

**TRAINING IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:  
ENHANCING PRAXIS  
WITH PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS**

**THESIS**

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
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## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis I explore the use of praxis as a means of developing educators' collaborative abilities. The research is based on the development and design of two restorative justice training programs. The programs' delivery and their impact on two groups of public school educators are also examined. Group A included 20 educators from an elementary school, trained in the principles, interventions, and language of restorative justice. Group B included 11 educators from elementary, middle, and high schools, representing 7 district schools, trained to facilitating a community conference.

The effective use of praxis assumes that individuals involved in its practice are actively engaged in their social environment and are therefore able to assert their needs within that context. It also assumes they can reflect on their actions and are therefore able to co-operate within their social environment. My training programs made extensive use of a talking circle format, which provided the space for both experience and reflection. In this inquiry I suggest that those who can balance their ability to assert their needs and their ability to co-operate in a given social setting are individuals who are able to collaborate.

In developing my argument I use dialectics, such as assertion and co-operation, to support my conclusions. My study concludes that training in restorative justice, when linked with methods that support and model the use of praxis, will develop and improve educators' ability to be collaborative.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background to My Inquiry.....	2
Focus of My Study.....	3
Purpose of My Study.....	4
Scope of My Study.....	6
Assumptions.....	7
Definitions.....	7
Plan of Presentation.....	9
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	10
Doing: The Experiential Connection.....	11
Defining Experiential Learning.....	11
Definitions of Knowledge.....	12
The Objective Reality: Where the object finds the subject.....	13
The Subjective Self: Who is this that meets the object?.....	14
The Dialectic Relationship.....	15
Being the Subject of One’s Learning.....	17
Experiential Learning and the Community Conference.....	18
Dialectics and the Conferencing Process.....	18
Reflecting: The Creation of Dialogue.....	20
Defining Reflection.....	20
Reflective Outcomes.....	22
Dialogue.....	23
Reflection and Restorative Justice.....	24
Reflective Language Patterns.....	24
Reflection, Dialogue, and the Conference Process.....	25
Deciding: The Experiential Dilemma.....	26
Planning Effective Learning Experience.....	26
Change and Resistance to Change.....	28
Methods that Support Learners’ Deciding.....	30
Debriefing.....	30
Modeling.....	30
Role-playing.....	30
Story-telling or Narrative Practices.....	31
Talking Circle.....	31
Deciding and the Community Conference Process in Decisions.....	34

Changing: Finding Courage and Support.....	35
The Individual and Changing.....	35
The Helping Relationship.....	38
Changing and the Community Conference.....	40
The Function of Shame.....	41
The Collective Experience.....	42
New Doings: Experience Re-visited.....	42
The Paradoxical.....	43
Qualities and Skills to Effect Praxis.....	44
Flexibility.....	44
Trusting.....	45
Intuiting.....	46
Intentions.....	47
Respect.....	48
Summary of the Literature.....	49
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY.....	51
Group A: Elementary School Staff.....	51
Selection of the Elementary School Group.....	52
Design for Elementary School Setting.....	52
Providing the Initial Experience.....	53
From the General to the Specific.....	55
A Common Language for a Community.....	56
From the Specific Back to the General.....	57
Group B: School District Staff’s Facilitator Training.....	58
Training Committee.....	58
Shared Leadership.....	59
Selecting Participants for the School District Group.....	60
Developing a Screening Circle.....	60
Welcoming Circle.....	62
Working Group.....	62
Program and Module Design.....	63
Module Presentation.....	64
Closing Circle.....	67
Research Structure and Methods.....	67
Developing a Model.....	68
Pre-project Data Gathering, Group A.....	72
Post-project Data Gathering, Group A.....	73
Pre-project Data Gathering, Group B.....	74
Post-project Data Gathering, Group B.....	75
Analysis for Praxis.....	77
Similarities from data that Suggest Praxis.....	77
Differences from data that Suggest Praxis.....	78
4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS.....	81
Usefulness of the Methods.....	81

The Talking Circle.....	81
Role-Playing.....	83
Debriefing.....	84
Modeling versus Expertise.....	86
Value of Participants' Experience.....	88
Deepening their Listening Skills.....	88
Meeting Learners' Goals Through the Training Program.....	90
Realizing Praxis.....	91
Researcher's Experience.....	91
Action.....	92
Reflection.....	95
Conceptualization.....	96
Experimentation.....	96
Conclusions.....	98
Recommendations for Future Training and Research.....	101
Closing Reflection.....	103
 REFERENCES.....	 104
 APPENDIX A: Module 6.....	 113

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

A GIFT! This is the only word I can use to describe my involvement with the principles and philosophy of restorative justice. From my introduction to restorative justice through a facilitator's training program, to defining my studies at St. Francis Xavier University (St FX), and on to the privilege of training others in restorative principles, it has been a gift.

My personal growth and my reading in adult educational literature focus on two important aspects: the necessity of finding "my" voice (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Kaplan, 1995) and the value of developing dialogue with my students (Vella, 1994; Howe, 1963). The opportunity presented to me through this work with restorative justice enabled me to further develop my voice and to use it respectfully in dialogue with others. The structure and content of my research enabled me to involve myself in praxis, "doing, reflecting, deciding, changing and new doing" (Vella, 1994, p. 12). Energy begets energy. My master's research involved me in a community of individuals who were willing to explore the values and principles that I was studying and about which I was passionate. It was a delightful opportunity for growth and synergy far beyond what I could have hoped for when I started my studies.

My project provided me with the exciting opportunity to develop a comprehensive understanding and use of restorative principles and intervention within a community of people as it exists in a public school. Using a common language and approach to difficulties within a community of people is always a challenge, whether it is one's own family, a school, or a volunteer organization. Within the community of my



research, the principles of restorative justice provided both a common language and the potential for a common approach to solving difficulties.

In many countries, the use of restorative justice principles and interventions has grown to include not only the criminal justice system, but also other social agencies like public schools and the social welfare system. Its use in all of these is in an early developmental stage. My research into the use of restorative justice within a specific elementary school setting and with school staff from seven district schools broadens the scope of adult educational literature within the field of restorative justice. Furthermore, it may point towards how the use of adult educational principles can enhance the development of restorative justice principles in diverse social support settings.

### **Background to My Inquiry**

The research project had two organizational branches; one involved the local school system and the other involved the local restorative justice program. In February of 1999, Local Beach School District (here after called simply, the school district) together with the Local Community Justice Program (here after called, Local Justice Program), the local restorative justice organization, trained an initial group of facilitators for formal restorative justice interventions (community and family circle conferences). I was fortunate to be a member of this first group of trained community conference facilitators.

By June 1999, a district policy was established and the Assistant Superintendent asked administrators if their schools were interested in being pilot schools for the school district's restorative justice program. During the 1999-2000 school year, Local Beach Elementary School (hereafter called Beach School) served as one of four pilot schools in the district. The school's two trained facilitators, myself (school counselor) and the youth

care worker, were involved in two family circle conferences and one large group class/circle intervention. Apart from a few staff members who were involved in the above interventions, the staff's involvement during this first year was limited. There was a short presentation to the staff from the District's Restorative Justice Committee and there were occasional informal discussions between staff and the school's trained facilitators. After these initial attempts to develop restorative justice interventions as a viable alternative to traditional discipline methods, I proposed a restorative justice project (which I explained I would use as part of my degree research) to the school's administrator. After receiving the administrator's approval I presented my proposal to the school staff. There was a keen interest shown in support of my proposed project at Beach School. The restorative justice project at the elementary school began in the fall of 2000 and was completed in May 2001.

I had a role with each of the organizational branches involved in this research. Alongside my work as an area counselor for the school district, I also volunteer with the Local Justice Program as a facilitator and a member of their training committee. In the fall of 2000 the training committee began work to create a training program for new facilitators. Again, the Local Justice Program and the school district's goal was to combine the training of both community volunteers and school district personnel. In the spring of 2001 we ran a 10-week training program.

### **Focus of My Study**

The focus of my work, as a counselor and educator, has always been to link an individual's cognitive understanding (the head), to his or her emotional experience (the heart). Effective therapy is a combination of cognitive understanding and insight with

affective (emotional) connections (Kelly, 1997). I see this same combination occurring through the process of praxis. Similarly, in educational and business settings the concept of emotional intelligence is currently gaining recognition (Goleman, 1998; Kohn, 1993). My academic experience and personal learning journey has led me to seek experiences that demonstrate a respect for both my cognitive and affective needs as a learner. After my initial training as a facilitator for community conferences, I became curious as to how this process of combining the cognitive with the affective might be used to have an impact on the individual practices of educators and, ultimately, the culture of the institutions involved.

This sense of praxis, of the cognitive and the affective, is illustrated by frustrating moments I have experienced in my academic career; times when I felt as if I was dying of thirst and everyone around me was talking about water, but I found no experience of water in what I was doing. “Words have meaning only when they point to the experience which they represent” (Satir, 1972). I wondered: could training and implementation of restorative practices help educators recognize the power that experience can bring to learning and make them thirsty for more?

My research focused on closing the gap between the existing understanding and valuing of praxis in the field of adult education and how that understanding could facilitate the growth of praxis in individuals trained in the principles and interventions of restorative justice.

### **Purpose of My Study**

The inquiry was created on the basis of my learning goal: to explore if training in restorative principles and interventions can help school staff trust the value of

experiential learning and reflective abilities for themselves. I believe the two aspects of finding voice (Belenky et al., 1986) and of developing dialogue with learners (Vella, 1994), which were important in my personal growth, are also important for individuals developing their reflective and experiential abilities. I also observe, directly and through the literature, that often schools and many educators tend to devalue experiential learning (see Gatto, 1992). Thus, questions I developed for this inquiry were: Can the use of restorative justice principles and practices help increase the valuing of experiential learning? Does training in restorative justice help develop the use of praxis for the school staff within the school's culture? My intent in doing training in restorative justice was that through the restorative interventions adult learners may develop a clearer set of distinctions that allow them to connect more fully with their own experiential learning and in their relationships with others. Thus, my purpose for the research was to examine whether this type of praxis occurred. If this is the case, school staff would be in a stronger position to connect their students to the students' own experiential learning.

Research demonstrates that reflective and experiential educators tend to include others in creating solutions to problems and conflicts, to be more collaborative (Ferry & Ross-Gordon, 1998). Moreover, collaborative educators function “with” their clients by appreciating the relational quality of the learning experience (Robertson, 1996) and tend to respond more effectively to conflict (Kearns, Pickering, & Twist, 1992). I designed a pre- and a post-questionnaire and inventory to assess participants’ knowledge and valuing of praxis in their work, and their responses and resourcefulness in dealing with conflict. In designing the inventories I draw upon the ideas of Fray, 1996, Hunt and Gow, 1984, and Kilmann and Thomas, 1974.

Following the principles of qualitative research methods, (Kuhne & Quigley, 1997; Peters, 1997; Quigley, 1997) I chose a methodology that would deepen my understanding of my own practice, particularly how the use of restorative justice practices leads to changes in the use of praxis and an educator's responses to conflict. I also combine a needs assessment with pre-project questionnaire and inventory to establish base lines for this project as advocated by Vella, Berardinelli, and Burrow (1998). The post-project assessment repeats the questionnaire and inventory used during the pre-project, and is augmented by my own reflections through journaling.

### **Scope of the Study**

The participants in this project are all staff members in a public school system. I conducted their training in restorative justice principles and practices in two separate groups with significantly different goals and using slightly different curriculum and formats for each group. All participants had limited previous exposure to restorative justice philosophy and no formal training in the principles and intervention of restorative justice.

The first group, Group A, comprised 20 staff members from a local elementary school. Group A's training took place during assigned staff meeting times over a 7-month period of the school year and included 10 sessions. This group included the school's principal, teaching staff, youth and child care worker, and teacher assistants. All staff were given the opportunity to learn and use the informal interventions of affective statements and questions (Wachtel, 1999), and other restorative language patterns (Chelsom-Gossen, 1992). Classroom teachers were also introduced to the semi-formal interventions of small impromptu group discussions (Wachtel), and talking circles

(Baldwin, 1994; Pranis, Stuart, & Wedge, 2000) and were encouraged to use these interventions.

The second group, Group B, comprised 11 staff members from district school, trained as facilitators for the school district's Restorative Justice Program. Group B's training took place with other volunteers from the Local Justice Program over a 10-week period and included aspects of group A's training and also training to facilitate a formal community/family circle conference.

### **Assumptions**

In my work and life, I intend (purpose) to ask others to do only that which I am willing to do myself. This inclination contributes to several assumptions I had as I began my work in this study. I assumed that if I led by example, modeling the values and skills to be imparted, learners would be more willing and able to connect these qualities with their own experiences and learn from them. I assumed, that, as learners were given the opportunity to reflect, to "find their voice," and to experience dialogue with others, they would make progress in their use of praxis and collaboration. I also assumed that the use of a talking circle format would create the "space" for experience and dialogue to take place.

### **Definition of Terms**

To clarify my use in this thesis I define several key words or concepts from restorative justice, (due to its relative newness) and adult education, (due to of the variety of meanings to be found in the literature).

Restorative justice interventions are based on the belief that misbehaviour is a break in a relationship, not merely the breaking of rules or laws. The purpose of

restorative practices is to mend the relationship damaged by the misbehaviour or crime. Restorative practices include a range of formal and informal interventions. The formal interventions are called community or family conferences involving both the victim and offender, together with their families or supporters and other school or community members, under the direction of a trained conference facilitator. The conference facilitator is an individual who guides the process; this person must fully understand the process, and how to maintain the integrity of the process and the safety of the participants. The purpose of the conference is to help the parties involved understand who and how individuals have been affected, to develop a space for empathy and understanding, and to create a resolution agreement that will help repair the harm and damage caused by the offense and provide reconciliation between those involved (Braithwaite, 1996; Wachtel, 1999; Zehr, 1990).

Although not usually associated with a community conference circle, a talking piece was often used in the context of my training program. A talking piece is used to facilitate respectful dialogue (Pranis, Stuart, & Wedge., 2000). Baldwin (1994) defines it as “a designated object that is passed hand to hand and grants the holder of the piece the chance to speak without interruption”(p. 67).

A focal point in my study is praxis, a Greek word, meaning action with reflection. I like Vella’s (1994) description of it being a dance between inductive, (particular to general) and deductive (general to particular) forms of learning.

Finally, I use the term collaborating or collaboration to mean developing dialogue between two or more individuals with the intention to create (Peters, 1997), and in the

process manifesting the deepest respect for learners and their right to be the subjects of their own learning.

### **Plan of Presentation**

Following this introductory chapter, I review the literature in Chapter 2. Vella's (1994) description of praxis is the basis for organizing my review of the literature into five sections: doing; reflecting; deciding; changing; and new doings. Within the first four sections, I expand my themes and make clear distinctions between the literature related to adult education and restorative justice. However, in the final section I approach the literature with a multi-disciplinary intention, and I do not identify the discipline of the referenced literature.

I proceed in Chapter 3 to describe my inquiry and my process throughout the project, including my own reflections and actions. I discuss my intention and rationale for the intervention and the direction my inquiry took. I expand on both the method of instruction and reasons for the data collection tools used and the results from my data collection.

In my final chapter, Chapter 4, I discuss and interpret my results and then draw conclusions and make recommendations for further studies in this area.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The intention of this review is to summarize the literature concerning praxis and the community conference process used in restorative justice, and to demonstrate the unique relationship between the two. I begin this chapter by discussing my use of praxis as a template for my review of the literature. It is important for the reader to recognize that in my examination I consider my discussion of praxis from two view points: internalizing (intra-personal) the individual and his or her relationship with self; and externalizing (inter-personal) the individual's relationship with other individuals and their world. I also expect that throughout this discussion the reader will come to recognize the cyclic nature of praxis.

*Praxis* is of Greek origin and means action with reflection. Vella (1994) introduces praxis as a “beautiful dance of inductive and deductive forms of learning” (p. 4). Inductive reasoning begins with the particular and moves to the general whereas deductive reasoning begins with the general and moves to the particular. This dance or movement can also be thought of as a flow between divergent and convergent ways of thinking (Heron & Reason, 1998). The use of praxis finds the individual in his or her social context and provides the opportunity to strengthen that connection (Boyce, Franklin, & Willets, 1995). An old prairie saying of Swedish origin provides a useful metaphor: “How can I ‘yump’ when I have no place to ‘stood’?” Praxis gives learners a place to “stood,” a place to begin from as they connect with their learning. Vella names praxis as: doing, reflecting, deciding, changing, and new doings. I use these five definitions of praxis as headings to guide my discussion. In the “Doing” and “Reflecting”

sections I discuss aspects of experiential learning and critical reflection from the current literature in adult education and contemporary sources. In the “Deciding” and “Changing” sections I continue to draw heavily from current adult educational sources but broaden my scope to include a wider range of educational materials that include progressive sources in psychology and counseling. I close each of these four sections with a brief discussion relating the section to the principles and practices of the community conferencing process. I use the current literature on restorative justice from the recognized leaders in this developing field. In “New Doings,” I close this review by synthesizing the two disciplines of adult education and restorative justice. My use of Vella’s template approaches the literature review process as a dance between inductive and deductive forms of learning.

### **Doing: The Experiential Connection**

In this section, I discuss experiential learning, the elements involved in experiential learning, and the knowledge created through this process. I close this section by examining its relationship with restorative justice principles and how the community justice conference is often mirrored in experiential learning’s concepts and practices.

