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Restorative justice as reflective practice and applied pedagogy on college campuses

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Restorative justice (RJ) is both a methodology for dealing with conflict and a process for modeling more positive human relations after social harm. As both method and process, the benefits of developing restorative practices on college campuses go well beyond just the many positive community-oriented outcomes of facilitated conflict resolution processes. We argue that the opportunities for reflective pedagogy and learning for student facilitators outpace the pragmatic benefits to the parties in conflict. By explaining the reflective learning and theoretical interaction that has blossomed between and among students and teachers during the implementation of a RJ initiative in DePauw University's Conflict Studies Program (CSP), this paper problematizes the role of student engagement and practice in analytical learning about conflict and conflict resolution. The CSP/RJ project, a liberal arts practice initiative, provides a space and structure for undergraduate students to apply conflict theory and learn through the experience of facilitating restorative conferences. Restorative conferences facilitate dialog between harmed individuals and those responsible for causing the harm. In providing victim(s) with a voice and offender(s) the opportunity to take primary responsibility for repairing past harm, restorative conferences represent an untapped resource for students of applied peace education and teachers' interested in applied conflict pedagogy.

Keywords: conflict resolution; culture of peace; transformative learning; students; social justice

Introduction

As both conflict resolution methodology and a pedagogical process, the benefits of instituting restorative justice (RJ) conferences in college/university settings go well beyond the many positive community-oriented outcomes associated with such practice. Student-facilitated conflict resolution processes such as RJ conferences, or what some call community conferences (see Abramson and Moore 2002), provide not only a space and structure for the inclusive and organic solution to community problems that are the result of a crime or harm, but they also provide a rare educational modeling of pro-social communication, collective problem solving, and conflict intervention. In this article, we argue that by serving as facilitators of RJ conferences students' opportunities for reflective learning and practice quickly outpace the obvious pragmatic benefits of such conferences to campus-based conflict parties. By

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explaining the reflective learning and theoretical interaction that has blossomed between and among both teachers and students during the implementation of a recently formed RJ initiative in DePauw University's Conflict Studies Program (CSP), this article foregrounds the role of student engagement and experiential/ empathetic learning in becoming a professional in the field of peace and conflict studies. In following an experiential learning methodology, this article relies on our experiences of DePauw's RJ initiative to make clear our argument for an applied pedagogy of conflict resolution. Additionally, the article supports what some have termed 'grounded curriculum' (Lang 2012) in which it is argued that the hope for modern higher education lies in participatory action research in local communities nearest to the institution.

More than simply a useful conflict intervention practice, RJ processes provide an opportunity to create collaborative and engaged learning, develop creative pedagogy, and foster wider impacts than those simply found in the traditional classroom. The DePauw University CSP/RJ initiative opens the potential for closer community–student interaction and fosters the type of empathetic relationships necessary for lasting community building and learning. Not only do the student opportunities for reflective learning and practice outpace the obvious pragmatic benefits to conflict parties involved in RJ processes, but the pro-social benefits to the entire College campus community are enhanced by supporters' involvement in such processes. As members of an 'unjust community' (Rader, Piland, and Pascarell 2002) students serving as facilitators and participants of RJ programs are given a position to respond to unmet needs within the campus community. This article provides preliminary evidence of the many benefits of such engaged conflict resolution pedagogy and makes the argument that this is an under-discussed and less obvious aspect of the need for more RJ initiatives within higher education and beyond. Additional experience co-directing the Conflict Resolution Resource Center (CRRC) at Guilford College has provided the faculty author with a critical context to comparatively engage the many methodological, process-oriented, and pedagogical implications of RJ processes and their unique ability to support the process of reflective practice and pedagogy in college settings.

Pedagogical considerations

Students of the social sciences are too often engaged in discourses aimed solely at deconstructing injustices by analyzing the causes of suffering and injustice without providing positive examples of successful social change or giving students the skills to create change (Rader, Piland, and Pascarell 2002). A pedagogy focused on reflective practice is both critical and discerning of effective local change management and necessary for applied learning. Reflective practice involves a penchant towards what Donald Schon calls 'reflection-in-action' (Schon 1983, 49). As Schon puts it:

> When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. (Schon 1983, 68)

Such 'reflective practice' (what we also might call 'praxis' (Freire 1970, 51)) cannot be learned in books, but is arguably the bedrock of the creation and maintenance of truly professional knowledge and competency for creating local change. For aspiring

peacemakers and peacebuilders, learning these skills and abilities, though not easy, is critical to effective practice as well as informed theory-building.

