jones Theory of Restorative Community Practices

The next chapter covers a detailed discussion of the findings in this research and how the implementation of the Talking Circles impacted the personal and social experiences of each participant; student residents and a resident assistant.
Chapter 6. Discussion

Implementing Talking Circles in a living learning community is needed as a proactive measure increasing the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants. Although this research study does not directly include faculty-in-residence, the Talking Circle impacts the relationships created with student residents and resident assistants. Behaviors change based on environment and relationships. As a proactive measure, Talking Circles are utilized to discuss values and communicate news. Titles are removed and all participants are treated equal from a restorative lens and the Balanced Approach framework accountability, building competency development, and community safety. In the discussion related to the findings of the study explore the support the Talking Circles provide to the Resident Assistants as programming or a communicative tool.

6.1 Discussion related to findings of the study

The Resident Assistants of Prairie Place have more day-to-day interactions with the student residents. Therefore, the use of Talking Circles allows Resident Assistants to use the impactful statements made to increase the social experiences for student residents by encouraging positive actions. With the living learning community being a vital component to the state university in the Midwest, the dialogue in the Talking Circle discusses the importance of academic and social experiences as it relates to each participant. Resident Assistants gain insight from student residents without forcing a conversation. In the Talking Circle, the facilitator which can be student-led, has the opportunity to use ice-breaking exercises to establish trust and respect.

In order to take a holistic approach to understanding Restorative Justice and Talking Circles, the researcher believed that all shareholders of the living learning community should be trained. Colleges and universities that are able to make broader commitments to linking
residence life and academic initiatives have other options showing great promise for seamlessly connecting in and out of class experiences (Brower & Inkelas, 2010).

The staff of Prairie Place that were trained to use Talking Circles as a part of their programming selected values that reflected the same values as the student residents. The values selected were: considerate, kind, and respectful. There were other values selected that ranged from being connected, considerate, fair, human, understanding, and valid. The question that prompted a response to name a value addressed how each participant of the Talking Circle would like to be treated by other students, professors, and administration. The Talking Circles can be developed into a program model for the living learning community to train RAs. The program model will allow RAs to receive training that is current and effective as well as offer a resource to all student residents who are in search of creative ways to discuss academic and non-academic matters.

See Appendix A. The student residents and RA that participated in the Talking Circles sought opportunities to gain a better understanding of how to hold each other accountable through defining values within the living learning community (C1=V3). The participants shared their experiences as a formal introduction to the others of the living learning community as well as offered insight on best practices that work in order to succeed in academic and social settings (C2= V1/V5/V6). The Talking Circles provided the participants with an additional resource to maintain a safe community allowing all parties to demonstrate the main value discussed, respect (C3= V2/V4).

There were several strengths and limitations that will discussed in the next section.
6.2 Strengths and limitations

Based on the responses provided in the survey, the students and Resident Assistant who participated in this study found the Talking Circle to be useful on a daily basis especially when entering a new environment such as a living learning community. The Talking Circles lay the foundation to address values and respect among all Prairie Place residents. In doing so, there are no assumptions made about community building, dynamics, standards, and values of Prairie Place. The student residents including the Resident Assistant will utilize the Talking Circle as a communication tool in their classes and programming in the living learning community.

The first talking circle scheduled with student residents did not occur according to plan. Students did not understand the importance of arriving on time for the specified amount of time in order for the Talking Circle to occur. In a Talking Circle, all participants must be present with little to no interruptions. With the researcher making the best with the time allotted, the first Talking Circle scheduled was utilized to familiarize participants with one another and the process. This action set the tone for the second Talking Circle. There were scheduling conflicts that prevented more student residents to participate (i.e. classes, employment, and practice). When participants signed up to volunteer for the Talking Circles through the Resident Assistant, there were no discussions prior to signing up because the Resident Assistant missed the initial staff training that would have offered a better understanding of what takes place in a Talking Circle. There were no faculty-in-residence directly involved in the staff training or the Talking Circles with student residents. Another limitation was the inability to explore the academic interactions of student residents. The strengths and limitations of this research resulted in providing meaningful implications on an organizational, professional, and personal level.
6.3 Future directions
The purpose of this research is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure in Prairie Place, a living learning community at Governors State University increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants. Talking Circles have the potential to impact the entire campus as a whole bridging the gap between academic and student affairs. There are instances where Talking Circles are utilized in response to local and national injustices that cause discomfort for many shareholders. Prairie Place can set the tone on how Talking Circles can be utilized as proactive measure to build community based on the dynamics, standards, and values.