### **Defining Experiential Learning**

Lewis and Williams (1994) explain, “In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing” (p. 5). The Thorndike-Barnhart Dictionary (1957) defines experience as “what has happened to one; what is or has been met with or felt; anything or everything observed, done, or lived through” (p. 348). For the adult educator three facts are apparent: the presence of an individual, some type of

objective reality, and an action or a relationship between the two. Freire (1970) describes this phenomenon:

There would be no human action if there were no objective reality, no world to be the “not I” of the person and to challenge them; just as there would be no human action if humankind were not a “project,” if he or she were not able to transcend himself or herself, if one were not able to perceive reality and understand it in order to transform it. (p. 35)

It is these two realities (the subject and the object), the relationship between them, and the learning produced through their interactions that form the elements of my discussion on experiential learning. Kolb (1984) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). In his definition of experiential learning, Kolb sees three important aspects for the experiential educator: the process is adaptive, with no defined outcomes; the knowledge is in itself a transformational process, not facts to be transmitted; and, this learning changes both the subjective and the objective (p. 38). These thoughts are echoed by Freire (1998):

The process of knowing and the process of growing have everything to do with each other. Or even: the process of knowing implies that of growing. It is not possible to know without a certain kind of growth. It is not possible to grow without a certain kind of knowledge. (p. 91)

### **Definitions of Knowledge**

Barnett and Caffarella (1994) state that experiential knowing is one of three major forms of knowledge—theoretical, empirical, and experiential. Postle (1993) believes that “attending to the whole of experience appears to lead to the generation of realistic, useful and relevant knowledge” (p. 27). Kolb (1984) writes, “Knowledge is formed by individuals. To understand learning fully, we must understand the nature and forms of human knowledge and the processes whereby this knowledge is created and recreated” (p. 99).

Adult educators' understanding of learning and knowledge continues to grow and change. Jackson and MacIsaac (1994) describe this change as:

A shift in our view of the nature of knowledge and the processes of knowledge acquisition—from knowledge as “conclusive and objective” to knowledge as “tentative and socially constructed,” and from knowledge acquisition as learning units of information and basic skills to knowledge acquisition as gaining “in-depth understanding” and critical thinking skills. (p. 18)

This description could also be referred to as knowledge synthesis, which suggests that any learning involves the synthesis of previous knowledge and the new information. This view maintains that learning and the creation of new knowledge can never be separated from the individual's unique experiential past (Caffarella & Lee, 1994).

Schön's (1983) terms “knowing in action” and “reflection in action” are key elements in the experiential learning process (Barnett & Caffarella, 1994). In *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky et al. (1986) discuss types of knowledge, beginning with received knowledge and concluding with constructed knowledge. Heron and Reason (1998) discuss four kinds of knowledge: experiential; presentational; propositional; and practical. They define experiential knowledge in this way: “Knowing is through direct face-to-face encounter with person, place or thing, it is knowing through empathy and resonance, and is almost impossible to put into words” (p. 3).

It is this experiential knowing that emerges through the meeting of the objective and the subjective, and I now turn to these two elements.

**Objective Reality: Where the Object Finds the Subject.**

In simple terms, the objective reality is the problem and the setting (Vella, 1994). In action learning theory the focus is to find the right problem. This is done by a process of reexamining and agreeing on a redefined problem (Cranton, 1996). Thus, the way into

the particular of the objective is by problem-posing (Freire, 1970) where individuals begin “to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves” (p.64). This world can be in the extremis of a concentration camp or in accidental and routinely human events (Williamson, 1998). However, the needed “object” for learning will not be found or experienced in a “banking” form of education, where value is assigned to pure knowledge, where the learner and the scholar are disconnected, and where learning and education are the activity of bestowing knowledge by those who consider themselves knowledgeable (see Freire, p. 53; also see Boyce et al., 1995)

### **Subjective Self: Who is the Self Who Meets the Object?**

Who is this subjective self; who is this one having the experience? (Reason, 1993). Clarke (1999) suggests the concepts of the self, like other accepted truths, continue to evolve and transform themselves. She believes that the accepted concept of the self in modern times has been the unitary self. Clarke states, “I think Carl Rogers (1961) articulates this modern self most clearly; quoting Kierkegaard, he proposes that the goal of life is ‘to be that self which one truly is’ (p. 166)” (p. 40). She suggests that Rogers is putting forth the accepted norm for the self of the day, that of the authentic self—a self with a core to be discovered, which assumes the individual has the power to make that discovery. Peck (1987) uses the term rugged individualism and, like Clarke, challenges the effectiveness of making and giving the individual sole power or agency. Pipher (1997) suggests that, in the pursuit of the authentic self, many have left their basic morality and have stepped into narcissism.

In postmodern thinking, the self tends to be thought of as non-unitary. Chovanec (1998) suggests, “There is, however, a growing body of literature that leads us to question theories of unified self and that introduces the notion of unconscious learning processes” (p. 307). Clark (1999) states, “This self is non-unitary in the sense that there is no single, core self that exists separate and unaffected by its sociocultural context” (p. 42). Gilligan (1997) defines the self as relational and names the three principles of beingness, belongingness and relatedness. These are experienced as a felt center in the body; expanded feelings of belonging to field; and connection, interaction, and mental diversity. Bugental (1965) writes, “Clinical evidence is mounting that for most of us the phenomenological reality is not a single Self but several Selves” (p. 216). Again, for Clarke the model of the nonunitary self opens the possibility for a subjectivity that can be challenged by culture and divided between experience and interpretation. Thus, the agency of control is shifting from the autonomy of the self to an agency that is both affected and affecting.

Whether the self is unitary or non-unitary in nature, Reason (1993) accepts the definition of the person (self) as a “fundamental spiritual reality, a distinct presence in the world” (p. 7); this definition includes the two elements of which I have been discussing, the subjective and the objective. I now turn to the relationship of these two elements.

### **The Dialectic Relationship**

Reason (1993) offers this reminder of the paradoxical nature between two apparent opposites like the subjective and the objective.

While traditional logic creates a dichotomy, a dialectical ontology embraces the paradox of opposites. Dialectics involves a recognition of the inseparability of two apparent opposites, and an exploration of the interplay between these interdependent

poles, because “what lies between the poles is more substantial than the poles themselves (Watts, 1963).” (p. 11)

In Kolb’s (1984) description of Lewin’s, Dewey’s, and Piaget’s models of experiential learning, attention is drawn to the fact that in each of these models there are dialectics, a tension and conflict between opposing ways of dealing with the objective. Kolb suggests that learning is the product of resolving these tensions. Lewin’s model has two sets of conflict—the concrete and the abstract followed by observation and action (the precursor to Kolb’s model). In Dewey’s view, the significant conflict was between impulse or emotions and reason. For Piaget it was the twin process of affecting the external world (objective) with ideas and integrating experiences into one’s existing (subjective) conceptual framework.

Kolb (1984) develops this theme of dialectic within his own model and he too describes twin dialectic sets, the dimensions of intention and extension and the dimensions of apprehension and comprehension. For this discussion, I focus on the dimensions of apprehension and comprehension. Apprehension is the “here-and-now” element, the present that is unfolding and is timeless. Comprehension is a record of the past, a linear process that seeks to define the future. Kolb states:

Apprehension of experience is a personal subjective process that cannot be known by others except by the communication to them of the comprehensions that we use to describe our immediate experience. Comprehension, on the other hand, is an objective social process. (p. 105).

Both of these dimensions are equally important in recognizing a dialectic “in which contradictions and conflicts are borne out of both logic and emotion in a thesis and antithesis of mutually antagonistic convictions” (p. 102).

### **Being the Subject of One's Own Learning**

Vella (1994) makes the important distinction between being an object for the wishes of others and being a subject—a decision maker. Wheelis (1973) states, “If one’s destiny is shaped by manipulation one has become more of an object, less of a subject, and has lost freedom” (p. 104). In viewing learners as subjects Vella (1994) also suggests that the distinction between their suggestions and their decisions—between the consultative voice (a suggestion) and a deliberative voice (a decision)—is of critical importance. This distinction helps provide clarity to the relationship. She also offers a practical guide in helping learners to be the subject of their own learning: “Don’t ever do what the learner can do; don’t ever decide what the learner can decide” (p. 13)

To be the subject of one’s own learning is to move the individual beyond alienation (Freire, 1970; Reason, 1993). The experiential educator begins with the particular, the individual and his or her experience of the problem or concern. By beginning with the particular of a learner and his or her experience; a pedagogy of *with* the learner can be created, and not to or for the learner (Freire, 1970, Kilmann & Thomas, 1974). This pedagogy of *with* is twofold: it speaks of the relationship of the teacher with the student (inter-personal); and it speaks of the relationship of the individual with him or her self (intra-personal). Individuals practising the pedagogy of *with* cannot separate themselves as the knower from the known. Brookfield (1998) maintains that “experiences are constructed by us as much as they happen to us: the meaning schemes and perspectives we employ to assign significance to events shape fundamentally how we experience them” (p. 287). He challenges the notion that the individual can stand separate



from the experience. For example, to be the subject of my own learning is to make decisions. It is, in my own words:

To abandon to the unknown  
 To flee towards the unfamiliar  
 To escape within the dance of others  
 TO...  
 Raise my hands, stand, breathe  
 YES!            YES!            YES!    (Osborn, 1995)

### **Experiential Learning and the Community Conference Process**

For the trained facilitator in restorative justice the above discussion echoes the realities of the community conference process. There is the subjective reality—the individuals involved: the one who was harmed, the one who caused the harm, and the support group for each of these individuals. The collection of these individuals represents the community. There is the objective reality—the offence/harm, crime (in criminal justice terms), or misbehaviour (in public school terminology). And there is the relationship (the dialectic) between the subjective and the objective that allows for the transformation of both. From adult educational pedagogy, the community conference is mirrored in action learning methodology, which utilizes the three main elements: the problems that people identify; people who accept responsibility for taking action on a particular issue; and colleagues who support and challenge one another in the process of resolving the problems (Lewis & Williams, 1994).

### **Dialectics and the Conferencing Process**

A number of dialectics are present within restorative justice and the community conferencing process. On a philosophical level there is the tension between permissive and punitive approaches to justice (Wachtel, 1999). Within the conferencing process there are the conflicting needs of the victim and offender, and the dialectic of the

apprehension and comprehension dimensions (as in the discussion on experiential learning). What emerges through the conferencing process is a flow between the dimensions of apprehension and comprehension. The dimensions of apprehension and comprehension are of critical importance in the conferencing process.

As the conference develops the facilitator asks questions to evoke the event, the problem in the comprehensive dimension. Then by deepening the questions and process, the facilitator elicits a shift to the apprehensive dimension (McDonald, Moore, O'Connell & Thorsborne, 1995). This flow is comparable to Vella's (1994) references to praxis as the flow between inductive and deductive. Brookfield (1987), in discussing the use of questioning, encourages the educator to follow a line of questioning that is not concerned with eliciting information but facilitating the reflection of events. Brookfield's suggestions also support the pattern encouraged in a community conference of relating questions to particular events and actions, working from the particular to the general, and being conversational. Beginning with the particular of the past record allows for rapport to develop (e.g., Dilts, 1996; Goleman, 1998) as the individuals tell their stories (e.g., Johnson & Prutzman, 1997; Randall, 1995). As the stories are told and the questions lead to the here-and-now of the apprehensive dimension, individuals' emotions are activated in both the familiar and new. They are familiar in the sense that the individuals have already experienced them from the problem, but new, and at times unexpected, because they are hearing these feelings through the stories of the other affected individuals (McDonald et al., 1995). The possibility exists here for the individuals to see each other as subjects who both experience the "objective," the problem, the crime, or the concern. In Freire's (1970) words, this is transformative; it enacts humanization. Whereas the

individuals who entered the community conference were likely alienated and saw each other as object, as oppressor and oppressed, they are now gifted with an opportunity to wrestle with the dialectic of the flow: between the past record and the here-and-now feelings; between the meaning they had previously assigned to the problem/crime/concern and the opportunity to rename it. In Freirean terms “each individual wins back the right to say his or her own words, to name the world” (p. 15).

Thus the flow of the dialectic in the community conference is an example of the differences in knowing by apprehension and by comprehension. It is what Kolb (1984) points to as “the most critical for our understanding the nature of knowledge in its relationship to learning from experience” (p. 105). The conference process evokes what Kolb (1984) has named as the learning of personal and social knowledge. I have examined and defined the elements of experience, of apprehension; I continue by discussing how reflection transforms these elements into dialogue and learning, into comprehension.

### **Reflecting: The Creation of Dialogue**

In this section, I discuss how the development of reflection is central to developing dialogue for the individual on an intra-personal and inter-personal level, and how both processes are encouraged and used with the community conferencing process.

#### **Defining Reflection**

Many adult educators have written on reflection and defined it in many ways. One uniting theme is the recognition of the cyclic relationship between reflection and action. Boyd and Fales (1983) define reflection as “the process of creating and clarifying the meaning of experience (present or past) in terms of self (self in relation to self and self in

relation to the world)” (p. 101). They look to a change in conceptual perspective as the outcome of the process. They also define the components of the reflective process as:

1. A sense of inner discomfort.
2. Identification or clarification of the concern.
3. Openness to new information from internal and external sources with the ability to observe and take in from a variety of perspectives.
4. Resolution, expressed as “integration,” “coming together,” “acceptance of self-reality,” and “creative synthesis.”
5. Establishing continuity of self with past, present and future.
6. Deciding whether to act on the outcome of the reflective process. (p. 106)

Dewey (1933) defines reflection as “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends” (p. 9). Mezirow (1998) develops the distinction between reflection and critical reflection. He says that reflection as “a ‘turning back’ on experience, can mean many things: simple awareness of an object, event or state, including awareness of a perception, thought, feeling, disposition, intention, action, or of one’s habits of doing these things” (p. 185). He defines critical reflection as “making an assessment of what is being reflected upon.” He continues saying that it may be “either implicit, as when we mindlessly choose between good and evil because of our assimilated values, or explicit, as when we bring the process of choice into awareness to examine and assess the reasons for making a choice” (p. 186).

Cranton (1996) lists Mezirow’s three types of reflection, (content, process, and premise) as a useful distinction in any discussion on reflection. Brookfield (1987) asserts that the key components of critical reflection are an awareness of one’s assumptions, challenging those assumptions, an awareness of how the context alters behaviour, exploring and imagining alternatives, and analysis and action (p. 8).

Cranton (1996) credits Schön as having an influential and alternative view on reflection by seeing it as an unarticulated and intuitive process. Ferry and Ross-Gordon (1998) argue that, “a root notion of Schön’s (1983) epistemology of practice is that reflective thought is a dialectic process that incorporates action with experience to uncover one’s underlying assumption of reality” (p. 100). Schön (1983) speaks of two types of reflection, both closely linked to the earlier discussion on praxis—reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action functions in the comprehension dimension of the past, whereas reflection-in-action fits the apprehension dimension of the here-and-now.

In Kolb’s (1984) model, reflection is part of the dialectic of his intention and extension dimensions. In the intention dimension the experience is transformed by what it means to the experiencer, whereas in the extension dimension it is linked to abstract conceptualizations that are tested in practice. I give the final word on defining critical reflection to Freire (1970), who says, “True reflection leads to action but that action will only be genuine praxis if there is critical reflection on its consequences” (p. 41)

### **Reflective Outcomes**

Does reflection or critical reflection in itself lead to the transformational learning that so many adult educators speak of? Cranton (1996) recognizes that “not all reflection leads to transformation. Sometimes we confirm or consolidate our beliefs. Sometimes we learn something new” (p. 116). Brookfield (1998) takes the question a step further when he acknowledges that “we all know people who make disastrously wrong readings of the meaning of the crises through which they pass” (p. 286). Atherton (2001) continues this

line of questioning when he states, “In the real world it [reflection] is just as likely to lead to self-justification, self-indulgence, or self-pity” (p. 2).

Is there a missing piece that will produce the outcomes adult educators hope for with critical reflection? Courtenay, Merriam and Reeves (1998) define “meaning-making” as central to the process of critical reflection leading to transformational learning. Courtenay et al. (1998) use five categories in the meaning-making process that help identify the possible missing piece.

1. Initial Reaction Period
2. Catalytic Experience
3. Phase I – Exploration and Experimentation
4. Phase II – Consolidation of New Meaning
5. Phase II – Stabilization of New Perspective

In their research, the length of time respondents remained in the initial reaction period varied from 6 months to 5 years. They characterize the catalytic experience as “a discrete, somewhat isolated occurrence, it emanates from a support system of family and friends, support groups, and/or spirituality” (p. 72). In their model it is this catalytic experience that is identified as helping the individual make positive changes through critical reflection and that dialogue may support or precipitate a catalytic experience.

### **Dialogue**

Reflection is a flowing back and forth between what an experience was and what it meant to the individual—the externalizing and internalizing process. As the very word reflect implies, it is having something come back to you (Boyd & Fales, 1983). Similarly, Howe (1963) describes dialogue as “a reciprocal relationship in which each party ‘experiences the other side’ so that their communication becomes a true address and response in which each informs and learns” (p. 50). For Freire (1970) dialogue is the

precondition for one's true humanity. Dialogue provides an opportunity for humanity to "show up." He explains, "Dialogue is the encounter between men [*sic*], mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (p. 69). Baldwin (1994) states: "In dialogue there is free and creative exploration of complex and subtle issues, a deep listening to one another and suspending of one's own views" (p. 130). Bohm, Factor, and Garrett (1991) suggest that dialogue provides a space where individuals give attention to "slowing down the process of thought in order to be able to observe it while it is actually accruing" (p. 4). Bohm et al. continue by breaking the word "dialogue" down into its root meanings of "dia" meaning through and "logos" meaning the word or the meaning of the word. Freire (1970) expands these thoughts:

As we attempt to analyze dialogue as human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly, we must seek its constitutive elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world. (p. 68)

Freire sees dialogue as immensely more than just communication; it is transformation of one's world. Similarly, for restorative justice the reflection and dialogue that are evoked through restorative interventions are transformational.

### **Reflection and Restorative Justice**

Dialogue is key to promoting reflections. Reflection in restorative justice is an invitation to understand what a particular act meant to others (Ross, 1992). I consider two aspects in this invitation to understand: language patterns and the conference process.