Referencing Paolo Freire and bell hooks, Vaandering (2010) calls upon RJ to meet Freire's (1970) pedagogical demands for first awareness then action on 'undo oppression.' By applying hooks' belief that the broader sociopolitical and cultural forces at play must be addressed to create healing for individuals by resolving conflict (Vaandering 2010) a critical pedagogy is constructed, as well as made more easily palatable to students. According to hooks (as cited by Vaandering 2010), we must look inward and change who we are and how we educate if we want to change oppression, and, in turn, change cycles of conflict (Vaandering 2010). 'In so doing, hooks provides for RJ in education a model for interrogating the theory–practice divide and the concept of community as a space for healing and justice' (Vaandering 2010, 147). Such attention within the field of Education Studies to the centrality of the union between theory and practice for developing a critical pedagogy provides clear justification for furthering the use of restorative practices on college campuses. If we want students of conflict studies to change existing structures of justice in the future, our curriculum must provide them with accessible opportunities to create and experience change in the present. What better place to engage students still forming their ideas about the world than on a college campus? While applying theories that question common practice students build experience and confidence to effectively challenge oppression and stagnant sociality.

While traditional social science pedagogies too often keep theory and practice separate, lack of practice experience leaves students equipped with 'technical rationality' (Schon 1983, 21) but little ability to apply this knowledge. Devoid of practice opportunity, such critical skills training and pedagogy is left under-addressed at best, or completely lacking at worst. In the positivist landscape of traditional college learning, how does one teach the soft skills necessary to lead people away from destructive conflict to pro-social and constructive conflict interaction? We argue that the best, and maybe only, way to teach such experiential knowledge is through modeling applied theory that couples critical reflection with the actual application of third party intervention. Without some sense of connection to the application of theory, students are likely to lose the relevance of the theoretical processes necessary for developing sound conflict practice interventions. Students will be left with an idealized, theory-based version of conflict intervention with no understanding of how complex and nuanced theory application really is.

Methodological considerations

Written from both the position of a teacher and a student involved in co-facilitating a restorative process, this article aims to provide insight into the critical pedagogy of applied theory through experientially and ethnographically exploring RJ conferences as reflective practice. As action research, the article aims at 'supporting and engineering change as an integral part of the research process' (Robson 2002, 7). Through a combination of critical pedagogy, experiential learning through appreciative inquiry and ethnographic participant observation of the CSP/RJ initiative's first case we have strived to reconstruct the impact and relevance of group restorative process on a campus environment with the intent of both making and teaching a more just community on campus. Following Hurst's (1991) call to readers of ethnographic essays to 'be aware of the possible distortions of the necessarily narrow

though forceful arguments that fit into the essay form' (Hurst 1991, 202), we foreground the obvious power dynamics on a college campus through exploring the work of changing community members' perceptual lenses about justice (see Zehr 1990). One important way that this foregrounding is done is through the creation of a learning community model in which student and teacher are equal agents in teaching and learning. Despite the inherent pedagogical and practical difficulties of such learning communities' models, the team work of all collaborative projects is invaluable to create for an increasingly global student body.

Finally, the ongoing evaluative nature of this work lends to obvious methodological constraints. Outcomes evaluation in the short-term is tricky, at best, and in order to overcome such complexities we consciously chose to take an approach to evaluation that involves appreciative inquiry. Taking a critical stance towards assumed knowledge evaluating experiential learning through appreciative inquiry entails 'the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity in positive ways' (Watkins and Mohr 2001, 194). Appreciative inquiry builds on what worked, as opposed to highlighting what did not. Thinking about the college community as both a justice and education system, the ethnographic reporting of experiential learning and reflective pedagogy in this article aims to provide grounding for change, but not *the* change per se. Student facilitators were consistently guided by an appreciative inquiry focus on questioning with a positive orientation, and thus developed a capacity to construct as opposed to simply deconstruct. Embracing a methodology that is aware of longitudinal constraints and overcoming them with a present-focused and learning-community-centered modeling of appreciative inquiry, we ground our insights in the hope that others will locally take up the dream of change our experience confirms.

The practice

As a conflict intervention practice initiative at a small liberal arts institution, the CSP/RJ initiative provides a space and a structure for undergraduate students to apply conflict theory, test causal inferences, and learn through experience by facilitating and reflecting on restorative conferences which are referred to the CSP/RJ initiative by campus life's Office of Community Standards. An RJ Conference is a co-facilitated dialog process between harmed individuals and those responsible for causing the harm, the goals being to provide 'victim(s)' with an opportunity to be made whole and for 'offender(s)' to take primary public responsibility for repairing any harm previously done. Such an intervention process 'is decidedly not a process by which: punishment is imposed by a public official on an individual; or punishment or therapy is imposed on an individual, by a group, on behalf of a public official' (Abramson and Moore 2002, 137). From an institutional standpoint it is therefore critical that RJ conferences are, in both actuality and perception, a completely independent and self-contained process from any student accountability process run by student life or other departments of school administration.[1]

RJ conferences are predicated on the idea that when harms are committed, the whole community is impacted by that harm. This focus on the impact of harm on the community, of course, assumes that a sense of community exists – a difficult sell in our individualistic American society, but a sell made much easier in the social milieu of a small liberal arts college. As 'well-defined communities' college campuses 'are capable of developing internally coherent restorative programs to address

student behavior that violates college policies and/or criminal law' (Karp and Conrad 2005, 315). In such settings, where a majority of students live on campus and learn together on a daily basis, the potential for RJ conferences is great, especially since victims and offenders are likely to meet again. In addition, the problems occurring within a college campus community often mirror problems occurring within larger communities and contexts, thus providing a microcosm of greater society for student facilitators and participants. Engaging with these conflicts within the protection of a campus setting allows students to problematize conflict resolution processes and engage in self-reflective practice in a relatively safe environment.