On a micro level, the vision is to witness colleges and universities utilizing restorative practices as a proactive measure to increase the positive academic and social experiences among students, resident assistants, and faculty-in-residence in a living learning community… and on a broader scale (whole school approach). On a macro level, restorative practices as a proactive measure will extend beyond the living learning community. Colleges and universities, system-wide will experience a greater understanding of the difference between Restorative Justice and restorative practices. The two terms are not to be used interchangeably. All staff of living learning communities will receive extensive training on how to effectively use Talking Circles to welcome students, check-in, communicate news, and address concerns; if any. Restorative Justice and restorative practices as a reactive measure will continue to be utilized in the student conduct code but will also be used proactively throughout the campus community. Restorative Justice is reactive in theory and practice yet restorative practices have the potential to be utilized as a proactive approach to community building, dynamics, standards, and values. Prairie Place is the living learning community at Governors State University, a minority-serving institute (MSI). Historically, this population have experienced challenges. Since the establishment of Prairie
Place in fall 2014, there have been infractions that led to suspensions, expulsions, and other unfortunate yet warranted experiences. Specifically, many of the nation’s MSIs often do not have the institutional capacity to collect data on their students’ experiences, and even fewer have effective mechanisms for linking their collected information to campus change efforts (Del Rios et al, 2008, p.2).
Chapter 7. Conclusions

The purpose of this research is to determine if the implementation of Talking Circles as a proactive measure in Prairie Place, a living learning community at Governors State University increases the positive personal and social experiences among students and resident assistants. Observing the interaction among staff and student residents in a living learning community with the Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar as the facilitator offered insight that all participants agreed that Talking Circles build stronger communities in living learning communities. The utilization of Talking Circles in a living learning community as an implementation project for this capstone confirmed the importance of using Restorative Justice and restorative practices in higher education – proactively. This research provides a lens to view Restorative Justice and restorative practices; in particular, Talking Circles as a proactive measure to increase academic and social experiences. In a living learning community, Talking Circles is useful as a communication tool that focuses on the dialogue and not the response.

Although there are many types of Circles, Talking Circles are more proactive in approach – used as a communication tool through accountability, building relationships, and competency development.
Chapter 8. Implications of the study

The general conclusion of this research study suggests only that Talking Circles do impact and increase the academic and social interactions of student residents. Of the 17 total participants, 12 strongly agreed that Talking Circles would build stronger living learning communities. The convenience sampling procedures for this research generalizes the impact of Talking Circles in a living learning community of all colleges and universities. Kuh (1991) suggested that educationally effective practices may differ between institutions. In essence, what works on one campus might not work on another campus. Yet, behaviors change based on an individual’s environment and connections (Korr, 2016). Therefore, the use of restorative practices as a proactive measure is universal.

Personal level

Restorative Justice and restorative practices are a way of life for me. My life has been restored. My mantra is that a journey not shared is a soul not healed. Oftentimes, people just need an outlet, a listening ear, a safe place, or a facilitated tool to process their feelings. The Talking Circle provides this service to all participants. I look forward to the journey ahead as I have established my own publishing company to share my personal journey to restoration and publish books based on proactive approaches to restorative practices.

Organizational level

Prairie Place, the living learning community at Governors State University will begin utilizing Talking Circles on a more regular basis as a part of programming each semester. The Talking Circles will be utilized to establish values and respect, introduction for new students, communicate news and updates, discuss academic and social experiences, and to celebrate accomplishments. Currently, Talking Circles are approached reactively in regards to injustices that occur on a local and national level. The living learning community at the state university in
the Midwest has taken strides to offer Talking Circles as a proactive measure due to the response of all 17 participants of this study.

**Professional level**

Restorative justice in higher education is a personal passion to build social capital particularly in a four-year institution. 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.

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.
References


Suitor, D. T. (2013). Social Support, Sense of Community, and Psychological Distress Among College Students: Examining the Impact of University Housing Units.