**Reflective language patterns.** Chellsum-Gossen (1992), in the context of her work with restorative principles, develops a number of language patterns to use to

encourage students to reflect on their experiences. Based on her work with Glasser's model of control theory, she has developed the concept of a restitution triangle: on one side is, "Stabilize the Identity"; on the second side is, "Validate the Misbehaviour"; and on the third side is, "Seek the Belief" (p. 103). Each of the sides has an associated statement from control theory and a series of questions to help the learner reflect on the experience that he or she and the educator are examining. The language patterns connected to each side of the triangle are designed to return the locus of control back to the individual and away from the circumstances that the individual finds him or herself in.

**Reflection, dialogue and the conference process.** The reflection of the conferencing process, as with First Nations circle practice, places the problem or concern—and not the person—at the center of the circle as the object of reflection (Pennell, 1999; Pranis, 1998; Ross, 1996). When the problem (offence) is in the center, and not the individual who caused the harm (offence), that individual becomes an equal member with that circle and in essence with the community (Pranis, 1998). The pedagogy of with is created and dialogue is possible (Freire, 1970).

Braithwaite (1996) states that "restorative justice should restore harmony with a remedy grounded in dialogue which takes account of underlying injustices" (p. 5). Pranis (1998) suggests that community involves balancing the needs of the self or individual with the needs of the group. She concludes that "conferencing fits nicely into this concept of commitments beyond self which honour both individual and group needs using a dialogue process involving the key parties to determine those commitments" (p. 2). To



balance these needs and following Vella's (1994) description of praxis, experience (action) and reflection leads to deciding.

### **Deciding: The Experiential Dilemma**

In this section, I examine: decision-making in terms of planning effective learning experiences, change and resistance to change, methods to help learners embrace their responsibility to decide, and the role of a community conferencing process in decisions.

### **Planning Effective Learning Experiences**

Two aspects that can improve the effectiveness of planning learning experiences are considering the characteristics of adult learners and the influence of systemic context on learning. Much has been written on the needs and characteristics of adult learners. These can be summarized in five statements: acknowledge and use adults' existing experiences and knowledge; recognize the different approaches that adults use in their learning; respect their responsibility and desire to be actively involved in their learning; provide opportunities for the affiliation needs of learners to be met; and acknowledge the complex nature and content of adult lives (Barnett & Caffarella, 1994).

Caffarella and Lee (1994) suggest three guiding principles to consider in planning for experiential learning and the use of praxis. The first principle is that effective experiential methods are ways to connect the learners' existing knowledge with new knowledge. The second principle involves the relationship between the teacher and the learner, and a shift in the power base whereby the learner assumes more responsibility for his or her learning. The third principle looks to the transfer of learning. To support this transfer they recommend educators consider: simulation potential, how closely the

instruction and application are matched; and knowledge richness, the quality of the information being provided.

Vella, Berardinelli, and Burrow (1998) list seven steps in the planning process as who, why, when, where, what for, what, and how. Vella (1994) stresses that these seven steps “honour the fact that we begin with the learners as subjects of this learning process” (p. 23). Furthermore, the teaching of individual adults rarely takes place outside of a social or organizational context, be it an educational institution, workplace or homeplace. Each social and organizational context comes with a set of expectations (Jackson & MacIsaac, 1994) and a power structure that need to be considered (Cervero & Wilson, 1999; Newman, 2000). Cervero and Wilson (1994) suggest that planners often make the mistake of trying to use the same generic procedures in all situations; that is, they tend to have a “naïve view of the relationship between planner, action and social context” (p. 252). They identify four concepts that are helpful for planners to consider in the course of the planning process: power, interests, negotiation, and responsibility.

The concept of the learning organization is a useful format to help organize educator planning in a systemic way (Marsick & Watkins, 1996). Senge (Kleiner, Robert, Ross, Senge & Smith, 1994) identifies five disciplines that are essential for a learning organization: team learning; shared vision; mental models; personal mastery; and systems thinking. Aretz and Linard (2000) support Senge’s claim that the fifth discipline (systems thinking) is the cornerstone, often overlooked by planners. Cervero and Wilson (1999) support this claim; they challenge the concept of planning from a learner-centered approach, which often views the system as an empty container. They state, “Adult education always happens in places that have material existence, where socially

organized relations of power define both the possibilities for action as well as the meaning of the learning for all stakeholders” (p. 34).

If educational planners make the mistake of viewing the organizational context as an empty container, the organizational context often behaves as stewards for the status quo by resisting innovations (Conzemius & Conzemius, 1996). It is through dialogue and inquiry that this tension can be addressed (Marsick & Watkins, 1996). Key for Cervero and Wilson (1994) is “knowing who has what information relevant to the program, who has a legitimate stake in the outcome, and how to involve them in the relevant parts of the planning” (p. 263).

### **Change and Resistance to Change**

Krupp (1995) lists three types of change: developmental (continuous), situational, and discontinuous. Developmental changes include the tasks of early adult life when decisions concerning occupation, marriage, and lifestyle are made, and continue through the tasks of middle and late adulthood. The second and third types of change do not give the same opportunities for preparation. Situational change is alteration people can imagine that may or may not ever happen—such as planning to move to a new city or change one’s career. Discontinuous change would fit the description of traumatic events—such as a serious traffic accident or being physically assaulted (Schiraldi, 2000).

Change is often accompanied with resistance. In his discussion on facilitating change in others, Bertram (2000) calls on educators and managers to remember that “real change is personal, it can’t be ordered or legislated” (p. 1). He suggests that most individuals tend to move through seven stages: denial, resistance/fight, resignation, depression, exploration, acceptance, and integration (p. 1). Corey and Corey (1992)

suggest that even individual and groups who are eager to learn experience some initial resistance, which may manifest in complaints about “inconsequential” matters. They stress that because resistance can be a result of fearful expectations, resistance must be respected. They state, “If leaders do not respect the member’s resistance, they are really not respecting the members themselves” (p. 147).

Dilts (1996) encourages managers and educators to look for the “positive intentions” or unmet needs when encountering resistance. In Dilts’ model, resistance is seen as a gift that will help the educator or manager to work more effectively with learners. It is based on the assumption that the “map is not the territory” (p. 153), that the individual experience of the world is different from the world itself. Therefore, the individual is not responding to the world itself, but to his or her map or assumptions about the world. This view allows the educator or planner to get curious about the needs of others and thus serves as a doorway to praxis with individuals.

In her exploration on human dialogue, Kaplan (1995) provides an interesting image of this process:

These confused agitations differentiate into two fundamental types of energy—the aggressive energies of growth, expansion and exploration and the libidinal energies of attachment, rootedness, and safety. Because the basic mother-infant dialogue endows him [*sic*] with a variety of manageable affects and emotions, the baby will gradually find the courage to extend himself beyond the now familiar infant-mother orbit and begin to become a participating member of the larger social order. (p. 26)

Crawford (1995), quoting Fox, points out that “images are closer to our experiences than words” (p. 59). Even though Kaplan’s description here is for a mother and child relationship, this image summarizes some of the required attitudes and qualities that must be present during the deciding process. The educator should expect and allow for the expression of strong emotions, recognize the conflict or dialectic between the

learner's desire for the familiar and the excitement about the unknown (Weiser, 1987), and be present to support and encourage reflection and dialogue. I now examine methods that can support these attitudes and qualities.

### **Methods that Support Learners' Deciding**

Possible methods to use in planning and designing effective experiential learning that support Caffarella and Lee's (1994) guidelines include: debriefing, modeling, role-play, story-telling, and talking circle. I briefly review debriefing, modeling, role-playing, and story-telling, and I explore the use of the talking circle at greater length.

Debriefing. The aim of debriefing is to raise and encourage self-reflection, reinforce the skills that are working well, identify new skills that may be required, and provide an opportunity for the expression of emotion for those in the debriefing process (Rosenberg, 1999). On the basis that most adults, through their socialization, tend towards convergent rather than divergent thinking, Brookfield (1987) suggests debriefing to help learners move towards divergent thinking. Effective debriefing facilitates individuals toward ownership of their learning. As learners "own" their learning, they are more likely to have the required commitment for learning (Gass & Priest, 1997).

Modeling. A key role for the adult educators is to model desirable behaviour (Vella, 1994). Brookfield (1987, 1997) encourages educators to model risk taking, assumption analysis, and openness. Marsick (1990) suggests that modeling human behaviour can rarely be limited to a required number of steps for the practitioner to use.

Role-playing. The use of role-playing in adult education is supported by many writers (e.g., Barnett & Caffarella, 1994; Cranton, 1996; Lewis & Williams, 1994). Dimock and Devine (1995) describe role playing as an opportunity to virtually live

through a situation. This process allows problem solving to be more realistic rather than just talking about the situation and possible solutions. Van Ments (1989) favours role-playing that involves a warm-up, action, and debriefing phases. Devine and Dimock (1995) stress the importance of providing time for “de-roling” the players and allowing players to express feelings created through the role-plays.

Story-telling. Narrative practices are part of a rich tradition that is making its presence felt in many areas of the human sciences (Randall, 1995). Chapman (1997) believes that narrative practices help individuals to see their humanness, and to respect and honour their experiences and emotions. Randall (1995) suggests that in a narrative perspective individuals write and edit their reality to conform to their beliefs about the world. He further suggests that by telling one’s stories, individuals have the opportunity to see the beliefs (myths) that rule their lives. A First Nations perspective (Zion, 1998) supports these claims in the process of “recognizing the fact that you can take an abstraction, give it a name to make it concrete, then deal with it” (p. 6).

Randall (1995) proposes three roles educators, like therapists, can play in learner’s restorying. Educators can act: as co-auditor, as learners tell their stories; as co-editors, as they reflect back these self-narrations; and as co-authors of “a new self-world-story that they both can tell and live” (p. 178), a story that explores the meaning of untold stories or poorly described stories of the past.

Talking circle. A talking circle differs from the circle discussion groups often used in college, university, and adult educational settings. Here, I first give an overview of the talking circle, then discuss the concerns raised with the adult educational literature

on discussion circles, explore the relevance to the talking circle format, and finally share recommendations for addressing those concerns.

From a First Nations' perspective, talking circles are modeled after the cycles of the natural world (Pranis, Stuart & Wedge, 2000) and are central to their cultural and social processes (McCold & Wachtel, 1997). The use of a talking circle is different from our familiar adversarial way of resolving conflict. Often part of an individual's initial experience in a talking circle is surprise in having to shift to a slower pace (Baldwin, 1994). This is in keeping with Bohm et al.'s (1991) conviction that dialogue requires a slowing down of the thought process. Baldwin (1994) suggests three forms for the talking circle: using the talking piece, conversational mode, and silence. Pranis et al. see the following common practices and principles at work in the talking circle: participants act on personal values, have direct and equal opportunity to participate, participate voluntarily, practise respect, and design their own resolutions.

Pranis et al. (2000) also identify four stages of the circle process: acceptance of the circle—defining the process, parties agreeing to meet; preparation—information sharing, identifying the participants, building familiarity with people and process, determining timelines; gathering—sharing concerns and aspirations, building relationships, telling the stories, finding common ground, exploring options, building consensus, clarifying objectives; and follow-up—accountability of participants, assessing progress, making adjustments, celebrating successes (p. 33).

Despite the differences between talking circles and discussion circles, some of the same cautions may apply. Fine (1997) and Brookfield (1998, 2001) express a number of concerns with the use of discussion circles or groups. Brookfield (1998) is concerned that

the circle can “be experienced as a mandated disclosure, just as much as it can be a chance for people to speak in an authentic voice” (p. 289). Brookfield, (2001) challenges the notion that “any talking of the discussion method as if it were a single, integrated approach to facilitating learning that achieves broadly the consequences each time it is used is hopelessly naïve and simplistic” (p. 212). A third concern is that “what counts as ‘good’ discussion springs from a particular sociopolitical milieu and represents the values of those who have managed to lever themselves into positions as professional gatekeepers” (p. 212). The common theme in these concerns is power—who has it, and how is it used?

Although the context of the talking circle may differ from the discussion groups that Brookfield is addressing, his questions are helpful in critically reflecting on the practice of talking circles. Brookfield (1998) is quick to stress that he supports the use of discussion groups and is not suggesting that “we go back to the dark days of teachers talking uninterruptedly at rows of desks” (p. 289). His practice is to make as explicit as possible the question of power, and to suggest openly to his students that just being in a circle does not remove the power relations from the group. He also invites reflection on this topic and practices a no-speech policy where students have the freedom to speak or to remain silent.

In her discussion of talking circles, Baldwin (1994) suggests the use of three principles concerning power questions: rotating leadership, shared responsibility, and reliance on the spirit. She also encourages individuals to practise speaking with intention, listening with attention and self-monitoring the impact of his or her contributions. Pranis et al. (2000), in keeping with the First Nations tradition, place strong responsibility on the



elder or gatekeeper of the circle and refer to the gatekeeper as the servant of the circle process. They suggest that the gatekeeper's qualities should include "community respect, knowledge of the community, a reputation for fairness and integrity, understanding of the practices and principles of peacekeeping (talking) circles, skill in facilitating difficult conversations, empathy and respect for others, and humility" (p. 35).

In closing this discussion on talking circles I emphasize Brookfield's (2001) discussion of the political analyses of discussion groups. He invites the reader to consider the topic from three viewpoints: a Marxist structural analysis, resistance theory, and a post-structural analysis. I refer briefly to these viewpoints in the discussion in the final section of this chapter, "New Doings."

### **Role of the Community Conference Process in Decisions**

Central to any discussion of the community conferencing process is the systemic consideration of community. In her discussion on community, Pranis (1998) names community as "a group of people with a shared interest and a sense of connection because of that shared interest" (p. 2). Similarly, McCold and Wachtel (1997) define community as "a feeling, a perception of connectedness—personal connectedness both to other individual human beings and to a group" (p. 2). McCold and Wachtel point out the potential for "building and utilizing perceptions of connectedness to individuals and groups as a way to respond to and prevent crime and wrongdoing" (p. 3). For Zehr (1990) systemic considerations involve showing due concern for interpersonal relationships, and the needs of the victim, offender, and the community.

Wachtel (1999) encourages all involved with restorative justice to look beyond the formal conference process and recognize that, "restorative justice is a philosophy, not

a model, and ought to guide the way we act in all our dealings” (p. 4). He emphasizes, “You can’t have a few people running conferences and everybody else doing business as usual” (p. 5). He believes restorative practices are contagious, that they will spread from the training and workplace settings to personal and home settings. In his school for troubled youth, staff found that as informal restorative practices increased, the need for and use of formal practices decreased.

### **Changing: Finding Courage and Support**

In this section, I discuss how courage from the individual and support for the individual are required for change to take place, and I also examine the process of change within the context of the community conference.

*Changing* is a verb! It is never an object to be possessed. Freire names changing as “conscientization,” which means “an ongoing process by which a learner moves towards critical consciousness” (Heaney, 1995, p. 8). Lawlis (1996) states, “To change one’s life requires tremendous courage, and to have this change honoured and respected by those around one is critical. All research comparing individual and group psychotherapy supports this conclusion” (p. 27).

### **The Individual and Changing**

The literature on praxis often describes change as a product of reflecting critically on an experience that leads the individual to change his or her assumptions about the world and behaviour (Boyd & Fales, 1983). Wheelis (1973) states that the job of changing can only be done by the individual, and to assign the task to anyone else is to remove the learner as the subject of his or her own learning and to end praxis. Senge’s model of the learning organization (cited in Kleiner et al., 1994) includes personal

mastery and mental models in this aspect of changing. Dilts refers to this skill set as “self-skills” in his model.

Robinson (1996) summarizes personal mastery as: the ability to accomplish one’s desired outcomes; the creation of visions and goals; mastery of the creative tension created by those visions and goals; and management of emotional tension from current beliefs. He continues by defining mental models as “the capacity to reflect on notions and assumptions that lie behind one’s perceptions and behaviours, critically scrutinizing generalizations and deeply ingrained mental pictures and images of the way one sees things” (p. 16). Dilts describes his set this way, “Self-skills allow the leader to choose or engineer the most appropriate state, attitude, focus, etc., with which to enter a situation. In a way, self-skills are the processes by which the leader leads himself or herself” (p. 14).

Changes are inevitable, but changing remains in the control of the individual. How the individual learner chooses to respond to change is based on a multitude of factors that could be summarized as personal background and learning styles (Jackson & MacIsaac, 1994). Providing learners with opportunities to see themselves is important in supporting the individual’s learning and abilities with critical reflection. Within the context of adult education, many tools or inventories are used to help raise this self-awareness. The Myers-Briggs Style Inventory (Briggs-Myers & Myers, 1980) or the Learning Styles Inventory (Kolb, 1984) are well known in adult education. In my research, I made extensive use of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Kilmann & Thomas, 1974). This inventory uses the difference between assertiveness and co-operation in creating the tension of the dialectic. The authors generalize five ways

in which people respond to conflict: competing, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and collaborating. In using this inventory it is important to stress that all responses are appropriate at different times, and that naming the categories indicates tendencies rather than labels. Awareness of these types of tools can help provide individuals with new eyes to see themselves and to help them identify beliefs and assumptions that guide their lives.

Dilts' (1996) model is helpful in connecting these beliefs and assumptions to the larger context of the learner's life. His model, Levels of Change or Logical Levels, was inspired by the work of anthropologist Gregory Bateson. The model consists of six levels: environment, behaviours, capabilities, values and beliefs, identity, and spiritual. Each level has its own focus of questions and influence. The *environment* is the external and particular context and represents both constraints and opportunities. Questions used at this level focus on the "where" and "when." *Behaviour*, the next level, is the "what" of the particular, and is concerned with actions and reactions. The third level, *capabilities*, concerns the "how." It explores the states and strategies learners use and represents perception and direction. *Beliefs and values* are the "whys" of the particular and represent motivation and permission. In *identity* there is the "who," representing role and mission. *Spiritual* reaches beyond the who to "who else" and "what else." Dilts also frames this level with the question, "Who am I serving beyond my self?" (p. 37). This final level relates to the vision or spirit of the learner, organization or system.