Rectifying past injustice involves a visioning of a future where parties can forgive, but not forget; a situation in which individual accountability is valued as co-equal with a desire to maintain a sense of community. Key to this process is an acceptance of responsibility on the part of the person referred to this process (what we call below the respondent[2]), and implicit in this acceptance of responsibility is an understanding of a collective desire for shared community. The RJ conference itself, thus, becomes a site to reinforce a sense of community while simultaneously acting as a conduit for developing humane language and response for past community harm. As Karp and Conrad (2005) write:

> It is an approach that focuses on moral education by integrating academic learning, student participation in the judicial process, and restorative justice principles. The approach is both a response to individual misbehavior and campus dissensus. (Karp and Conrad 2005, 317)

For this process to work most effectively from a pragmatic standpoint, a clear referral process, involving case screening and selection developed and implemented by the Office of Community Standards, or Office of Student Life, is critical. The referral process must acknowledge the capacity of student facilitators and the severity of cases they are ready to take on while also liking to enforcement mechanisms already in place on campus. Just as responsibility is crucial to the social psychological processes of shame and guilt necessary for shift in participants, the selection of cases that include a marked impact on multiple members of the community provides the emotional investment necessary for difficult conversations to bear transformative fruit.

> Though many conferencing proponents have focused on the offenders' shame as being the cornerstone of this process, we feel this to be only one possible part of a successful conference. We assert that the sequence of emotions throughout the conference is critical to understanding the source of the efficacy and the power of the process. (Abramson and Moore 2002, 135)

Both as a process and movement, RJ is best described by using the metaphor of a river (Zehr 2002, 61–62). If the gradation is right and runoff and precipitation are enough, a small trickle of water can become the source of a mighty river. Similarly, if the referral process is sound and community accountability is a valued resource, then the right case can become the source of a vibrant and community-driven accountability process and lasting change. Lack of these critical inputs will leave the landscape of RJ barren and river-less. By leading parties through waves of emotions such a process can model both a pedagogy and epistemology of practice that can have lasting effects on community building and group capacity for conflict

resolution. As Karp and Conrad argue, RJ on the college campus 'promotes inclusion over social distancing' (Karp and Conrad 2005, 318). In the case of the DePauw University, CSP/RJ initiative, collaborative pre-planning of a clear sense of the specific use and value of restorative practices provided the critical riverbed for modeling the effectiveness of these restorative practices and, in turn, building a supportive environment for this new vision of justice and community accountability. While there is much ground for the CSP/RJ program to traverse before restorative practices become a raging torrent of community change at the traditionally conservative DePauw University, initial outcomes and learning potentials were made clear to all who participated in the RJ conference. From those in the Office of Community Standards to students familiar with the accountability process, the RJ experience resonated with their desire for a more meaningful community engagement on issues of harm. Further, the creation of this referral process enhanced student understanding of university accountability processes and highlighted the many ethical challenges of dealing with student conflicts. For example, even though the restorative practice philosophy (see Umbreit, Vos, and Coates 2006) cites the importance of voluntary participation in restorative processes (i.e. the idea that referred students must be given the choice to participate, and not mandated to do so), our experience speaks to the pragmatic difficulties of creating both interpersonal and systems change. Despite this ideal, when starting a new initiative that challenges dominant conceptions of justice systems, existing systems can exert important pressure and support to engage innovative intervention practice. The need to design programs that can be hypothesis-tested and reflected on is critical for both student-learners and justice systems. Even though this may at times run counter to RJ 'ideals,' providing respondents strong incentives to participate in conferences provides a connection to the realities of applied theory.

The practice is fairly pragmatic – after preparing the parties for the RJ conference, parties are brought together in a co-facilitated process whereby the facilitators walk impacted parties through three stages of discussion guided by the following three broad questions: what happened, who was harmed or affected by what happened, and what do we need to do now to repair the harms created? Pragmatically the practice is harder than it first appears and providing students with an ability to co-facilitate fleshes out the inherent difficulties of third-party practice and emotional psychology, developing reflective learning along the way.