Table 1: Illustration displaying the relationship between two theoretical frameworks; The Balanced Approach three concepts (C) and Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development seven vectors (V). Accountability (vectors 3 and 7), building competencies (vectors 1, 5, and 6), and community safety (vectors 2 and 4) are all included within the seven vectors of Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Scale 1-10</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Director</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Took a course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never really heard of the terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never really heard of the terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discussion in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Never heard of the terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar</td>
<td>Kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Director</td>
<td>Human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Justice Practitioner Scholar</td>
<td>Home in the living room listening to music surrounded by the plants and fish tank. The family is home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Director</td>
<td>Lake in Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Peace and calming smells of imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>With dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>Lake Shore Drive hearing the waves against the rocks while thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>The heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>In the van</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>2) Financial; 2) Grow to become a leader; 3) To step outside of comfort zone to handle unfamiliar issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>2) Like to help people; 2) Pay it forward; 3) Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>2) Financial; 2) Wonderful experience with RA at previous institution attended – pay it forward; 3) Role model for the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>2) Missed similar roles of leadership and did not want to pass this opportunity; 2) Make an impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Hall Director</td>
<td>2) Pay it forward; 2) value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Assistant</td>
<td>2) Become more diverse in thinking; 2) Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Director</td>
<td>Yes; sharing more vulnerable things</td>
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<td>Yes; with difficult family</td>
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<td>Yes; with marriage as an equalizer using a “special” talking piece. Using this process with family takes work to create this space; especially with a group not as connected. Start small with topics and amount of people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Getting Acquainted
- Opening Ceremony
- Introductions
- Check-In
- Why are we here?

## Building Relationships and Trust
- Values
- Guidelines
- Story-telling
- Questions

## Addressing Issues (The “IT”)
- Concerns
- Challenge
- Content
- Vision

## Taking Action
- Developing Plans
- Follow Through
- Check-Out
- Closing
Role of Keeper:
- Creates atmosphere of respect/safety
- Creates tone of hope & optimism
- Guides process to remain true to underlying values
- Clarifies unresolved issues to focus the circle’s energy and attention
- Participates as community member

Talking Piece:
- Helps to manage emotional climate
- Creates space for contributions of reserved individuals
- Promotes better listening and attention
- Spreads responsibility for communication & problem solving
- Encourages use of silence in process
- Reinforces principle of equality
- Item of significance

Circle Etiquette:
- Remain in the circle
- Respect the talking piece
- Speak respectfully
- Listen, do not interrupt
- Maintain confidentiality
- May pass
- Decisions are made by consensus

All decisions made in the circle process are done by consensus. Consensus means that those who come together for discussion and decision-making agree to listen to all perspectives and to be flexible in working toward a common agreement. Consensus does not mean unanimity. An individual may not agree with the general conclusion or opinion reached as the shared common position of the group, but they can live with it.

The Closing:
Ending the circle properly is as important as any other part of the process. In closing, the keeper needs to choose words, use tones and inflections and set a mood that is in keeping with the circle’s accomplishments. If the circle has not reached consensus, the keeper needs to note the accomplishments of the circle and set the tone for the next meeting. A circle can be seen as a journey, sometimes without an end. The work of the circle is improving friendships, encouraging participation, and engaging participants in taking responsibility for their growth and are oftentimes more important than arriving at a final solution.
Appendix C

**Demographic Questions:**
1. What is your gender?
2. What is your Ethnicity/Race?
3. Indicate your age range? (17-24; 25-29; 30-34; 40-44; 45 & over)
4. What is the zip code of your prior residence?
5. Do you have any prior experience with Restorative Justice or Talking Circles? If yes, please specify your involvement.
6. How many years have you lived in the Living Learning Community? (1 or 2)
7. What is your student status? (First-year; Sophomore; Junior; Senior; Doctoral)