For Dilts, "each level is to synthesize, organize and direct the interactions on the level below it. Changing something on an upper level would necessarily 'radiate' downward, precipitating change on the lower levels" (p. 19). This model provides the

learner and the educator with immediate access to the particular of a learner's experience. Dilts' model clearly overlaps Vella's (1994) seven steps of planning, which also place the learner as the subject of his or her own learning. My use of the Social Control Window in my research also provides additional access in examining a learner as the subject of his or her own learning.

In closing this exploration of the individual learner's place in changing, I return to Wheelis (1973). He closes his masterful discussion on changing by suggesting that the "truth" of one's past experience does not decide the future; but rather one's understanding of the past is determined by the future he or she desires.

### **The Helping Relationship**

The second quality that Lawlis (1996) finds promotes change in the individual is support from others important to the individual. Vella (1994) names this quality "a sound relationship—which implies that there is friendship, but no dependency; fun without trivialization of the learning; dialogue between men and women who feel themselves peers" (p. 65). Senge (cited in Kleiner et al., 1994) calls it team learning; Dilts (1996) names it relational skills; Ross (1996) calls it relational practices; Robertson (1996) and refers to it as the helping relationship.

Central to the concepts and practices of the helping relationship is its foundation in humanistic philosophy. Educators respect and accept this foundation by recognizing: that freedom and dignity are the birthright of the individual (Elias & Merrian, 1995); that the development of the individual's subjectivity is through the human relationship (Kelly, 1997; Kaplan, 1995); that education is of a facilitating mode, not transmission or banking modes (Howe, 1963; Freire, 1998); that although technical expertise is important, the

core of educating, counseling, and helping is relational (Pratt, 1993; Robertson, 1996; Kelly, 1997); and that the teacher has as much to learn from the student as the student from the teacher (Freire, 1998).

Robertson (1996) expresses concern over inadequate training and support for educators to manage the dynamics of the helping relationship. He suggests that the “dynamics of the helping relationship are complex and often involve professional challenges such as transference, counter-transference, confidentiality, sexual attraction, supervision, and burnout, each with attendant ethical, legal, and efficacy considerations” (p. 44). It is beyond the scope in this thesis to expand on such a demanding list. However, to support educators working with praxis and the expressed emotional nature of this work a brief discussion on transference and counter-transference is pertinent.

In its simplest terms, transference means that the individual being helped transfers feelings, motivations, and conflicts from past relationships and projects them into the present relationship with the helping individual or educator. In counter-transference, the educator or the helping person does so to the learner or the individual being helped (Robertson, 1996; Corey & Corey, 1992). It is important to recognize that the quality of these transferences or projections can include both positive and negative feelings (Robertson, 1996). To this end Corey and Corey (1992) describe typical ways individuals may view the leader or educator: the expert, the authority figure, the super-person, the friend, and the lover.

The dynamics of the helping relationship offer a place where adult educators have an opportunity to be immersed in praxis just as they are asking their students to be. These emotions that the educator and the learner experience in praxis are manifestations of

different parts of their respective selves. They can help each to discern more clearly how their inner workings manifest in their physical reality (Zukav, 1989).

To help resolve these issues in therapy groups, Yalom (1975) suggests consensual validation, and encourages the therapist to be more transparent. Supporting Yalom's suggestions, Bertram (2001) encourages group facilitators (helpers), when faced with defining moments in a group, to recognize the moment, protect the moment, and respond to the moment. Corey and Corey (1992) encourage helpers to listen carefully and to explore the possibility that the individual may be reacting genuinely to the helper's response. Corey and Corey further suggest that the facilitator lead group members to recognize their feelings, provide for safe and respectful expression and reflection on those feelings, and invite exploration on the issue of power. They believe that when an individual views the helper as the expert (or other possible projections), "they also give away most of their power" (p. 178).

In working with praxis and the helping relationship, adult educators are working within the context of individual subjectivity. This subjectivity "is grounded in relationality and the individual person develops and functions within relationships" (Kelly, 1997). Kaufman (1985) points out that if the relationship is to mature, "attention must be paid to the establishing of emotional ties, grounded in trust and security" (p. 12). It is the *relationship of with*—balancing the subjective realities of the learner's experience with the teacher's experience is required in the helping relationship to facilitate praxis.

### **Changing and the Community Conference Process**

Reports in the literature of how changing occurs through the community conferencing process are insightful and controversial. A dialectic exists here too: Does

change spring from the internalist's accounts of change, coming from within the individual or the externalist's accounts of change, being a product of the pressures of social conformity from without? (see McDonald & Moore, 2001). Deeply connected to this dialectic are questions concerning the function of shame and the collective experience.

The function of shame. Included in this function is the relationship between shame and forgiveness, and whether or not to force either in the conference to make change happen. Affect theory (Nathanson, 1997; McCold & Wachtel, 1997) postulates that there are nine basic affects or emotions that are universal to all human beings. These nine affects are categorized into three groups: positive, neutral, and negative. It is in the negative group that the controversy begins. The affect that dominated discussions in the earlier theoretical development of the conferencing process was shame or humiliation. Kaufman (1985) states, "To feel shame is to feel seen in a painfully diminished sense. The self feels exposed both to itself and to anyone else present" (p. 8). As theorists developed their models for the conferencing process, shame was broken into two types and referred to as reintegrative shaming or stigmatizing shaming (Braithwaite, 1989). Stigmatizing shaming was seen to make offenders more angry and less reflective. Reintegrative shaming appeared to reconnect the offender with the community. Nathanson (1997) later argues that reintegrative shaming was a misnomer. He argues that it is more useful to understand individuals' responses to shame: withdrawal, avoidance, attack self, and attack other. In reality there was "only reintegration, only hard work aimed at the reinforcement of community and the hope that the offender finds the



community enough of a source of positive affect that return to it is worth a huge dose of shame as withdrawal” (p. 2).

The collective experience. Nathanson’s (1997) thinking reflects a shift to a more systemic view of the process. In discussing the evolution of the conferencing process, McDonald and Moore (2001) describe a shift that moves from seeing the process as isolated events to a more synergetic event. They still recognize that the expression of shame is a turning point in the conference, but they “now emphasize that a significant part of the experience of shame seems to be collective” (p. 131). They continued by acknowledging that change seems related more to the emotional dynamics of a conference than to the expression of a specific emotion. They summarize their account of this aspect by stating:

This account suggests that the crucial dynamic is not that one conference participant expresses shame, and thereby clears the hurdle beyond which reintegration can occur. Rather, the crucial dynamic is that everyone experiences a sense of shame, and this experience marks the transition from a generally negative emotional climate, to a generally positive emotional climate. Shame marks the transition from conflict to cooperation. (p. 7)

Within this brief review on how change occurs through the conferencing process, I recognize Lawlis’ (1996) required elements for changing—courage for the individual and support from the group or community.

### **New Doings: Experience Re-visited**

In this final section I make no distinction between adult education and restorative justice. I do this in the spirit of bricolage. Kincheloe (2001) states, “The vision of the bricolage promoted here recognizes the dialectical nature of this disciplinary and interdisciplinary relationship and calls for a synergistic interaction between the two concepts” (p. 683). It calls for *new doings*.

### **The Paradoxical**

The ideas presented so far in this chapter seem paradoxical, highlighting the dialectic relationship that constitutes praxis. The concepts in the literature are filled with opposing needs: action and reflection, the subject and the object, inductive and deductive thinking, the individual and the system, internal and external, inter-personal and intra-personal, concrete and abstract, impulse and reason, apprehension and comprehension, permissive and punitive, victim and offender, assertiveness and co-operation and, of course, the learner and the teacher. How is the educator to balance all these conflicting and opposing needs?

I turn to Freire's (1970) work as an exemplar of adult education and restorative justices as bricolage: "The dialogical theory of action does not involve a subject, who dominates by virtue of conquest, and a dominated object. Instead, there are subjects who meet to name the world in order to transform it" (p. 148). And again he states, "It (dialogue) is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another" (p. 70). Sullivan and Tifft (2001) catch the spirit of Freire's approach to social justice: "Proponents of restorative justice know that justice cannot be done by someone or administered to someone" (p. 116).

Dialogue is established in resolving conflict. The potential for the loss of dialogue is present with unresolved conflict. Kaplan (1995) states, "Essentially, every trauma poses a threat of the loss of dialogue" (p. 32). This potential loss of dialogue is essentially the challenge every educator faces who would work with praxis.

### **Qualities and Skills to Effect Praxis**

What are the qualities and skills in the adult educator's subjective self best suited to meet the challenge of establishing dialogue with learners and working with praxis? One of Chelsum-Gossen's (1992) language patterns fits here, "What kind of a person do you want to be?" (p. 109). My reading and reflecting on the literature on praxis leads me to suggest the following qualities are primary: flexibility, trust, intuition, awareness of the power of intentions and values, and respect.

Flexibility. In her discussion on the non-unitary model of the self, Clarke (1999) sees the non-unitary model as providing "a more complex understanding of the interplay of personal agency and the colonizing power of particular socio-cultural forces, because people can experience both liberation and oppression simultaneously" (p. 45). She continues by suggesting that this model challenges Mezirow's model of transformational learning—a simple linear and rational process. She sees the non-unitary model as more realistic. Nevertheless, I believe a more flexible educator is required, to recognize, Clarke's assertion that learning is "a messy, multi-layered, and multifaceted process that involves the action and interplay of many selves within the person" (p. 46).

Addressing the questions of power raised in the literature also requires flexibility in adult educators. Brookfield (2001) relates power to change and transition, "Changing practices do not, then, do away with power but displace it and reconfigure it in different ways" (p. 219). He emphasizes that *no action* is an action, and if educators refuse to provide active leadership, they allow the existing patterns that are present in the larger society to manifest in the classroom. For Brookfield power and knowledge are intertwined. The question of power must be acknowledged publicly and students must be

engaged in critical discussion that deconstructs and analyzes the power in the classroom. Cervero and Wilson (1999) also contend that “education represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. Thus education becomes a central terrain where power and politics operate out of the lived culture of individuals and groups situated in asymmetrical social and political positions” (p. 37).

Questions of power can quickly lead educators into a minefield. If a position is held absolutely, it represents what Foucault (cited in Brookfield, 1999) refers to as a *regime of truth*, that is, “the type of discourse which [society] accepts and makes function as true” (p. 220). From a practical point of view Brookfield suggests adult educators can recognize a regime of truth in two ways: when the teacher says, “we all agree then,” or when, a participant in a conversation, can sense where it is going, regardless of their responses. These are examples of dialogue turned to monologue (Howe, 1963). There are no guarantees that the educator can rekindle dialogue in polarized environments, but he or she can always trust the process (Corey & Corey, 1992).

Trusting. Trusting the process is a primary quality required for the educator who desires to work with praxis. The educator must recognize that a process exists, and the educator must learn to be comfortable with ambiguity and even to welcome chaos (Heron & Reason, 1998). Kleiner et al. (1994) capture a wonderful image from Joseph Campbell’s work that is applicable here, “No tribal rite has been recorded which attempts to keep winter from descending” (p. 229). To work *with* others is to enter into dialogue (Freire, 1970); to let go of control and move to connection (Leaf, 1995); and, to submit self’s wish to the synergy of the relationship, the community (Kleiner et al., 1994, p. 229). Freire is explicit in the need for trust, “To achieve this praxis, however, it is

necessary to trust in the oppressed and in their ability to reason. Whoever lacks this trust will fail to initiate (or will abandon) dialogue, reflection, and communication, and will fall into using slogans, communiqués, monologues, and instructions” (p. 48).

Kaufman (1985) describes trusting as meaning “that we have come both to expect and to rely upon a certain mutuality of response” (p. 12). Trust is an acceptance of the dialectics and tensions educators are working with; it is part of the dynamics of learning. Each dialectic has its own cycles and tensions, and from a developmental viewpoint, they often disappear in the next level of learning (Zukav, 1989). Howe (1963) suggests that the “decision to say no is as much a part of dialogue as a decision to say yes” (p. 57). Far too often, adult educators hear no as a failure, rather than part of the process. At times, learners must say no before they can say yes (Howe, 1963). Trusting the process is accepting the tension of the no. It recognizes that the speaker and the hearer are of equal importance in the relationship; each has his or her voice.

Intuiting. Reason (1993) argues that as a society we are experiencing an epistemological crisis and “that a secular science is inadequate for our time” (p. 1). He suggests that our current constructs have alienated us and failed to treat the living world as such, a living world. Reason supports the notion of a participatory mind: “Mind is present in all constructions of our knowledge and in all pictures of the world” (p. 4). He continues by encouraging the reader to recognize that this participatory mind is not a cerebral identity and suggests we embrace it with a more encompassing meaning, a meaning that would include the ability for reverential thinking.

Intuiting is a recognition that as individuals, we are not alone, that we are a part of this living world (Zukav, 1989). Khartri and Ng (2000) define intuition as “a ‘synthetic’

psychological function in that it apprehends the totality of a given situation (Vaughan, 1990); it allows us to synthesize isolated bits of data and experiences into an integrated picture. It is a holistic perception of reality that transcends rational ways of knowing” (p. 60). Mulligan (1993) defines it as “seeing in terms of wholes, often detecting underlying patterns, potential or possibility which is not, or has not yet become, accessible in terms of sensory data” (p. 57).

Zukav (1989) describes intuiting as a self-skill that requires people to be present and not disabled in any emotional context. Day (1996) challenges the widely accepted notion that intuition cannot be developed. She states, “You develop your intuition by applying it consciously through practice, not by reading about it” (p. 13). McDonald and Moore (2001) believe that “people’s intuitive responses appeared to work both in their own best interests, and in the optimal interests of the group as a whole” (p. 136). They continue in their support for the conferencing process: “It seemed that the configuration and format of the conference prompted effective individual and collective intuition” (p. 136).

Khatri and Ng (2000) emphasize that, as with rational analysis, intuitive synthesis also suffers from biases and errors. Day (1996) calls upon her readers to maintain a balanced approach that accepts and respects intuitive knowledge along with other sources of knowledge.

Intention. Intentions are also primary. Hendricks and Hendricks (1985) liken them to the foundation of a building; they “determine what can be built, how high it can go and how strong the structure of your relationships can be” (p. 105). Pranis (1998) states, “Values are carried in intent” (p. 3). To bring clarity to her statement she uses the

examples of shame within the conference process. “To shame is not respectful. An intention to help a person understand the harm they caused and to support them in taking full responsibility for that harm is respectful” (p. 3). In his discussion on intention, Zukav (1989) states:

Every action, thought and feeling is motivated by an intention, and that intention is a cause that exists as one with an effect. If we participate in the cause, it is not possible for us not to participate in the effect. In this most profound way, we are held responsible for our every action, thought and feeling, which is to say, for our every intention. (p. 38)

Critically reflecting on our intention as adult educators provides the opportunity, as Argyris and Schön suggest, to assess whether our espoused theories are in fact our theories-in-use (Anderson, 1997). Intention in Dilts’ model deals with the why’s—the beliefs and values. Both praxis and restorative justice principles are matters of the heart; it is impossible to work with them unless we recognize our connectedness (Reason, 1993). In recognizing and understanding our intentions we experience our connectedness with self, others, and the world.

Respect. Respect seems self evident in what has been said thus far concerning the qualities the educator requires to work with praxis. Zukav (1989) suggests that the quality of this respect must be moved beyond any judgmental understanding or concept of respect to a reverence that is “honouring Life” (p. 51). Pranis et al. (2000) suggest that, “respect for oneself, for others and for the Circle reinforces all other principles and flows from all other principles” (p. 27). In speaking about respect, Vella (1994), in her practical way, says “Do not tell what you can ask. Do not ask if you know the answer; tell in dialogue” (p. 185). Freire (1998) demonstrates this quality of respect in describing the relationship between teaching and learning.

What I mean is that teaching and learning take place in such a way that those who teach learn, on the one hand, because they are recognizing previously learned knowledge and, on the other because by observing how the novice student's curiosity works to apprehend what is taught (without which one cannot learn), they help themselves to uncover uncertainties, rights, and wrongs. (p. 17)

Finally, all of these attitudes and qualities required for New Doings are captured again by Freire (1998) when he states, "Their learning in their teaching is observed to the extent that, humble and open teachers find themselves continually ready to rethink what has been thought and to revise their positions" (p. 17).

### **Summary of the Literature**

Through this literature review, I have examined how praxis and the community conference process provide the opportunity for the educator to begin with the particular, move to the general, and then return to the particular of new learning. I presented the discussion of praxis in five sections, as defined by Vella: doing, reflecting, deciding, changing, and new doings.

Then I introduced the reader to the elements of experiential learning: the subjective (the self), the objective (the world), the tension and relationship between them, and the knowledge produced through this tension or dialectic. It is on the foundation of this relational quality/reality, *the with* that my discussion of praxis and the community conference has been presented. I described how dialogue provides the space for *the with* to be explored and experienced, whether it is: the self with self, the self with others, or the self with the world.

The developing picture is one that must embrace the whole person and her or his experience of the world. It demonstrates the necessity for courage, for educators to invite chaos and step beyond the limits of their comfort zones. Often these uncomfortable zones



entail the power relationships that we experience as educators in our institutions, *with* our students and *with* the leaders of our institutions. The literature suggests that educators working with praxis and restorative justice must trust that a relationship *with* self, others, and the world will produce the required experience and knowledge for growth and change.

In examining the literature, I found a gap in how the principles of adult education could be used to train educators in restorative justice. I began my research project with the hunch that this training might change their use of praxis and experiential learning, and develop their collaborative abilities. My research project examines the possibility that training in restorative justice can lead educators to connect more fully with their own experiences and the experiences of others. If restorative principles are as contagious as theorists believe, I anticipate changes in educators' reflective practices and their ability to collaborate together.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore how training in restorative justice principles and intervention might affect the practices of public school staff members. The participants in this study were similar in that they were all employees of the school district, and different in the settings and type of training they received. The study includes: (a) the developmental phases of designing a training program for two different settings and groups of educators; (b) the delivery of this training in both settings; (c) the design, rationale and use of data gathering tools (both pre and post-project); and (d) analysis of the data for the presence of praxis.