Getting the parties to the table is not the goal for the CSP/RJ conference, rather getting parties to understand and buy into the process is most important. Not only can this be extremely difficult when those involved are steeped in the dominant cultural discourse and understanding of punitive justice, but institutional procedure and constraints can often run counter to this measured process. What we call justice as law and order – i.e. directed at meting out justice deserved, not necessarily repairing harm done, poses an ideological obstacle to RJ conferences, but equally problematic can be procedural norms and institutional policies that have been influenced by the popular retributive and individualistic discourses. Umbreit and his colleagues appropriately ask: 'Can restorative justice really be a victim centered approach when the overwhelming emphasis and resources in the system are so heavily focused upon identifying, apprehending, processing and punishing or even treating the offender?' (Umbreit, Vos, and Coates 2005). In developing restorative practices in a college setting, such pre-process planning and discussion of policy and procedural norms is essential for long-term success of the restorative practices. As institutions of

learning, the argument to incorporate RJ into traditional forms of campus justice is strengthened when the opportunity for learning on the part of the respondent is emphasized, but the reality is that all involved can gain an educational payoff.

Equally important to RJ practice is the need to clearly explain to all parties the goals and objectives of the RJ conference prior to convening a conference. When meeting individually in pre-conference caucuses with the parties, it is important that facilitators develop a clearly impartial stance to the problem or harm while also building a rapport with those involved. What is said in caucuses and pre-conference preparation meetings can have lasting and important impacts on the RJ conference that will occur and, therefore, words have to be chosen carefully. The decision-making about what is shared with each party must be carefully thought through, as well as clear understanding of what you will and will not discuss with the other party needs to be clearly communicated. This pre-conference practice, most equivalent to coaching and counseling, is invaluable experience for students to reflect on before, during, and after the conference. A related challenge, especially for student facilitators with little experience creating equidistance and working to be perceived as multipartial, is getting what came out in caucuses to come out during the conference without asking leading questions or breeching confidentiality or impartiality in ways that might cause harm. This challenge was experienced by our facilitators and provided a critical reflexive lens for students to further inspect during post-conference reflections.

Co-facilitators have to walk a fine line between minimizing the conflict and maximizing it (see Abramson and Moore 2002). If, for example, a case arises in which a student gets drunk and destroys public property on campus, the complexity of finding a representative of the community that can personalize how this damaged communal property affected them may jeopardize the effectiveness of an RJ conference. The trick in both pre-conference and conference negotiation with the parties is to get the burden of future action squarely on the respondent's shoulders and simultaneously to work with the 'plaintiff' (or 'plaintiffs') to carefully negotiate the sanctions necessary to restore the respondent to the community while simultaneously insuring the needs of the plaintiff. Co-facilitators must address such complexities analytically and reflexively with both parties prior to, during, and after the conference; otherwise, the uncertainty of casual and emotional boundaries crossed might reduce the potential for the transformation of parties' feelings and behaviors. An understanding of these complexities cannot be read in any theory textbook and cannot be fully captured in theoretical concepts like neutrality, empowerment, or asymmetric conflict. Real exposure to these contextual challenges is the best way to complicate the process of conflict intervention for students, to provide them with clear examples of the ambiguity of professional practice, and to develop a level of comfort about, as well as associated tools to embrace professional ambiguity. The American college campus represents one important and relatively untapped setting for this work.

The setting

Choosing the types of cases is a critical step in ensuring positive outcomes for an RJ conference. While developing the CSP/RJ initiative, a great deal of attention was given to the types of cases that would be taken on. Not only was the CSP interested in working with the Office of Community Standards to fill the need for restorative process on campus, but we needed to acknowledge the limitations of a fledgling

program with inexperienced facilitators and insure that no liability was unnecessarily accepted. Initially, at least the CSP/RJ initiative had to compromise on impartiality in order to rely on the Office of Community Standards to help select 'safe' cases. While RJ processes can certainly be beneficial in cases of either violent or sexual assault, the sensitivities involved in such cases, and the potential liability of students facilitating such cases, were deemed beyond our initial capacity and level of training. We outlined the importance of receiving cases which were connected to harm within the community, such as property damage or public disturbances, while avoiding the many cases of students who were caught drinking with no clearly harmed 'plaintiff.' When we did receive a case, we did our best to isolate the process from the Office of Community Standards to create a sense of impartiality and remove the perception that our role was related to a retributive sense of punishment. Pulling this notion of impartiality and case selection apart opened facilitating students' eyes to the challenges of creating change within existing institutional structures. While problem setting is as crucial a process as problem solving (Schon 1983), much of the difficulties associated with preconceived notions of facilitator bias and retributive mindset could be handled by choices associated with both physical conference setting, as well as initial problem setting and framing during the pre-conference discussions with parties.