**Talking Circles Impact Questions:**
8. I have a voice
9. I have the influence to get others involved to advocate in creating change
10. I am involved with campus-related initiatives
11. I understand my role to be civically responsible
12. I recognize my role to promote social justice
13. I promote the quality of life
14. I have developed the motivation and values to make a difference
15. I lead discussions on state, national, or global issues
16. I take action in addressing social problems
17. I support approaches that will make life more sustainable for people and the planet
18. I understand the importance of sharing the body of knowledge with others
19. I reprocess conversations to further stimulate positive discussions
20. I am an advocate for giving back (Paying it Forward)
21. I know how to effectively resolve disagreements
22. I make the best decisions

**Implementation of Talking Circles:**
23. I am prepared to implement talking circles in a living learning community
24. I am prepared to facilitate a talking circle in a living learning community
25. I need additional training to implement a talking circle in a living learning community
26. Talking circles will build stronger communities in living learning communities
27. I do not know what a talking circle is.
28. I enjoyed the interaction of all participants
Gender

![Pie chart showing gender distribution with 6 females and 10 males.]

Ethnicity/Race

![Pie chart showing ethnicity/race distribution with 2 Blacks, 1 Caucasian, and 13 Hispanics.]
## Talking Circle Impact Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (1)</th>
<th>Agree (2)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Disagree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (5)</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a voice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the influence to get others involved to advocate in creating change</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am involved with campus-related initiatives</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand my role to promote social justice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recognize my role to promote social justice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I promote the quality of life</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have developed the motivation and values to make difference</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lead the discussions on state, national, and global issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take action in addressing social problems</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support approaches that will make life more sustainable for people and the planet</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the importance of sharing the body of knowledge with others</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reprocess conversations to further stimulate positive discussions</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>9</td>
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### Implementation of Talking Circles

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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
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<th>Agree (2)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Disagree (4)</th>
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<td>TCs will build stronger communities in LLCs</td>
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<td>I enjoyed the interaction of all participants</td>
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Appendix D

Talking Circle – Part 2

**Demographic Questions:**

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your Ethnicity/Race?
3. Indicate your age range? (17-24; 25-29; 30-34; 40-44; 45 & over)
4. What is the zip code of your prior residence?
5. Do you have any prior experience with Restorative Justice or Talking Circles? If yes, please specify your involvement.
6. How many years have you lived in the Living Learning Community? (1 or 2)
7. What is your student status? (First-year; Sophomore; Junior; Senior; Doctoral)

**Talking Circles Impact Questions:**

8. I have a voice
9. I have the influence to get others involved to advocate in creating change
10. I am involved with campus-related initiatives
11. I understand my role to be civically responsible
12. I recognize my role to promote social justice
13. I promote the quality of life
14. I have developed the motivation and values to make a difference
15. I lead discussions on state, national, or global issues
16. I take action in addressing social problems
17. I support approaches that will make life more sustainable for people and the planet
18. I understand the importance of sharing the body of knowledge with others
19. I reprocess conversations to further stimulate positive discussions
20. I am an advocate for giving back (Paying it Forward)
21. I know how to effectively resolve disagreements
22. I make the best decisions

**Implementation of Talking Circles:**

23. I am prepared to implement talking circles in a living learning community
24. I am prepared to facilitate a talking circle in a living learning community
25. I need additional training to implement a talking circle in a living learning community
26. Talking circles will build stronger communities in living learning communities
27. The training provided me with the knowledge needed to facilitate a talking circle independently
28. I do not know what a talking circle is.
29. I learned something useful in this training that I will apply in my living learning community.
30. Name one specific thing you learned in this training
31. I enjoyed the interaction of all participants
32. I have been able to use the talking circles to create and maintain relationships in a living learning community.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (1)</th>
<th>Agree (2)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Disagree (4)</th>
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</table>
In the Talking Circle – Part 2 survey, participants were asked to name one specific thing you learned in this training: (1) how to communicate; (2) to listen; (3) show respect; (4) different types of Circles; (5) value; (6) voice is important; (7) how to use a Talking Circle.

Table 6

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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Appendix E

Jones Theory of Restorative Community Practices

1) Community Building – creating and maintaining through sharing and developing the dynamics, standards, and values within a common place.

2) Community Dynamics – a blend of the internal (academic) and external factors (i.e. family, work, etc.) that requires self-sufficiency.

3) Community Standards – acceptable conduct within the community in order to remain safe.

4) Community Values - beliefs and ideas shared by the community by utilizing skills and resources to develop personal and organizational purpose.