For Group A, I was responsible for the design and implementation of the training program, which started during the fall semester of 2000 and continued into the late spring of 2001. For Group B, I was a member of the training committee for the Local Justice Program. Together with seven other members I was involved in designing and implementing the eight-module facilitator's training program for the community's program. I was well into the development of my work with Group A when the community training team began preparation in earnest for Group B. I was in a rich position for cross-pollination and support.

#### **Group A: The Elementary School Staff**

Group A consisted of 20 members of Beach School's staff—including teachers, teacher assistants, a youth care worker and the principal. This group trained during designated staff meetings over a period of 7 months.

### **Selection of the Elementary School Group**

In my role as an area counselor in our local school district I provide counseling services for three elementary schools. In selecting one elementary school as my project site I considered a number of factors. The administrator had just completed her second year in the school and she had a strong interest in exploring restorative practices. The selected elementary school was the one I had worked at the longest, and I had a solid and well developed relationship with the school staff. Finally, the staff had worked together for a number of years.

### **Design for the Elementary School Setting**

In my thinking, reading, and preparation for Group A I laid out a range of interventions from formal to informal, that I felt a school staff would need in order to develop restorative thinking in their practice and in the school's culture. As I contemplated how to begin this training, I continually returned to the centrality of the circle process in my experience and training with restorative justice. So I started with the big picture of the circle process: a deductive learning intention (Vella, 1994). I then proceeded to the specifics of restorative justice intervention, from the community circle conference along the continuum to the informal interventions. Throughout the training I modeled the interventions I was introducing and then, through the use of role-playing, I provided participants with the opportunity to practise the interventions. As time permitted, debriefing was used to consolidate their experience and understanding of the concepts of restorative justice.

I used two guiding principles in deciding to begin with the deductive process of giving participants an experience of the circle process. First, working restoratively is a

value-based activity (Pranis et al. 2000), and individuals cannot use restorative principles unless there is an increased awareness of how one's actions are statements of one's beliefs and values (Dilts, 1996). Secondly, individuals cannot work restoratively unless they are willing to do what they are asking their students to do. Individually and personally, it is usually a difficult task for individuals to acknowledge a mistake they have made and what actions they are willing to take to right the harm done by the mistake, all requirements in a community conference or informal restorative interventions (Zehr, 1990). My design of this initial circle experience, although different from the specific restorative justice intervention I would be introducing, would give staff the emotional experience of the challenging nature of this work. To work restoratively individuals must experience a paradigm shift, moving from the reliance on punishment and rewards to building relationships and intrinsic support of individuals (Kohen, 1993; Zehr, 1990). Working restoratively is about openness, trust and respect; it is about building and re-building relationships.

### **Providing the Initial Experience**

The initial experience took place at the school district's outdoor educational retreat centre during the morning section of a professional development day. The staff person responsible for the school's professional development approached me and asked if I would be interested in starting my project on a school's professional development day. I was ecstatic. The site was ideal for my plan to open with a talking circle. I could not have selected a more appropriate setting. The participants in this initial circle were seated on chairs of equal height and there was nothing but open floor space inside the circle.

I opened the talking circle with a review of the information shared at the previous staff meeting concerning the structure and expectation for my project. I reinforced that we were starting with the big picture and progressing to the specifics. I reminded them that their involvement was voluntary and if at any time they felt unable to continue that was their prerogative. I thanked them for completing and handing in the pre-project inventories and proceeded to open the circle. I did that by naming the opening, explaining that even though we had been sitting in this space and I had been talking there was still uncertainty about when exactly, the process begins. I drew their attention to the space between us and to the individuals around this circle and allowed the silence to open the space. Then I resumed giving gentle guidelines for the use of the talking piece and how the talking piece was one of three modes I use in a talking circle, (the talking piece, conversation, and silence). I pointed out they had experienced the second, that of silence, that today we would be using the “talking piece,” and that in later sessions I would call their attention to the use of the conversation mode. I explained that as the “talking piece” came to them each individual had the right to speak or to pass. I said that the content of the discussions from the circle belonged to the circle and was confidential to the members of the circle.

I had prepared four questions to use during this talking circle. As I passed the “talking piece” to the person on my right, I lightened the moment by saying humourously, “the next time ‘you’ come to a talking circle, you’ll know not to sit by the facilitator.” My first question was, “When you leave this school how would you like the school to be different because of your work here?” I allowed two rounds for this question, and we took a short coffee break before we proceeded to my second question, “When you

leave this school, what gift would you like to leave to your peers, or how would you like to be remembered by your peers?” Again I allowed two rounds for this question. The discussion was rich and, as I hoped, value-laden. My third question provided the debriefing to get at the principles and qualities of interactions involved in working restoratively, “What was this process like for you?” Again the richness and the wisdom of the circle brought forward the concepts and values like respect and equality. Time did not permit for responses to my fourth question, “How can you imagine using this process with your students?” In my closing and summarizing of the circle I did leave the staff with this question.

### **From the General to the Specific**

The first talking circle was followed in a couple of weeks with a mock community conference. I role played the community conference facilitator, and other staff members volunteered to be participants of the community conference. Mock circles with individuals who have never experienced a real community conference are usually more difficult to facilitate than an actual community conference. Participants in an actual community conference have experienced the pre-conference, which provides an opportunity for their initial expression of the emotions generated by the event and a clearer understanding of the conference process. In this mock conference the school’s administrator played the individual who caused the harm, and she had her quiver full of all the latest acting out behaviours she had encountered from students she had been working with. I was comfortable that a favorable picture of the community conference was demonstrated and that an understanding of the process was beginning to take shape for the staff.

My next demonstration took place during the next staff meeting, and was an example of a group intervention a teacher might use in a classroom setting. I had asked two staff members to be part of the demonstration. One would say something inappropriate to the other, and I would respond with a demonstration of a group intervention. First, I led the group in a discussion reviewing concepts and principles involved to date. As the discussion proceeded, the “offending” staff member made the inappropriate comment to the other. I intervened with the use of an observation loop which I adopted from Yalom (1975). This observation loop allowed the members of the group to comment on how the inappropriate remarks had affected them. The individual who made the offending comment was also able to respond during this loop, which demonstrated the restorative justice principle of equal support for the individual causing the harm and the individual harmed. I then returned to our initial discussion to demonstrate how this loop could be used in a group setting. Finally, I led the group in a debriefing on the intervention and examined both the potential and some concerns with its use.

Through these initial experiences (the talking circle, the role-play demonstrations and debriefing) I felt comfortable that the staff had experienced and was beginning to understand the shifts I was looking for. It was important for me that the staff was able to see the signposts of restorative justice before proceeding to informal interventions and language patterns that they could use in their daily work with their students.

### **A Common Language for a Community**

After the Christmas break, I turned my attention to the development of restorative language patterns for the staff to use. I anticipated that the development of these language

patterns would make it easier for the staff to begin their own use of restorative principles in their work. I showed the staff a video by Diane Gossen (cited in Chelsom-Gossen, 1992) on the restitution triangle and the language patterns she has developed for restorative work. For the next six sessions, to supplement this video, I created a number of short handouts on the language patterns based on the work of Diane Gossem and Marshal Rosenberg (cited in Rosenberg, 1999). I hoped that these very visual handouts would support the use of this language. My work in these six staff meetings included my demonstrating and the staff's role-plays using the specific language patterns, debriefing of staff's experience within the role plays, and debriefing their daily exploration and use of these language patterns and restorative principles.

### **From the Specific Back to the General**

As with the initial talking circle the richness of insight and conversation continued throughout this training program. During Session 8 a very interesting comment was made by a staff member, and was echoed by others, which illustrated a shift to inductive mode. We were debriefing after role-playing the use of the phrase "It is OK to make a MISTEAK," (as spelled on the handout) and a staff member commented, "For me to be really effective using this phrase I need to apply it to myself before I can use it effectively with others." Another ecstatic ("magic") moment for me occurred as I watched the staff make significant connections with the material being presented and heard the validation of their experiences with the material.



### **Group B: School District Staff's Facilitator Training**

Group B comprised 11 public school staff members—including teachers, teacher assistants, and youth care workers—from 7 different district schools. They trained during 12 non-designated meetings over a period of 10 weeks.

#### **Training Committee**

The eight members of the training committee were either trained community conference facilitators and/or board members of the Local Justice Program, and as such had a strong confidence in the use of circles to accomplish tasks. Thus, it is not surprising that not only did the training with Group B start with a circle experience, but even the planning for Group B began and ended within the context of a talking circle. During the months of preparation for the training program the training committee made a commitment to conduct as much of our discussion and planning as possible using a circle format. Not only was very little done outside of the circle format as we planned and implemented the training program for Group B, but most of the actual training was done with the use of the circle format.

My work with the training committee provided me with a wealth of opportunity for learning and practicing the concepts of adult education. It was also a wonderfully unexpected gift. Our committee work was based solely on the principles of a talking circle and was totally experiential in nature. It provided the raw material not only for the actual module design and training of facilitators, but also deeper reflections on the nature of my own practice as a counselor and my work as a restorative justice facilitator. Here I provide an overview of a typical meeting to give the reader a flavor of the committee's process.

### **Shared Leadership**

At the close of a training committee meeting a committee member would volunteer to facilitate our next meeting. It was the facilitator's responsibility to sense the directions and themes for our next meeting. This was typically done through personal reflection, intuition, and at times consultation with other committee members between meetings.

The designated leader would open the next meeting with some specific ritual, from telling a story to a moment of guided breathing. This would be followed with what became known as our check-in, a round with the talking piece that provided each member with the opportunity to connect with the circle. The check-in was usually followed by another round with the talking piece to establish the topics and needs of the current meeting. The leader/facilitator would then guide the meeting through these themes and topics. Again following the principles of talking circles (see Baldwin, 1994) three formats were used: the talking piece, informal discussion without the talking piece, and silence. We usually met for 2 to 3 hours. The length of the current meeting was always established when setting the topics. It was predominantly the designated leader's responsibility to monitor the quality of interactions and to keep the meeting focused on the selected themes and topics. However, given the practice of shared leadership, all members shared the responsibility to monitor the quality and direction of a meeting. Our meetings closed with a checkout, a round with the talking piece that gave individuals the opportunity to express their reflections on the meeting, our relationships in the group, and concern or joy for the future.

### **Selecting Participants for the School District Group**

Before we could begin training, we needed to select the trainees for our training program. For the community program a notice was placed in the local paper for 3 weeks and interested applicants were to phone the director of our community program, who was a member of the training committee. For the school district, the superintendent sent a memo to administrative officers who, following established protocols within the district, informed school staff. Interested staff members' names were sent to the director of the community program via the superintendent's office. Our next concern was how to screen and select applicants in a way that was congruent with the values and process in which we were going to be training these individuals. Rather than the traditional job interview process we decided a more respectful way for us to select new volunteers was by a screening circle.

### **Developing a Screening Circle**

Although not formally part of our training program, our screening circles were a critical aspect in the outcomes of this training program. Congruence in practice has always been an important value and guiding principle for me. The screening circles were in accord with the values of the Local Justice Program, the process of a community conference, and the attitudes we wanted to develop in our new facilitators. We designed a screening circle, which typically consisted of at least two members of the training committee and three to five applicants. Both school district and community applicants were screened in the same circles. In the screening circle we used three questions: What brought you to be interested in volunteering to work with restorative justice? What gifts would you bring to this work? Do you have any questions for us as a member of the

Local Justice Program? These screening circles were opened with an introduction of the people present, a brief introduction to the circle format and talking piece, and an explanation that the purpose of this screening circle was for us to get to know them and for them to get to know us. After each circle the facilitators present debriefed the process and made decisions concerning the suitability of the applicants. The screening circles were wonderful because they gave a number of applicants the information and experience they needed to be able to self select and deselect. A few decided that this was not the type of volunteer work they were looking for. After the training committee members debriefed the screening circle they contacted the applicants and discussed with each one their experience of the circle and their involvement with Local Justice Program. We conducted eight screening circles. They were an extremely important introduction to our training program even before it officially began. Our use and design of the screening circles modeled the values, expectations, and outcomes the training committee had for the training program.

The screening circles were pivotal in establishing the training committee's confidence that the entire training process could be done in a congruent fashion with the beliefs, values and practices of the Local Justice Program, and our understanding of the restorative justice process. From the start, the new volunteers were given a clear example of the process and the values we would be introducing them to in working restoratively. When designing the screening circles, the training committee had spent considerable time discussing how to reject an applicant in a congruent way. In keeping with our practice of face-to-face contact, the two committee members from the screening circle arranged a meeting with the individual and respectfully engaged the individual in a dialogue. This

dialogue focused on the experience of the screening circle process for the applicant and the committee members, leading to a clear and respectful statement concerning the applicant's involvement in the training program.

### **Welcoming Circle**

From these screening circles we proceeded to our official opening of our training program. As with the beginning of Group A's training, we began with a large circle experience. Our welcoming circle was led by a board member of the Local Justice Program and included 26 new trainees, 5 board members, 11 experienced volunteers, and 1 elder from the First Nations band, who was also a member of the original steering committee that formed our local justice society. The circle was opened with prayer and took approximately 3.5 hours to complete. It continued the work started in the screening circle beautifully. The board member leading the circle set the respectful and sacred tone that invited all to experience the power and trust that is possible in a talking circle. It also clearly established the expectation that this volunteer work would not be solely about helping others and learning a few restorative justice skills, but that it would require an openness to address matters of one's own "heart," a desire for personal growth and a willingness to open oneself to the emotions of others.

### **Working Groups**

For training purposes, we wanted to work with smaller groups at a time. Members of our training group of 26 were given the opportunity to select training times that best fit their schedules from three options; eight sessions on Tuesday evenings, eight sessions on Friday afternoons, or four sessions on Saturdays. Five members of the training committee took responsibility for co-facilitating and leading each of the three groups. The other

three members, due to work schedules, committed themselves to attending and supporting training sessions when possible. I was co-responsible for Tuesday evenings and Friday afternoons. Most training sessions also benefited from the additional support of one or two experienced facilitators from the Local Justice Program. They participated fully in all activities of the sessions they were attending.

### **Program and Module Design**

Themes had evolved during the work of the training committee, which we selected as key to the effective development and training of new facilitators. The official board of the Local Justice Program entrusted the training committee with the responsibility of designing and delivering the training of new facilitators. This was a radical departure from the initial training of Local Justice Program's facilitators; hired experts from outside of the community provided the previous training. The new training modules were developed from the raw material of the themes generated by the on-going work of the training committee and their collective experience in facilitating community conferences.

Eight modules (not counting the screening, opening, and closing circles) and a training manual were created to provide the structure for the training program. Each module had a very clear and well-defined intention. The training manual was created on a thematic format rather than a session-by-session format. In part this decision resulted from the fact that when we printed the manual the training committee had not defined the intention for each of the eight sessions. However, the training committee also had a strong sense that it would be more useful as a resource book in the format we selected. The intentions and titles for the eight modules were: The Circle Process; Community

Circle Conference; The Conference cont'd; Listening & Values; Our Initial Contact with Clients; Needs, Seeing and Hearing; Practice & Debriefing; and Practices & Victim's Issues.

An example of a module outline (for Module No. 6) is provided in appendix A. These outlines were also a conscious example of modeling. Facilitators in a community conference are encouraged to use a script as they develop their practice, and the modules' scripts enabled leaders to demonstrate their use in providing direction to a meeting. They were also kept general enough to allow each session leader/facilitator adequate flexibility within the training session they were conducting. There was always an overlap of leaders/facilitators between sessions. For example, Frank and I would co-lead Tuesday evenings; on Fridays I would co-lead with Badge; and on Saturday Badge would co-lead with Joyce. This structure, along with the module script, provided an excellent balance between a continuity of experience and information shared with trainees, while providing flexibility and sensitivity to the dynamics of each training group. To give a sense of how the modules were used, in the next section I provide the reader with an overview of a typical session.

### **Module Presentation**

I have selected Module 4, Listening & Values as the session to expand upon. It was one of many highlights in this training program and likely my favorite module. It brought together two key aspects of this work, the ability to quiet oneself and listen to another's story and the recognition that this work is value based. As the modules proceeded we were given opportunities to model the process and skills we wanted our new facilitators to develop.

I opened this module with a guided listening exercise, encouraged the trainees to close their eyes, follow their breath, feel their bodies resting on the chair, and notice the sounds around them. I used this opening to draw their attention gently to what an opening can provide. I then proceeded to discuss the intention of this module as the centrality of listening, and enlarged this concept to listening from the heart. I suggested that listening from the heart helps individuals to connect with their values and for us, as listeners, to hear their values. I spoke of how the process of change for individuals in this work is connected to a shift in values. I reinforced the importance of respecting the use of the talking piece, of speaking with intention, of listening with attention and of self-monitoring.

I opened the talking round by requesting the participants to tell a story of a time when they were listened to. I modeled the instruction by telling a story first. For the second round with the talking piece I asked how they felt when listened to or when they heard other's stories. I explain that, as in module 1, the co-leader would be writing the words and placing them in the center of the circle. I allowed two rounds for this process of naming the values. We then placed the Local Justice Program's core values in the circle, prepared beforehand on different colored paper. I allowed time and silence for participants to notice the similarities and differences in these qualities. I continued to use the talking piece with an invitation for the participants to share their reflection. The richness of the reflections in these moments cannot be reproduced in print. As the training progressed, I began to see two signposts that signified the depth of the work that was manifesting in moments like these. I referred to them as "the wisdom of the circle" and (my favorite one) "humanity shows up." These two signposts I have also begun to



recognize as the confirmation that effective work is taking place within a community conference. In shifting to the work on pre-conference and moving to conversation mode in this module, I reviewed the discussion and the importance that both listening and values have played in our session thus far and how that is representative of this work.