We chose to hold our first conference in a quiet, private space on campus that is infrequently used and not affiliated with any office or community organization. Space neutrality was important, as was the warm atmosphere of the room, comfortable chairs, and the ability to sit in a circle without any obstructions between us. While a seemingly trivial question, the setting of pre-conference and conference activities clarified the CSP/RJ initiative's independent role on campus for the participants, insured a level of impartiality, and served as a lesson to student facilitators to the depth of detail conflict resolution practitioners must consider to prevent unintended further harm to participants. A large part of successful conferencing on a college campus involves educating potential consumers of the process about what it is that we do and how it is separate from other official sanctions or third-party approaches. Choosing appropriate settings on campus to do the 'work' was critical to ensuring successful outcomes, quietly advertising our work, and maintaining confidentiality.

Further theory behind the practice

Following the grandfather of the RJ movement, Howard Zehr (1990), the process of getting people to move from a retributive paradigm of justice to a restorative one is like changing lenses in photography. The look through the lens provides a completely new view of the subject matter and produces completely different results. 'Restorative justice seeks to provide an alternative framework or lens for thinking about crime and justice' (Zehr 2002, 32). The challenges of such a changing of lens or a 'paradigm shift' (Kuhn 1962) are legion.

> The source of resistance is assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems, that nature [read social life] can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides. Inevitably, at times of revolution, that assurance seems stubborn and pigheaded as indeed it sometimes becomes. But it is also something more. That same assurance is what makes normal puzzle-solving science possible. (Kuhn 1962, 151–152)

Overcoming the dominant paradigm of crime as a break with laws as opposed to thinking of crime as harm to the community's norms presents a multi-level problem in need of a new way of re-conceptualizing and operationalizing the role of justice in society. Still, the little we know or speak of the power of restoration and reconciliation is shocking when placed beside our assumptions of retribution and violence. Nagler (2004) eloquently points to this lack of discourse, and thus knowledge, of nonviolent response to community harm as a major hurdle to creating nonviolent social change.

RJ practice forces one to see victims as interconnected with victimizers, and offenders simultaneously as victims. True restorative practice blurs the neat lines society places on victims and offenders for all involved, and this ambiguity is a resource for conflict resolution learning and pedagogy. As Zehr says: 'If we are to address harms and causes, we must explore the harms that offenders themselves have experienced' (Zehr 2002, 30). Similarly, as victims are involved in restorative conferences to get answers, healing, and a feeling of renewed security, during the restorative process they can develop a sense of empathy and understanding of the offenders' circumstances and choices. This can often be perceived, and at times misinterpreted, as re-victimizing the victim, but if handled carefully and caringly, the outcomes for the victim may be more life changing than for the offender.

RJ is a theory of justice and as such it remains open to critique and criticism. In fact, most scholars arguing for this theory of justice openly admit that it is not for everyone or every case (see Zehr 2002; Karp and Allena 2004, among others). From Zehr's perspective, 'restorative justice balances concerns for all' (Zehr 2002, 31) and decision-making processes around justice in restorative process are 'mindful of outcomes, intended and unintended' (Zehr 2002, 69). It is this mindfulness that can connect victims and offenders in ways that punishment cannot, producing transformed relationship and communities. Learning this mindfulness takes critical pedagogy and reflective practice. In the creation of our campus program, articulating these complex concepts and creating buy-in not only from the university structure, but also from student facilitators and participants took careful planning and re-education surrounding student misconduct.

Still 'the most common question about any disciplinary program is, "Does it work"' (Karp and Conrad 2005, 329)? Our experience with the CSP/RJ initiative is that positive benefits of relational interaction surely outweigh the potential harms to the community associated with limited, or no, interaction. Even so, on a case-by-case basis this question of effectiveness is critical and requires the constant reflective attention of facilitators and faculty sponsors. We find Nagler's (2004) explanation of what 'works' in nonviolent action to be helpful here. Nagler argues that to answer the effectiveness question about nonviolent tactics we need 'to get from a simplistic to a realistic sense of action and consequences' (Nagler 2004, 87). For Nagler, this means that what works is not always immediately or intuitively apparent. Similarly, in evaluating the effectiveness of RJ practice it is critical to expose every social level that the process reflexively affects. At the personal level, lives (or at least perceptions of justice within individual lives) are changed, at the community level harmonious relationship is modeled and community empowered, and at the institutional–systemic level an alternative conception of punishment is tested as possible justice expression. In this sense I think we can say that restorative practices 'work,' regardless of whether we can presently show quantitatively that it works better than traditional punishment. Despite the blurriness of short-term effectiveness,

long-term benefits of a variety of approaches seem obvious. As Nagler says about nonviolent action:

> they work on the much deeper level that is precisely where violence fails most reliably: every time someone uses real nonviolence, things get better, the system moves forward towards stable peace, whether or not the actor achieves his or her immediate goal. (Nagler 2004, 97)

In substituting retributive justice for violence and RJ for nonviolence in the above quote, our experience tells us that what works can only be effectively measured via a generational systems-level analysis. Thus, process is the critical focus of effective practice, not outcomes. When we think of justice as a system of interlocking relations, RJ as reflective practice and pedagogy provides a process with potential far-reaching outcomes. Such potential is stifled in a merely punitive system. In focusing on process and appreciating what works we build value and creative flexibility in the system.