My co-leader then introduced the topic of pre-conferences, their importance, and their structure. She proceeded to set up a demonstration of a pre-conference in the centre of the circle. After the demonstration we conducted a short debriefing naming the values, qualities and flavor of the pre-conference, and handed out the pre-conference check lists. We then set up satellite groups of three to allow trainees to practice a pre-conference. Experienced facilitators attending the session sat in on these practice groups and helped with the debriefing.

We returned to the larger circle setting. Due to time concerns, we did not use a round with the suggested question, “What value would you place on listening in the pre-conference?” I led a closing round with the talking piece using the questions, “Is there anything you’d like to share in closing?” Or, “What feelings are you taking away with you today?” After one round with the talking piece I closed the circle, briefly reviewed the topic for module 5, and told a story.

This description of module 4 is typical of the flow and format the facilitators’ training sessions took. Our intention in establishing this format was to model a key principle: *process must always take precedence over content*. This process is fueled by values and attitudes, not by information or techniques. It is by listening openly and supportively to others that this process is respected; it is the business of caring for each other that is the prime directive and intention of this work and training. Often it requires

that we as educators let go of our agendas and expectations of what we think our participants require or what the “correct” procedure is.

### **Closing Circle**

After delivering these eight modules over a 10-week period, (Easter and Spring Break stretched the time line out), we held a closing circle to consolidate and celebrate the learning of our new volunteers. All members of the training committee, the new trainees, and a number of experienced volunteers participated in the closing circle. We followed a talking circle model with a clear opening, a round with a talking piece, and closing. The question we used for this closing circle was, “What has moved you to a place of discovery or curiosity during this training?” A member of our training committee led the opening and introduced the question. During a round with the talking piece all participants responded to the question. After that, I told the story *The Empty Pot* (Demi, 1996). The closing theme of the story is that Ping, a young boy and the story’s hero, was willing to stand before the emperor with the “naked truth.” After a very long silence, our eldest board and training committee member closed with a short reflection on his excitement for the future of this work and our program. He closed the circle by asking the participants to stand, hold hands, and silently reflect on what we were thankful for. The group then shared a potluck lunch together.

### **Research Structure and Methods**

My primary question in this inquiry was focused on the concept of praxis: Could the understanding of praxis along with training in the principles of restorative justice help develop the use of praxis in individual public school educators? Within the context of adult educational pedagogy there is strong support for the use of praxis and for valuing its

power. My project allowed me to work with two distinct groups of public school educators in two different settings. These different setting enabled me to triangulate my research data (for the importance of triangulation see Lindlof, 1995; Quigley, 1997). When linked to my model and data collecting process these multiple approaches also stand as an example of bricolage (see Kincheloe, 2001).

As a means to measure the development of praxis during my research, I used pre- and post-questionnaires and inventories. In designing my pre- and post-project-questionnaires and inventories, I considered it important to find a tool and a model that could link theory and practice (praxis). In developing my model, I used the qualitative data collection method of a baseline inventory as put forward in action research (Quigley, 1997). In this section I describe the development of my model, data gathering through questionnaires and inventories, and the results I found for each group.

### **Developing a Model**

In developing a framework for restorative justice practice, Wachtel (1999), uses what he refers to as a *social control window* to describe the shift from a linear model to a restorative model. He begins by suggesting that the traditional model and the prevailing response to crime or mis-behaviour is a “punitive-permissive continuum” (see Figure 1). This continuum provides the limited choices of—punishing or not punishing. He then places this line diagonally on the social control window (see Figure 2), which utilizes a more comprehensive dialectic between the axes of control and support.

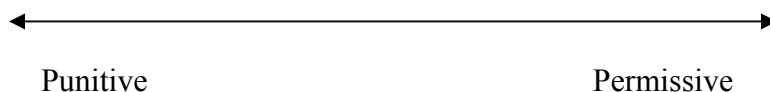


Figure 1. The punitive-permissive continuum.

From T. Wachtel, 1999, *Restorative justice in everyday life: Beyond the formal ritual*.  
<http://www.realjustice.org/Pages/anu.html>

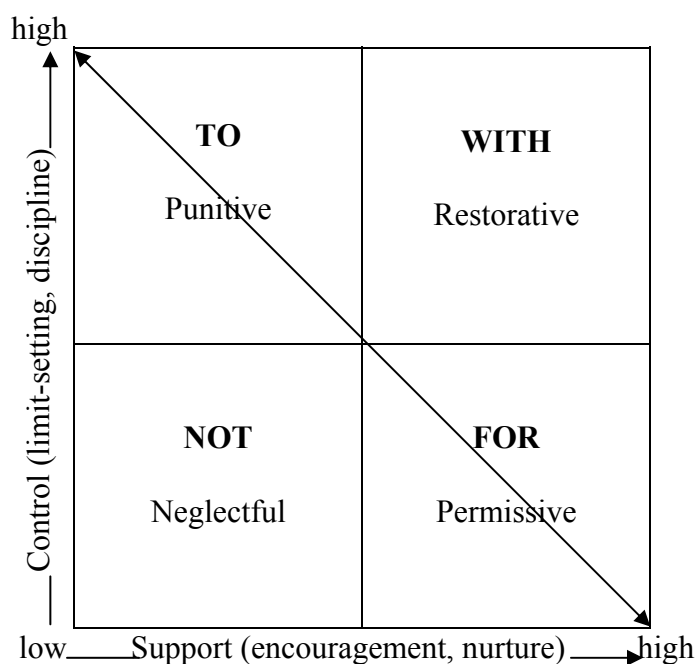


Figure 2. The social control window.

From T. Wachtel, 1999, *Restorative justice in everyday life: Beyond the formal ritual*.  
<http://www.realjustice.org/Pages/anu.html>

The use of the social control window helps educators to reflect on their practice. For example, in the NOT quadrant an educator would not be providing support (possibly by not listening) and control (possibly by not setting clear expectations) to his or her students. Educators functioning in this way would be treating their students in a neglectful manner. Wachtel suggests “we can combine a high or low level of control with a high or low level of support to identify four general approaches to social control: neglectful, permissive, punitive (or retributive) and restorative” (p. 1).

I am familiar with the social control window and use it in my counseling work with parents. Seeing it in this context reminded me of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Kilmann & Thomas, 1974). This inventory uses the dialectic of assertiveness and cooperativeness (see Figure 3), and categorizes responses to conflict

into five ways: avoiding, competing, accommodating, compromising, (quadrant intersection) and collaborating.

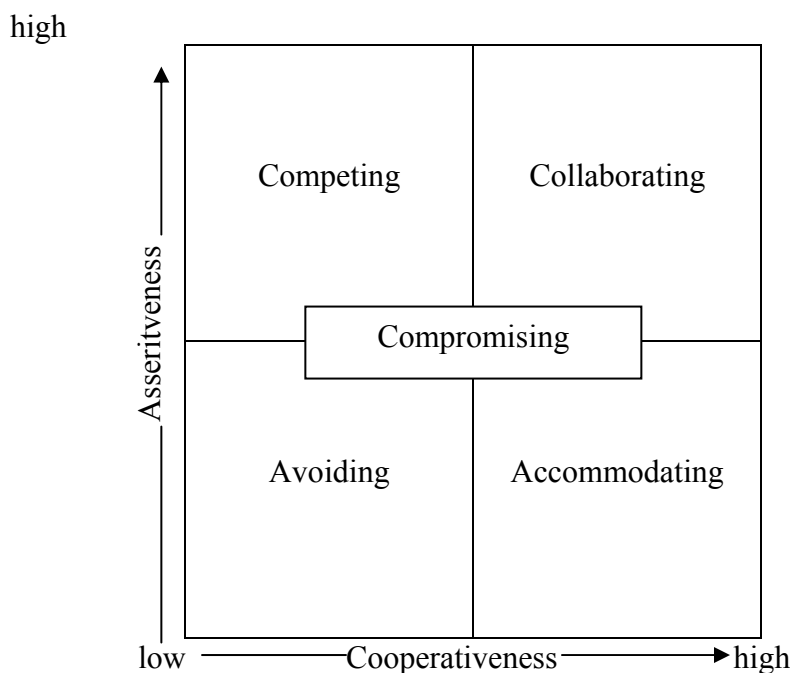


Figure 3.

#### Five Conflict-Handling Modes

Adapted from Kearns, T., Pickering, C., & Twist, J. (1992). *Managing conflict: A practical guide to conflict resolution for educators*

I started to play with melting these two models (figure 2 and 3) together and arrived at a unique combination of the two models (see Figure 4). Dossey (1999) suggests a model is helpful if it represents reality and can help predict outcomes. I felt this model could help describe the relationship between praxis and restorative justice training and possibly demonstrate changes in an educator's practice.

The words NOT, TO, FOR, and WITH become very important and helpful in understanding not only the outcomes of this inquiry, but more importantly educators' involvement with their students. In the NOT quadrant, individuals are unable to cooperate with others on some level and are unable to assert their own needs. Individuals

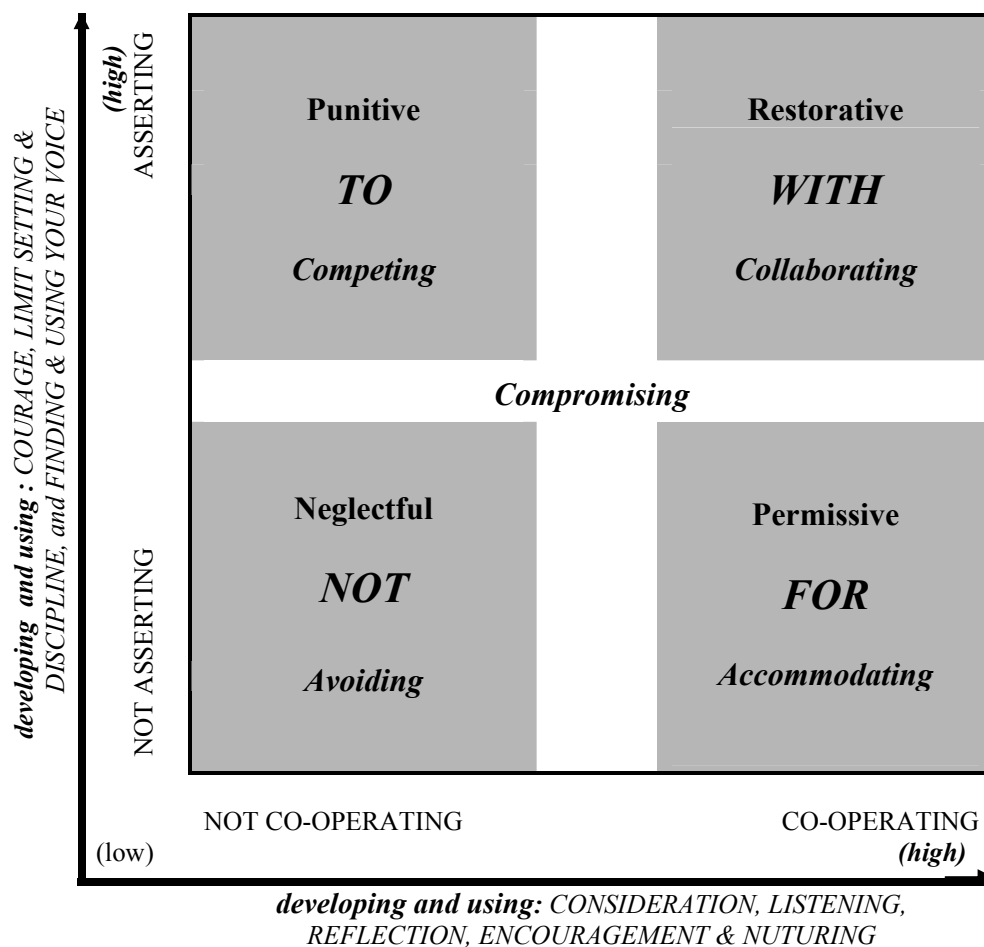


Figure 4.

Model Used in Evaluating the Development of Praxis with Public School Educators.

Adapted from Kearns, T., Pickering, C., & Twist, J. (1992). *Managing conflict: A practical guide to conflict resolution for educators*, and T. Wachtel, 1999, *Restorative justice in everyday life: Beyond the formal ritual*.

who are both not co-operating and not asserting suggests an inability to be open to experiences, an inability to engage in the world. Schön's (1983) work has demonstrated that reflective educators tend to be collaborative (able to be assertive and co-operative) and are therefore more open to experiential learning (Ferry & Ross-Gordon, 1998). I thought if educators trained in restorative principles showed a shift to the WITH (collaborating) quadrant, this would indicate an educator was more open to learning from his or her experiences and able to use praxis. Individuals functioning in the WITH

(collaborating) quadrant would be more assertive and co-operative than individuals functioning in the NOT (avoiding) quadrant. From the NOT quadrant, a shift could be demonstrated in three ways: moving in one direction along either the co-operating axis to the FOR quadrant or along the asserting axis to the TO quadrant or by moving along both axes to the WITH quadrant.

### **Pre-Project Data Gathering, Group A**

The pre-project questionnaires and inventories were completed before the initial experience of the opening-talking circle. Of the 20 individuals who attended the opening circle, 18 pre-project questionnaires and inventories were completed and returned. I used the final two questions as my needs assessment. From their responses their goals and needs were summarized into three groups: the desire to support the development of a common process within the school community; continued development of personal skill in working with students; and (closely related to the second), to support children to be more respectful and empathic towards each other.

Scores from the pre-project inventories relating to experiential learning showed that educators felt they took time to reflect on their practice. In response to the question dealing with praxis, educators responded with a mid to high valuing of praxis. Comments from the opening question were thoughtful, showed a strong love for teaching, and displayed a genuine appreciation of opportunities to influence others. The themes and values could be summarized as the desire to create a safe and open environment, where children are encouraged to develop respectful relationships through communicating with each other. Within this safe environment choices and risk could be taken that would help

children to connect to “real life learning” and to develop confidence in their ability to learn and to value that learning.

Total scores for the pre-project conflict inventory are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-project inventory scores for Group A

Quadrant	Score
NOT (avoiding)	166
TO (competing)	50
FOR (accommodating)	123
Intersection (compromising)	124
WITH (collaborating)	70

### **Post-Project Data Gathering, Group A**

I made two changes to the post-project questionnaires to help gather my data. I changed question 1 to read, “Due to your involvement with restorative justice, you want to communicate about some aspect of your work with students that has changed and how this is significant to you.” And question 8 was changed from what goals they had for the project to, “What did you enjoyed most about the project and how was that important to you?”

I was delighted with a 100% return, positive feedback, and useful data for comparison. For question 8, their answers could be categorized in three basic groups: appreciating the opportunity to develop staff relationships through the discussion and during the project; the importance of these discussions happening over an extended period of time; and the expressed usefulness of the language patterns on a personal level. Scores from the post-project inventories relating to experiential learning continued to show a strong valuing and a clear sense that educators felt they took time to reflect on their practice. In response to question 6 dealing with praxis, a small shift was noted with



educators responding with a higher valuing of praxis. Comments from question 1 were insightful and showed strong support for my project and the principles covered. There was clear and consistent recognition of the effectiveness and value of the language patterns. Staff expressed that they felt these patterns were effective not only in helping students to be more resourceful and better problem solvers, but were also helpful on a personal level. A number of staff felt that the patterns were key to the changes they had made in self-talk and how those changes allowed them not to be so hard on themselves, less judgmental, more patient, and more open to exploring solutions with children's learning and developing confidence in their ability to learn and to value that learning. Total scores from the post-project conflict inventories and the changes from the pre-project inventories are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Post-project conflict inventory scores for Group A

Quadrant	Score	Change from Pre-project
NOT (avoiding)	138	-28
TO (competing)	52	+2
FOR (accommodating)	109	-14
Intersection (compromising)	119	-5
WITH (collaborating)	87	+17

I was excited with the results I found here. Having already read the anecdotal sections of the post-project inventories, I was encouraged that these more quantitative results were mirrored in my qualitative findings, and that both supported my hypothesis.

### **Pre-Project Data Gathering, Group B**

The pre-project questionnaires and inventories were given to district staff between the screening and welcoming circles. Of the 11 school district individuals who participated in the facilitator's training program, 10 pre-project questionnaires and

inventories were completed and returned. Goals and needs from question 7 and 8 on the pre-project questionnaires were focused on learning the skills required to facilitate a community conference, improving professional skills, and developing a greater connection and support to community and spirit. Similar to Group A, scores from the pre-project inventories relating to experiential learning showed a valuing of experiential learning and a clear sense that educators felt they took time to reflect on their practice.

In response to question 6 dealing with praxis, educators responded with a high valuing of praxis. Again, comments from the opening question were rich and the stories had a warm and inviting flavour. The themes they brought forth were significantly different from the elementary school community's opening responses. The themes for the district staff focused more on the acceptance of the individual child in non-judgmental ways that affirmed the uniqueness and potential of each individual. There was a strong focus on the importance of the relationship and respect. Both of these qualities and values were linked with a desire to develop accountability and to help students to be the caretakers of their own learning. The scores for the pre-project conflict inventory are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Pre-project conflict inventory scores for Group B

Quadrant	Score
NOT (avoiding)	83
TO (competing)	25
FOR (accommodating)	60
Intersection (compromising)	57
WITH (collaborating)	74

### **Post-Project Data Gathering, Group B**

I made the same two changes to the wording for two questions on the post-project questionnaires for the school district as I had for Group A. Again, I was delighted with a

100% return, the positive feedback and the data from my post-project questionnaires and inventories. Answers for questions 7 and 8 could be summarized as the trainees' increased experience and appreciation for the power of the talking circle to create a safe vehicle that allowed respect, honoring, trust, deep listening and finally connection with others. There was no significant change in the scores from the pre- to post-project inventories relating to experiential learning and praxis; and both showed a strong valuing of experiential learning and a clear sense that educators felt they took time to reflect on their practice. Comments from question 1 reinforced the use of language in de-escalating situations, how the language from the community conference can be used effectively in individual situations with children, and again the value of the circle as a problem-solving tool. There was recognition of the way in which "rituals" (Lawlis, 1996) can help bring security, support and provide meaning in our relationships with students. A number of educators commented on how their listening ability changed and improved. Some felt more patient and more comfortable not having all the "answers." They also recognized that as they trusted the "process," students had a greater opportunity to solve problems. Total scores from the post-project conflict inventories and the changes from the pre-project inventories are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Post-project conflict inventory scores for Group B

Quadrant	Score	Change from Pre-project
NOT (avoiding)	75	-8
TO (competing)	22	-3
FOR (accommodating)	72	+8
Intersection (compromising)	58	+1
WITH (collaborating)	74	0

I was surprised and confused with the results I found here. Again, having already read the anecdotal results from both groups, I was now expecting a final confirmation with a significant change to the WITH (collaborating) quadrant for Group B. In developing an understanding for these results, I eventually turned to the goals each group stated in their pre-project questionnaires and the differences in the two training programs.

### **Analysis for Praxis**

The results of the post-project questionnaires and inventories for both groups showed strong similarities in answering the subjective questions. There were notable differences between the groups on the more objective questions used in the conflict inventory. In this section I analyze these similarities and differences and their possible meaning to the question of my inquiry. In this analysis, I will draw strongly on my developed model (Figure 4) for making sense of the data as indicators of praxis.

### **Similarities from Data that Suggest Praxis**

The common themes that emerged from the anecdotal comments of both groups were: (a) an increase in the educator's ability to listen to their students; (b) the ability to be less judgmental; (c) increased patience, with a willingness to allow more time for the students to develop solutions; (d) more openness to the solutions students generated; e) an increased comfort in not having to have all the answers; and (f) a recognition of how the language patterns of Chelsom-Gossen (1992), Rosenberg (1999) and the patterns used in the community conference process (McDonald et. al, 1995) all helped to develop dialogue with their students or clients.

These themes testify to individual educators' willingness and possible desire to let go of their "expert" positions and roles, which in turn strongly suggests a use of praxis.

These themes, from the anecdotal questionnaires, also point to a group of educators who are becoming more collaborative with their students, which Ferry and Ross-Gordon (1998) say indicates educators who are more reflective in their practice, another indicator of praxis. It follows that, educators who are feeling more patience, in their interaction with students, will allow their students to practise more and to make more “mistakes.” I also suggest that, as educators experience more patience, they will give themselves more freedom to make “mistakes” (Chelsom-Gossen, 1992) and to see their mistakes as the practising of new skills. All are stated components of praxis.

### **Differences from Data that Suggest Praxis**

I was surprised by the results of the post-project conflict inventories for Group B. Given the intensity of the 10-week facilitators’ training program compared with the more modest experiences that could be generated during traditional school staff meetings. I had expected a more significant change for the facilitators’ group. However, it was the elementary school staff’s results that demonstrated a more comprehensive change. In examining these differences I considered: my model, the different goals expressed by both groups, and the differences between the two training programs.

For both groups, their scores on the pre-project conflict inventories were higher in the NOT (avoiding) quadrant than on the post-project inventories. In the NOT (avoiding) quadrant individuals are unable to co-operate with one another on some level and they are unable to assert their own needs. As reflected in my earlier discussions, a number of reasons could justify avoiding behavior: a lack of safety in the working environment, an environment that is uninteresting for the individual, and a possible lack of confidence in the individual’s ability to meet the demands of the environment. However, both groups

showed a similar percentage shift away from avoiding to other quadrants: to collaborating for the elementary school staff, and to accommodating for the district school staff. The elementary school staff made change along both the asserting and co-operative axis while the district school staff made their changes primarily along the co-operating axis.

The expressed goals from each group were significantly different. Group A's primary goal was the development of a common process within the school community; whereas, Group B's primary goal was to learn how to facilitate a community conference. Given the context and expectations set by the training, these goals are reasonable and somewhat predictable. Group A's stated (asserted) needs and their desired goal may have by its very nature evoked greater collaboration among them. It seemed that even before the training began they expressed the desire to move in a collaborative direction. Group B's primary goal, of learning a new skill, may have pointed them in an accommodating direction. For example, when I am learning a new skill; I tend to be more self-absorbed and, initially, I need to co-operate more with the process, before I can assert my mastery with the process.

These different goals reflect in part the differences in the two training programs, but there were other important differences. There was the difference in the duration of the training programs. It seems reasonable to expect that the longer training of Group A allowed learners to move from co-operating with the material and process to asserting their mastery with the new skills. For Group A, there was also the very focused training in the use of language patterns (Chellsum-Gossen, 1992; Rosenberg, 1999). The use of these language patterns appeared to give educators some very respectful and powerful ways to assert themselves—with their students, and more importantly, with themselves.

The language patterns used in training Group A were different from those used in the conference process. For Group B the language patterns were learned through training in the conference process and were not made explicit and taught as specific skills.

The discussion of these differences helps highlight the value of my model in understanding educators' involvement with the two training programs. The different results away from the NOT quadrant, suggest both groups of educators were either asserting their own needs more clearly and/or co-operating more effectively in their practice. These results suggest that both groups of educators were able to engage in the materials and experiences presented to them and, as supported by the data, made progress in their understanding and use of the materials and skills. These different results also point to educators who are involved with praxis.

In the final chapter, I discuss how praxis was developed through the methods I selected, the participants' experiences, and my own experience. I complete the chapter by providing conclusions from my research, recommendations for further research, and a closing reflection.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Through my inquiry, I had the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of training in restorative justice philosophy and interventions with two groups of public school educators. Between the two groups, there were strong similarities in the philosophical bases, the methods of presentation, the information presented, and in the qualitative changes from the pre- to post-project inventories. There were also considerable differences in the settings, relationships of group members, the intensity of the experiences, the intentions and goals of the training for each group, and in the quantitative changes in the scores from pre- to post-project inventories.

I consider three areas of importance: (a) usefulness of the methods, (b) value of the participants' experience, and (c) value of my experience as educator.

#### **Usefulness of the Methods**

In this section I discuss the usefulness of the methods for promoting learning during educational sessions. Specifically, I discuss the usefulness of the talking circle, role playing, debriefing, and my use of modeling (rather than from a stance of expertise).

#### **The Talking Circle**

As I reflect on the usefulness of the talking circle with both training groups I wonder if a more effective tool could be used to initially allow an individual to experience praxis. An individual's first talking circle can be somewhat intimidating, and participants of both groups referred to this fact. When I consider that my experience of talking circles has been one of magic and humanity, of excitement and safety, it seems paradoxical that a talking circle can be intimidating initially. But herein lies the power of



its working, that it does open its participants to unknown territory and the attitude of its leaders and participants are key to its effective use (Baldwin, 1994). Boyd and Fales (1983) discuss that a precursor for reflection is a sense of inner discomfort, and Heron and Reason (1998) speak of the openness to and even the preparation for chaos. The circle provides both from its start. It is the facilitator's responsibility to nurture and foster that ability by maintaining the circle's integrity and respect for its process. As the facilitator maintains the circle's integrity the circle is able to meet a suggested criterion for reflection and thus for praxis.

The circle seems to demand consciousness. Any process in a social context that encourages individuals to develop and use their voice implies that the old practices of objectivity will be replaced with the interactive realities of people dealing with very real divergent viewpoints (Marsick, 1990). The circle places individuals as the subject of their own learning within their social context and evokes consciousness. Those ready to look at the specific piece of consciousness that is being offered through the circle have the clearly stated freedom to remain or leave. I was both delighted and somewhat surprised that there were no "drop outs" from the school district training group. For the elementary school group I had a somewhat captive audience. School staff are expected to attend staff meetings and that is where the elementary school training took place. However, the school district group was not a captive audience. The training for this group was not a delegated activity; individual participants were exercising their personal autonomy towards their professional learning in very self-directed ways. I attribute the no drop out success to the self-directed opportunities the participants had throughout the training and the quality of consciousness that was prevalent through the screening circles. The

individuals who experienced those circles and chose to join the training program received a clear message (consciousness), about what they might expect from the training program and what expectation would be placed on them. I suggest that embedded in the message (consciousness) was an attitude of respect for each individual's personal autonomy and an invitation to be self-directed throughout the training. The ability to be self directed is deeply tied with a learners' opportunity to practise new skills, and as Barnett & Cafferella (1994) stress, it meets adult learners' needs to be actively engaged in their learning.

### **Role-Playing**

In prior training settings I have worked in, role-playing is usually greeted with avoidance and often fear. I did not witness these reactions throughout the training in either of these groups. Role-playing is a natural for praxis and seems self-evident. Consciousness, reflection, and practice equal role-playing. Its use is suggested and supported in the literature by adult educators like Cranton (1996) and Barnett and Caffarella (1994).

In the elementary school training group a number of factors encouraged the use of role-playing. The staff is a very supportive and congenial group of individuals who, for the most part, have worked together for a number of years. This working together produced a sense of comfort with each other, which along with my modeling of all interventions, and the expressed usefulness of the language patterns to the staff—made role-playing a valuable activity for them. The staff's willingness to involve themselves in role-playing right from the second session that introduced the community conference to the last role-plays with the language patterns attest to the safety these educators felt

together. Similarly Vella (1994) makes very clear that in order to have strong participation in role-playing the participants must feel safe.

The school district training group also participated enthusiastically in role-playing. Many of the participants in this group had never worked together before. Safety in this group was created as a result of the culture that was developed through the building of relationships and establishing and modeling of the inherent values of restorative justice and the Local Justice Program. Another factor that supported the group's willingness to be involved in role-play was its close link with developing the actual skills of a community conference facilitator. The role-plays were designed to provide the participants with real-life scenarios for facilitating community conferences. Again, these real life role-plays are important aspects recommended by Jackson and MacIsaac (1994).

### **Debriefing**

The importance of debriefing (feedback, reflective listening, critical and open-ended questions, and dialogue) is clearly developed within the literature; many researchers speak of its significance in consolidating learning (e.g., Brookfield, 1997; Cranton, 1996; Lewis & Williams, 1994; Marsick, 1990; Vella, 1994).

My use of debriefing as a strategy to support praxis and the intentions of my training program with the elementary school group was underdeveloped. Time constraints and the different goals of the two training groups led to minimal use and development of this skill, in part because training for the elementary school group took place during staff meetings. I was allotted approximately 30 minutes per staff meeting; consequently, I was always conscious of the group's time, which forced a deliberative voice. In these sessions I deliberately chose to devote more time and energy to the role-

play and practice of skills than to debriefing them. I trusted that participants would gain more from practise (experience) and would, as Vella et al. (1998) suggest that practise increases the likelihood of transferring the skills to real life situations.

In contrast, debriefing with the school district group was well developed. The ability to use debriefing effectively was more important for the school district group. Not only was it an important part of the training process, but it was a required skill in their work as community conference facilitators.

Equality and respect, two of the core values of the Local Justice Program, repeatedly found their way into the discussion on the attitudes and qualities we should bring to the debriefing process and was supported with the introduction and practice of shared learning and shared leadership. These discussions clarified important lessons and attitudes that the training committee desired to be part of our culture as a training group and our Local Justice Program. These attitudes can profoundly affect how the facilitators will respond in the future to the needs of their clients. The safety and sacredness of the learner's autonomy (being the subject of their own learning) were key in our modeling and practise of debriefing. This equality and respect is what McDonald and Moore (2001) point to as guiding principles of the conference process.

In one of the training groups I was responsible for, a lively discussion took place in which two participants stated that they wanted a more critical evaluation of their role-playing. I brought this discussion to the next training group and we continued that discussion within the talking circle format. This discussion brought real clarity to our understanding and commitment to the values of equality and respect. Similarly, Ross (1992, 1996) emphasizes that it is through the development of equality and respect that

educators can help establish the learner as the subject of their own learning. It was also an interesting example of what Cervero and Wilson (1994) refer to: “Planners both act in and act on their social contexts when planning a program” (p. 257).

Another very important aspect of debriefing for the facilitator’s training is that the facilitators are involved with individuals who have experienced critical incidents (Snelgrove, 2000). Schiraldi (2000) points out that individuals working in settings like a community conference must protect themselves and their clients from projecting their own meaning to either the victim or offender, both of whom are involved with a critical incident. Our training committee’s modeling and understanding of the debriefing process was clear in this regard. As such, it also supported the requirements of reflection that are set forth in the literature.

### **Modeling versus Expertise**

For me personally the most challenging aspect within the context of my leadership in these two training programs was keeping myself out of the expert role. My concern about being placed in the role of the expert springs from the apparent willingness of individuals in educational settings to default and let the instructor be the expert. This tendency is ingrained in educators’ thinking (Gatto, 1992) and it is embedded in the sociolinguistic western culture (Cranton, 1996). I developed four practices that helped me deal with this situation: I purposely modelled all new information shared with both groups; I provided consistent and immediate opportunities for the learners to practice the skill; I raised it as a point of discussion in my journal, with the training committee and in both training groups in the context of shared learning; and I used Vella’s (1994)

distinction of the consultative voice (a suggestion) and the deliberative voice (a decision) to help guide my responsibility and leadership with both groups.

Modeling is recognized as a key aspect for the development of praxis; and modeling human behavior can rarely be limited to a required number of steps for the practitioner to use (Marsick, 1990). My modeling took place in my leading of talking circles, my role-playing, demonstrating all language patterns and conference interventions before asking participants to practise through role-playing, and informally as I listened and debriefed with participants.

The process of naming a concept helps to raise one's consciousness of the concept and to normalize the individual's relationship to the concept. Naming takes the concept and makes it public knowledge; it is no longer the sole inner knowledge of the expert. This process of naming the expert was made easier with the school district staff group due to the foundation laid in the screening circles with the introduction of the concept of shared learning. Similarly, Goleman (1998) points to the importance of authenticity in leadership, while Brookfield (2001) stresses the importance of explicit discussion between educators and their students concerning power issues.

Vella's (1994) distinction between a consultative and a deliberative voice is clear and helpful. Similarly, Freire (1998) explains that the instructor/facilitator must have the courage to lead. At times clear and decisive decisions must be made to maintain confidence and safety for the group. Rosenberg (1999) uses an interesting phrase in a slightly different context, but the principle fits here: "the protective use of force" (p. 156). There were many times throughout the design and implementation of these training programs where the use of this distinction was required. Knowing when to lead and when

to consult involved both developing trust in my intuition, and as Leaf (1995) points out, a deep trust in the process.

As I have reflected on my behavior as a leader/facilitator, I am comfortable that I honored praxis' requirement, that the leader must not be the expert. Feedback from both groups confirmed that, I and my fellow trainers with Group B, had effectively modeled leadership using praxis. I am assured and pleased that we avoided being seen as the experts in ways that were helpful to the participants.

### **Value of Participants' Experience**

Several elementary school staff said that they valued having the continuous training throughout the year, that it enabled them to be engaged more consistently in their own learning process. Research (Jones & Lowe, 1990) has shown that staff training that provides for extended periods of time with debriefing and consultation is more effective than workshops of short duration with no consultation. The training with the elementary school staff certainly met these criteria and likely helped to support the changes individual staff members were able to make. The school district staff training, although very intense in nature, may not have provided adequate duration of time to internalize the concepts being introduced.

### **Deepening Their Listening Skills**

Comments from the elementary school participants suggest that the specific language patterns were also very helpful on a personal level. (These language patterns were not used with the district training program.) Several staff commented in the post-project questionnaire that their use of the language patterns allowed them "to not be so hard on themselves" and encouraged their abilities to "not have to have all the answers."

These comments suggest significant internalization and integration happened with the elementary school staff due to both the duration of training and the specific language patterns (Chelsom-Gosssen, 1992; Rosenberg, 1996) used in their training program. The comments also point to educators who are moving away from seeing themselves as responsible for other's feeling and are moving towards seeing themselves as responsibility for their own intentions and actions. Rosenberg (1996) suggests these changes represent the development of emotional liberation.

Comments from Group B often focused on how the training had deepened their ability and understanding of the importance of listening, particularly a listening that is present *with* other, and not to be concerned or preoccupied with having to find the "solution," a listening that invites others to tell their story. It was also exciting to see how educators from group B spoke of transferring the principles of the community conference out into their classroom settings. One teacher spoke of her experimentation with using the concept of a support person as practised in community conferences. The practise of a support person or support from the community are validated by McDonald et al. (1995) and Pranis (1998), and seen by Lawlis (1996) as a requirement for individuals to make change. This educator started to invite her students to have an advocate or support person for solving conflicts within the classroom. She noted a decrease in students' anxieties and an improvement in the students' resourcefulness. Others spoke of using the fundamental questions (language patterns) from the conference process in everyday problem solving with their students. Similarly, Kolb (1984) points out that these types of questions help individuals move from apprehension to comprehension. They are questions that connect individuals to themselves and others.



Most educators in Group B referred to a new respect and appreciation for the use of the talking circle. One interesting by-product of the slowing down of the process within the talking circle was one teacher's developing a new respect for the amount of time a student may need to respond in a given situation. This reflection is supported by the Bohm et al. (1991) suggestion that the slowing down of the "process" is required for dialogue to take place.

The comments made by educators from both training groups speak of individuals who are respecting students' rights to be the subject of their own learning, of educators who are appreciating student's experiences and providing opportunities for those students to reflect upon the possible meanings in their experiences. These comments speak of educators who are effectively collaborating with their students, working in the WITH (collaborating) quadrant—and, in doing so, meeting their learning goals

### **Meeting Learners' Goals Through the Training Programs**

The expressed needs of the participants, the unconscious needs of both the participants and trainers, and the slightly different training intention for both groups may help account for the differences in outcomes. As learners, the participants were the subject of their own learning. Similarly, Brookfield (1998) notes that the meaning individuals create through their experiences are constructed by those individuals. Marsick (1990) suggests that this subjectivity does not imply the activity is of psychotherapeutic nature, but rather of a human nature. These possibilities, along with the quantitative data from the pre- and post-project inventories, support the finding that participants were making progress in becoming both more co-operative and more assertive through this training program. Thus based on my combined model and the work represented behind

this model (Kearns et al., 1992; Kilmann & Thomas, 1974; Wachtel, 1999), I suggest the participants were meeting their goals and also using praxis more.