CSP/RJ initiative case number one

The first case referred to the CSP/RJ initiative was ideal for the students and their preparation.[3] Endeavoring to put the above theoretical and methodological commitments into practice, the CSP/RJ initiative decided to have the first case co-facilitated by one professor and one student (the authors of this article). This decision had the benefit of ensuring the legitimacy of an independent process while simultaneously creating the space for ongoing teaching and learning. Three students agreed to participate in an observer role by taking notes on the conference interaction and sharing reflections in debrief post conference. These students were introduced to the parties as observers-in-training and did not speak during the restorative conference.

The case involved an intoxicated female student (from here on, 'respondent') who disturbed a retired Greencastle couple around midnight when she pounded on their front door looking for her friends. When the couple informed her she was not at the right house, she excitedly ran through the house, into the backyard, leaving the frightened couple to call the police, concerned about her well-being and their own safety. The respondent was non-compliant with the Greencastle police and the campus police became engaged when the responding officer decided to contact them hoping their prior interaction with the respondent would prove useful. This was not the student's first interaction with either police forces and she was subsequently taken to jail for resisting arrest and noncompliance. This case was ideal for the purposes of RJ because it had affected a number of people in the immediate DePauw community – including the older couple harmed by the student's behavior, who happened to be long-time friends of the university (indeed they were past owners of a local shop and had a long, and mostly positive, history of interaction with DePauw students). The case exemplified many of the town-gown issues in Greencastle, Indiana, where local residents are frustrated with 'unruly rich brats' and students are largely unaware of the full impact of their actions on the wider off-campus community. The respondent involved was willing to participate as part of her sanctions imposed by the Office of Community Life. Her pre-conference revealed her main desire was to put the incident behind her. The Office of Community Standards employee referring the case believed the respondent would benefit from better understanding

the harm she had caused and that this understanding could potentially be a powerful learning experience for her.

The CSP/RJ initiative prepared its student facilitators/observers by studying the principles of RJ, participating in role-plays, coordinating with the Office of Community Standards, and participating in a training session given by Dr Mark Umbreit during a CSP-sponsored visit to campus. During these initial sessions students reflected on RJ as a philosophy, practiced deep listening skills, and offered critiques and challenges to RJ's practical applications at DePauw University. The agreed upon model included pre-conferencing with all of the conference participants followed by a meeting of all participants using a co-facilitated conferencing model to discuss the incident and repair the harm. In addition, it was decided that three student observers would participate as in-service training for the initiative. The post-conference debriefing with facilitators and observers was seen as critical to ensure pedagogical outcomes and build participant confidence and capacity towards future successful intervention.

Regarding this first case, students had to apply many elements of conflict theory to prepare for, and run, the restorative conference. This theory, including creating an analytical typology of the conflict situation, hypothesizing about the sources and dynamics of the conflict interaction, and collaboratively articulating possible problem-solving outcomes, in-process, as the conference moved forward towards repairing the harm. All the reflection-in-action and post-conference debriefing helped to improve student's innate theory-building skills, as well as their ability to apply the theory learned in their classes. One student observer sheepishly said to the faculty facilitator in post-conference debriefing 'this experience was more useful than any class I have ever had at DePauw!'

The typology students developed helped to identify important parties involved in the case and guide students in determining whom to invite to the conference. While the CSP/RJ initiative's model generally includes a respondent, a respondent supporter, and a victim and victim supporters, each case has special features and realities that challenge students to make decisions selecting participants based on a complex set of factors that include: scheduling constraints, difficulties associated with determining who was harmed, and difficulties associated with deciding what might produce the best learning outcomes for the respondent and healing for the victim.

We identified the respondent, the Greencastle couple, and the DePauw campus police officer as necessary for the healing process.[4] Students identified the conflict as a manifest social conflict that had affects on the relationship between the DePauw and Greencastle community members, the respondent and the officer, and the respondent and plaintiffs. In addition, the conflict clearly involved intra-personal conflicts affecting the respondent. Students, in using Dugan's (1996) nested model of conflict, developed their own analysis of the conflict. Clearly seeing how the conflict is 'nested' at multiple levels, students mapped the issue level as involving differing needs and perceptions of insecurity, differing needs to understand the past interaction, and a mutual interest for reconnection after the events in question. 'While the issues may be complex and further complicated by their interconnections to other issues, so long as only issues are involved, the conflict is still issue-specific' (Dugan 1996, 15). At the relationship level there was a heartfelt expression on the part of the plaintiffs to see that a relationship be built and fostered so that this student's problematic behavior would not reoccur. At the sub-system level social

pressures to consume alcohol – an important cultural influence in the DePauw University community, one dominated by Greek life – were also major sources of the conflict. The campus setting is ideal to attend to this type of 'nested' conflict because these pressures and further system-level tensions could be discussed openly as the parties deemed necessary. Finally, at the system level, tensions were already high between the university and the Greencastle community over many issues, with this incident exacerbating a preexisting set of conflicts over space, lifestyle, and perceptions between the two communities. Systemically, a tacit response to past drunkenness was also clear.