### **Realizing Praxis**

In my goal to realize praxis for the participants in this study, I used the following descriptions of praxis as beacons to guide my decisions. Vella's (1994) describes praxis as a "beautiful dance of inductive and deductive forms of learning" and in a more practical way she formulates it, "as doing, reflecting, deciding, changing and new doings." Boyce, et al. (1995) name three tasks as essential for the development of praxis: consciousness, practice, and reflection on the practice. Boyd and Fales (1983) observe that one of the precursors for reflection is a sense of inner discomfort or curiosity followed by the ability to identify the concern, thus validating the claim for consciousness. The Boyce et al. (1995) suggestion that with praxis the trainer/teacher no longer assumes the position as the "expert," tied all of these qualities together in my hope of realizing praxis with the participants of this study.

### **Value of My Experience as Researcher**

Qualitative research (in contrast to quantitative) has a stated goal to raise or expand the consciousness of the researcher (Weiser, 1987). My experience as a researcher in this project followed the learning cycle of action, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation (Davies, 1987; Kolb, 1984). Vella's (1994) definition of praxis (doing, reflecting, deciding, changing, new-doing) added an expanded level of understanding to this cycle. In reflecting on my research, I identified the cycles of action, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation as occurring with the regularity and imagined them like the seasons of the year. Furthermore, it was fascinating

to note the interaction between these “seasons” and their overlap—these seasons could happen simultaneously! As a researcher interested in expanding consciousness, I recognized the significance in my changing energy levels through the “seasons.”

### **Action**

Action was my starting point. It was the season for planting of the “seed” in the soil. I received training as a restorative justice conference facilitator, and had lots of energy and new information. This energy created a need to link my newfound information to existing models and understandings of the world. It created a problem for me, and an introduction to Quigley’s (1997) step 1 in the process of action research. Although my research focused on how training in restorative justice might change educators’ use of praxis and their abilities to collaborate, my practice as a researcher was to involve others and to seek their co-operation, not their collaboration, in my research. Peters (1997) notes this as an important distinction between co-operative learning and collaborative learning. In the design and implementation of my research project, I was clearly in control. I involved educators in respectful ways in this research. However, any decisions regarding the use of data gathering tools or the problem I was seeking to address remained in my domain.

The goal of *with*, of learning to collaborate in new ways, is a dominant theme in the development of this research project. Peters (1997) suggests that collaboration is “people laboring together with the intent of creating something.” Thus in collaborative learning the intent is the co-construction of knowledge. Reflecting on my experience in leading the two groups of my research project allowed me to examine my own understanding and behaviours concerning collaboration.

For Group A, I planned the course of studies and implemented them with very little consultation with others. Was there the construction of new or shared knowledge? Peters (1997) might suggest that what I was involved in was an example of co-operative learning. I set the agenda and the learning outcomes of what was to be learned; the staff worked together with me toward those outcomes. I could maintain the context of my relationship with Group A (their school's counselor) and the structural constraints of the training (during regular staff meetings), further suggests co-operative learning. However, it does not seem that simple to me. I sense that my use and understanding of praxis adds an additional level of possibilities that opens the potential for collaboration—as defined by Peters. By introducing experiential opportunities and then encouraging learners to reflect on their experiences, I invited them to construct their own knowledge and meaning. Their understanding and knowledge were reflected in their experience and their comments in the post-project questionnaires. When I realized that learners were making their own meaning and connections, something magic happened for me. During these times of magic, there was the excitement of new growth and increased levels of energy for me as a learner and a leader.

In Group B the magic seemed to happen with greater frequency. Although members of Group A stated that they valued the training taking place over 7 months, I enjoyed the intensity of the 10-week course with Group B. For me it provided more moments for praxis, and there were clear reasons that helped create those moments. The use of the talking circle in the planning work with the training committee and in training helped me let go of control—to move from the TO (competing) quadrant to the With (collaborating) quadrant. Its use with the training committee created the space where new

meanings and understanding could be openly explored. Beginning with the training committee circles, the intentions for our training were introduced in circles and radiated out to our learners for them to respond to in the same fashion. Yes, there was the agenda to train facilitators, but this seemed secondary to the experiences generated within the talking circles. Similarly Pranis (1998) suggests it is the power of intention, beyond the structures or formats used, that determines the achieved outcomes.

Thus, learning to share power was a product of this action season. On a number of occasions, the training committee became stuck, and we could not establish a clear direction. We learned to ask the learners in our training. We learned to collaborate. This type of behaviour for leaders is comfortable for me in the context of my work as a counselor; yet the context of my relationship with Group B was different from Group A. In my work with Group B the expectations (from both the Local Justice Program's board and the participants) to train facilitators created a tension that demanded an outcome. During these stuck times I struggled with a feeling of being irresponsible or of not knowing the material I was responsible to impart. Vella (1994) discusses this type dilemma in terms of assuming new roles, and uses Freire's observation: "Only the student can name the moment of the death of the professor" (p. 140). In these moments of asking for suggestions, the participants responded with very helpful and insightful suggestions and we moved forward. As a training committee, we felt these moments modeled appropriate skills and behaviour for facilitators in the community conferencing process. It is important to note that these moments came when we were well into the training program, and confidence in our relationship with the participants, the process, and our ability to lead were well established.

## **Reflection**

Davis (1987) writes of the need for a balance in the expression of energies in the cycles of learning. If educators and learners only experience the highs of the action times, they will indeed burn out. As a researcher, I found that the times of reflection-on-action were calming yet vibrant. There was still the afterglow of re-living the experiences, and the intensity of the interaction. In the seasonal metaphor, it is the surveying of the garden after the seeds are planted or again after the harvest is in. Between the numerous training committee meetings and the actual training session for Group B and Group A, there were many opportunities for reflection. During my seasons of reflection, I often found myself returning to the themes of respect and courage.

I recognize these themes in my dilemma of when to speak and when to listen. An example of this happened during a training session with Group B that I had facilitated, providing a significant amount of leadership. I led the closing of the session with a talking circle. I introduced the closing, spoke about it, I then passed the talking piece. When the talking piece returned to me I sensed there was more I needed to say to complete the session. I did not respond to that inner urging to speak further on the topic and the training session ended. After the session a participant (a person I recognize as observant and intuitive) asked if I had had anything further to say at the end of the circle. I responded, "Yes, but I felt that I needed to let people do their own learning." My response was based on my desire to respect others' learning and encourage them. She responded by saying, "Yes, that is true, and sometimes more is being required of us that we have to step out with." This was an instance when courage was required of me. For me to have spoken at that moment would have been the most respectful action for that

moment and those involved. Similarly, Day (1996) points out that it is through practice that one's intuition and decision-making skill are developed.

### **Conceptualization**

I found the conceptualization season the most difficult. It was often a time of low energy for me. It is deciding and changing in Vella's (1994) definition of praxis. In my seasonal metaphor, it is the germination time of the seed in the ground, and some seeds take much longer to germinate than others. When I reflect back on the conceptualization times, there were the times of "hitting the wall," of being unable to narrow the field of vision, and failing to see the connection in that overwhelming field of information. Yet, these were the times of tremendous growth and consolidation. One aspect of this season that I did appreciate was how it made my reading of the literature more meaningful. It brought me back to re-visit articles and books, to help clarify my understanding and make new connections. Often these moments were serendipitous: I would have a curiosity, a formulating question, something I was unable to make the connection with; I often had the sense that the answer or needed article found me, rather than me finding the answer. Similarly Zuka (1989) makes the observation that as humans we are not alone in this existence and Reason (1993) suggests that humans "co-create with the universe" (p. 4). While Dilts (1996) frames questions like, "Who and what else am I serving beyond myself?" (p. 37).

### **Experimentation**

Sullivan and Tift (2001) capture the spirit of experimentation for me in stating, "Within the framework of restorative justice, there is no place for a stage on which someone acts on behalf of others so that those others are relegated to the role of

spectator” (p. 140). If I am to help others be the subject of their own learning, I must be the subject of my learning. I must have the courage to join “with” my fellow learners. I found myself “with” learners when I took risks. My willingness to take risks, to experiment, was pivotal in developing my skill and intuition in trusting when to speak and when to listen.

Strongly related to the question of when to speak and when to listen is the use of debriefing. Its use is also closely tied to the use of intuition and trusting the process. Effective debriefing is an essential facilitation skill. Gass and Priest (1997) state: “The central purposes of facilitation are: to enhance the quality of the learning experience, to assist clients in finding directions and sources for functional change, and to create changes that are lasting and transferable” (p. 1). Debriefing is an interesting combination of Schön’s (1983) reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. When I am facilitating debriefing I often am functioning in the mode of reflection-in-action. The concern is not mine, it is the learners’ and often it is my first experiencing of the concern. However, the learner is functioning in the mode of reflection-on-action phase. The experience has happened and I am helping them understand its meaning.

Debriefing is an exciting time, a time of increased energy. Emotions usually are at play, the learners have had a wonderful experience and are excited to share and learn from it or they have stumbled and are confused and discouraged. It is a time for processing emotions (Boulanger, 2002). My experience with debriefing provided clear opportunities to practice what Goleman (1998) calls the emotional task: be aware of feelings, understand feelings, control your feelings, read other people, and resolve conflict. I found Popov’s (1997) metaphor of “cup-emptying questions,” (the “what”, the



“how”, and the “when”) helpful in debriefing. She states that these types of questions are “open-ended and show the utmost non-judgmental curiosity” (p. 50).

In reflecting on my use of debriefing with others, I often found I was identifying with Schön’s (1983) suggestion concerning artistry and being a competent practitioner. He states: “In his [sic] day to day practice he makes innumerable judgments of quality for which he cannot state adequate criteria, and he displays rules for which he cannot state the rules and procedures” (p. 50).

### **Conclusions**

The formulation of my research question on how training in restorative practices could affect educators’ abilities to use praxis and improve their abilities to collaborate was well suited for my own growth and expansion of consciousness. My goal of providing learners with the opportunities to utilize their experiences more effectively, to reflect on their meaning, and to reflect in a social context is an example of what Kolb (1984) refers to as the interactionism of experiential learning theory. He states: “The interactionism of experiential learning theory places knowing by apprehension on an equal footing with knowing by comprehension, resulting in a stronger interactionist position, really a transactionalism, in which knowledge emerges from the dialectic relationship between the two forms of knowing” (p. 101). I suggest this is also a description of collaboration, partners working in relationship with each other to create. Looking at my study from an interactionist position, I have come to five conclusions, which I offer here.

1. I have used dialectics, such as apprehension and comprehension, to explore, develop, and understand the impact training in restorative justice might have on public

school educators. Their existence and my growing ability to recognize and work with them continues to produce new learnings. In my first readings and introductions to Schön's (1983) distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action I did not consider or recognize the presence of dialectic. However in thinking of these concepts in terms of the debriefing process (p. 95), the dialectic becomes apparent. As educators' accept and begin to work *within* the context of the dialectic relationship new learnings and new collaborations can emerge.

2. Kolb's (1984) words of "equal footing" (p. 101) suggest the notion that equality is deeply tied to the dialectic process. I have long held the belief that I can only know myself (intra-personal) as fully as I am willing to reveal myself to others (inter-personal). It is by my presence, my willingness to reveal myself, that I invite others to collaborate with me. My experience and path in this project has been to find my voice and to speak it respectfully—the assertiveness axis—and to listen to and with the stories of others—the co-operation axis. It is through these two qualities that I am able to collaborate more fully with others. This path, as I have stated in various ways, is a mirror of the steps in the community conferencing process, the principles of restorative justice, and the healing of relationships.

3. It is my conclusion from my reading (eg., Boyce et al. 1995; Marsick, 1990) and experience as an educator and counselor that both individuals and their communities will benefit from the use of praxis. In the 21<sup>st</sup>. century, the skills individuals require will be wide and varied, from the ability to use increasingly complex technology, to effectively communicating and collaborating with individuals of divergent opinions and values (see Boyce, Franklin & Willets, 1995). This is expressly true for educators.

4. Praxis is a powerful intervention for educators to use in meeting the learning demands of the new century. As a proponent of praxis, I acknowledge that learners and their learning are embedded in their social context (as emphasized by Boyce, et al., 1995) and it is by meeting learners in their social context that learning can be encouraged. Marsick (1990) sees three concepts relevant to the new demands: “(1) reflection on experience, (2) the linkage between personal meaning and socially created consensual meaning embodied in the organization’s culture, and (3) the transformation of personal frames of reference [reframing]” (p. 24). Educators will make progress in their use of praxis as they include Marsick’s three concepts.

5. My inquiry demonstrates that training in restorative justice, when linked with methods that support and model the use of praxis, supports the development of praxis for the educator and leads to changes in practice that include the ability to be both more assertive and co-operative—to collaborate. Clearly, these skills are well suited to the demands as seen by see Boyce et al. (1995). This inquiry also increased my awareness and appreciation for the significant relationship between the use of dialectics, praxis, and collaboration. It is my conclusion that if learners are introduced and involved in a dialogue, they will be actively connected to their environment (the “objective”—the world and others). In dialogue, they will also be reflecting on their experience (the “subjective”—the experiential) and their relationship with their environment. Thus they are engaged in praxis (action with reflection) and a dialectic (self with the world); this engagement leads to and is an opportunity for collaboration.

### **Recommendations for Future Training and Research**

The findings from my inquiry provide opportunities for more new-doings. I offer five recommendations:

1. Given the very strong approval and effectiveness of the language patterns used with the elementary school staff, it seems reasonable to explore the use of these patterns in the training of community conference facilitators. As a trained and practicing community conference facilitator, I see significant benefits to both the facilitators and their clients through introducing these patterns to facilitators' training. It could also be interesting to explore the impact the use of these patterns might have within the context of the pre-conference and the community conference process.

2. It is encouraging to note the very creative and positive ways educators integrated this facilitator's training in practical ways in their classrooms. Their ability to integrate this training into classrooms speaks of its value to educators in general and not just in the formal role as facilitators of community conferences. This speaks to Wachtel's (1999) desire that restorative justice be practised in everyday life. The results from this research suggest that there is value in training an entire staff as facilitators, even if they do not facilitate community conferences. I urge other adult educators' to follow this recommendation with research and evaluation on the transfer and impact of restorative justice principles in everyday practise.

3. I suggest further research into how the use of my model could help participants identify areas of personal strength and weakness, which Cranton (1996) says are often difficult for the individual to perceive. Supporting participants in identifying their areas

of possible weakness and strengths could undoubtedly facilitate a more conscious development of new skills and attitudes.

In the context of my inquiry, I hesitated to use the model and the data from my questionnaires and inventories as teaching tools. The model, questionnaires, and the inventories were all closely attached to the use of my data collection; and as a novice researcher, I was uncertain how their use might influence my role in this research project. I wondered if using the inventories as a teaching tool might compromise the equality of my relationship with participants and might force me into the role of the expert with specialized knowledge and intentions outside of the training programs. However, given the experience I have gained through this inquiry, I would strongly consider giving the participants control over the data from the questionnaires and inventories. I would structure a process to gather their reflections on what the results from the pre- and post-project questionnaires and inventories meant to them.

4. Other inventories, like the Myers-Briggs Style Inventory (1980) or Learning Styles Inventory (Kolb, 1984) might also be very interesting to use in more comprehensive ways to track the changes in participants during a training program using my suggested format and model.

5. Finally, there is the significant use of the talking circle and the role it played in the different results between the two training groups. Fine's (1997) question shows that the talking circle must also be examined: "What kinds of pedagogy might be developed to bring more equitable conditions to the discussion circle?" (p. 55) Although I am comfortable that we in this study created a very equitable circle, it is curious that the educators who used the circle the least appeared to increase their assertive abilities the

most. Continued research and reflection on the circle, its abilities to provide a space for dialogue, and its influence on the participants are important to its effective use.

### **Closing Reflection**

A final and continuous new-doing from this inquiry springs from the gift itself. Energy begets energy. A gift involves both the giver and the receiver as it invites continued dialogue. The abiding gift for me from my work presented here is “respect for learners,” principle 6 from Vella’s (1994) 12 principles for effective adult learning. When receiving from others I often remind myself, as Albert Einstein reminded himself, “that my inner and outer lives are based on the labours of other people, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving” (cited in Calaprice, 1996, p. 9). During this project it has been my privilege to structure and provide experiences for learners and to be a witness to the wisdom and insight learners gleaned from the presented information and their experiences.

What **JOY!**

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## APPENDIX A

### Module No. 6.

## NEEDS, SEEING AND MEETING

The intention of module #6 is to help new volunteers recognize the variety of needs participants in a community conference may have with a view to addressing those needs.

### *Introduction:*

- Opening: ‘Use the logo again with a story to help re-inforce the symbolic value and the central theme of the motto, Xwiyu’ los’ tel (look after each other).
- Again, maybe tie looking after each other to “needs” our own and others and ask a question that we’ll use in our circle tonight. “What have you noticed different about how you are responding to ”needs” your own and others?”

Go over the expected order of events for this module, restate the intention.

- Two rounds with a talking piece, check-in and tonight’s question
- Break into groups of three or four and practice a victim’s pre-conference.
- Debriefing within the smaller groups.
- Return to the larger circle and debrief the pre-conferences.
- In the larger circle use closing questions and comments.

### *Script:*

1. A check in round followed by the question “What have you noticed different about how you are responding to “needs”—your own and others?”
2. Break into practice groups for offender’s pre-conference and have each group member facilitate a pre-conference. Debrief for facilitators within small groups.
3. Return to larger circle setting and debrief the process and have a round with the talking piece, “How does this process honour the offender’s needs?” or maybe “What do you see as the offender’s needs and how does this process respect those needs
4. Hopefully those questions will lead to “Focus question on “needs” and help people to see how respectful it is to let the conference participants meet their own needs”.
5. Again, in closing do check out with reference to getting feedback on how the training program is meeting their needs and suggest what will happen in module # 7.