After mapping the conflict in pre-conference meetings with the participants, it was determined that the source of the conflict related to the respondent being under the influence. The student was apologetic and embarrassed by the experience, though this was not the first time drinking had caused problems for her (as was clear from the input of the campus police officer involved in the conference). During the conference, the respondent admitted past problems with drinking, and the female plaintiff empathized with her and alluded to having dealt with similar situations in the past herself. The connection between the two participants (the respondent and wife of the husband–wife community residents involved) provided insight into the powers of RJ to form connections between two people even from drastically different socioeconomic backgrounds and generations. In addition, interaction led to the subsequent conversation about creating a lasting relationship between the respondent and the female plaintiff, who offered to be a 'mother away from home' at one point during the conference.

RJ provides an opportunity for dialog about the issue-to-system level causes of community harms and creates a learning process surrounding the abuse of alcohol that goes beyond the usual slap on the wrist that is administered by school administration. The respondent in this first CSP/RJ initiative case recognized that without such a process the conflict would have never moved to a stage in which healing was possible. After the conflict between the parties, the existing system would only address the conflict that was between the student and the DePauw code of conduct, leaving the relationship with the Greencastle community residents unattended. The respondent entered the RJ process with a perspective of the incident that reflected that she had missed the harm she had caused to the Greencastle community because her community standards sanction did not consider this. As a clear example of conflict transformation, the RJ process 'addresses both the episode and the epicenter of conflict' (Lederach 2003, 31). During the conference, facilitators and observers saw a shift in the respondent's acknowledgment to recognizing greater harm. Particularly as the respondent heard the community residents' exhibit genuine concern for her well-being the facilitators noticed a shift from embarrassment over the incident to relief and thanks for the opportunity to speak with the 'victims.' Part of this shift likely related to the respondent's shock that Greencastle residents could be so caring and relationship-oriented – this challenged a common conception of DePauw students. The participants got the apology they needed, but also saw the learning process of the student, which represented a large part of the reason they chose to participate in the conference. Without the RJ/CSP, these outcomes may not have occurred because the paths of the respondent and community participants may not have intersected in any established or institutionalized way. Without the RJ process, those involved would only know each other as people who caused them problems, not people they learned something from and could have relationship with. For

student facilitators/observers, watching this process unravel and unpacking its out-comes provided many key learning moments.

After receiving the case from Community Standards, the facilitators set up indi-vidual meetings with the conference participants. Pre-conferencing was a valuable first exercise in listening and establishing legitimacy, rapport, and 'neutrality'[5] with the conference participants while still getting the information needed to move the case to a conferencing stage. Having read the case report, the facilitators knew only the basic background of the incident, and were challenged to get the respondent involved to reveal the further details – this challenge remained throughout the con-ferencing process as the respondent was obviously ashamed and reticent to reveal anything further about her drunken behavior. Furthermore, case reports by nature do not reveal feelings and reactions of those involved, which are important for RJ pro-cesses to address. As a peer, the student facilitator had to establish trust with the respondent by reassuring her that confidentiality was of utmost importance to the program and the conference was not intended to pass judgment, further incriminate, or punish her. The student facilitator and the respondent discussed the principles and intentions of RJ and the potential positive outcomes of the student's participation. Getting the perpetrator of a crime or harm to realize that this process will have more than just shame and punishment in it for them is a tricky, yet important, obstacle to collectively consider during the pre-conference phases. A common way to sell the process is to explain that it will provide respondents an opportunity to more fully explain what they were thinking and feeling during the incident. Aside from gather-ing relevant information from the participating parties, the pre-conferencing also enabled the facilitators to develop a base-line hypothesis about how the conference would go and what obstacles they would be facing, such as the hesitation of the stu-dent to share her side of the story, reaction from the plaintiffs, etc. This process is critical to the practice of both RJ conferencing and being a reflective practitioner of applied conflict theory. This is a process akin to what Donald Schon calls 'problem setting.' Schon writes:

> A conflict of ends cannot be resolved by the use of techniques derived from applied research. It is rather through the non-technical process of framing a problematic situa-tion that we may organize and clarify both the ends to be achieved and the possible means of achieving them. (Schon 1983, 41)

In the first CSP/RJ process the pre-conference was critical to successful outcomes and special attention not to set the problem was key to transformational outcomes.

During the conference itself, students' training was put to full use. The learning community had prepared a script for the CSP/RJ initiative, which gave us a pre-established order for speaking, participation, and questioning of each participant. Of course, reality cannot be scripted, as was learned by the student facilitator and observers in this process. The conference started with participants sharing their experiences from the evening and expressing how they felt about the events. The respondent was slow and shy to open up, but quickly apologized for her actions and expressed her desire to move on. The Greencastle residents expressed how they felt during the incident (a bit scared by an intruder in their home), but emphasized that their true concern was for the well-being of the respondent and how they could help her. They were happy to interact with the respondent in a different situation and be able to see her as a real person and not as a drunk breaking into their house and

unresponsive to their concerns. This empathy was key to the process, and in this case took little work from the facilitators to bring out.

The officer reported on the 'facts' of the situation and expressed his desire to see the respondent stay out of trouble in the future. He did not say much, but this may have been the fault of the facilitators for not engaging him more in the stories that others told. As the facilitators moved away from the script to allow the dialog to flow freely, the Officer, like the facilitators, became more of an observer in the process. In our post-conference debriefing, the facilitation team discussed the consequences of this and determined that it was critical to ensure that all participants feel consistently engaged in the process. The need to stick to the script was discussed as one way we could ensure equal participation and it was agreed that this inclusiveness was particularly critical at the beginning and the end of the conference when the facilitators have the greatest control over the dialog process. Still, as the facilitators moved away from the script, the participants started talking directly to each other instead of through the facilitators. The educational outcomes of this work go well beyond the participants to the team of facilitators/observers realizing the spaces for change through dialog.

During our earlier training with Dr Mark Umbreit, the idea that in a successful RJ conference facilitators will melt away from the scene as conference participants connect to each other had been discussed. The transition to this type of dialog started when the respondent began her explanation of the events with an apology to the other participants, and followed up with a more heartfelt apology after hearing their experience of the evening's events. As discussed by Karp and Conrad (2005), her second apology constituted genuine shame and remorse and is required for restoration to occur. The facilitators did not truly melt away from the situation until the female community member demonstrated her acceptance of the apology by empathizing with the respondent and mentioned her own issues with alcohol in the past. The plaintiff, in offering up her own human faults and recognizing that mistakes are only human, was hoping to help the respondent learn from her mistakes. It was during this conversation that the plaintiff offered to be a mother away from home at DePauw. Though the plaintiff's request may not go far with the respondent, the mere mention of a relationship beyond the conference had a dramatic impact on the conference dynamic. This unpredicted shift could not have been forced by the facilitators, but must be credited to the space and structure created for constructive dialog. Like the facilitators, the respondent seemed truly shocked by this expression of empathy. Differences in race, age, and lifestyle seemed to recede in this moment and a true human connection was made despite these obvious differences.

Once this connection had been established between the participants, the facilitators and participants agreed that a formal written agreement was unnecessary. The plaintiffs were not looking for anything in particular from the respondent, other than an apology and explanation, which they received during the conference. Once a shift had occurred it was as if all conferencing participants felt that the work was done and a sense of relief fell over the room. The female community member and the respondent exchanged contact information, promising to stay in touch during the respondent's time on campus. The sincerity of this informal agreement was made clear when after some snacks together the respondent said good bye and then returned a few minutes later to retrieve the forgotten piece of paper in which she had written the number of the Greencastle resident. In her post-conference evaluation, the respondent found the conference to have 'good' results for her. She

'strongly agreed' that she better understood the other parties involved and that they understood her. The Greencastle residents 'strongly agreed' that they got what they needed from the process and were satisfied with the RJ program. They expressed that the key result from the conference is that they were 'satisfied that the student involved was genuinely sorry about the incident.' They also thought the conflict was 'resolved.' The officer was only 'neutral' on the statements about understanding the people involved in the process and their understanding of him. We expected this since he was not as actively involved in the conference proceedings as we would have liked. He thought the main outcome was the opportunity for the parties to speak with each other and was happiest about the learning opportunity it provided for the respondent.

Further reflection

During post-conferencing dialogue, the complexities of applied conflict intervention theory and practice were discussed and student revisited their pre-conference assumptions and hypothesis about the conflict. Such experiential learning models a liberal education more completely than more traditional classroom-based learning. Our extensive preparations had equipped us to follow a script of the interaction as a sort of safety net for 'controlled communication'[6] – something that is not always consistent with reflective practice. Through post-conference reflection the student facilitator/observers involved realized the difficulties associated with teaching/ learning 'reflection-in action' (Schon 1983, 49) in a normal classroom setting. The challenges associated with getting speakers to share what they had shared in pre-conferencing without asking leading questions is an art that involves more than simply pre-conference planning, preparation, and training. It involves deep listening, empathy, creativity, and practice. One can teach and learn these skills only through experience and interaction. Students expressed their realization of the practical complexity of this link between theory and practice in post-conference debrief.

During reflection on this case, we discussed our roles as conference facilitators and third-party practitioners. Should the role of the facilitator be focused on getting out the truth or simply providing the opportunity to share what narrative truths the participants wanted to share? How do we suspend our own evaluative judgments during the course of emotional RJ conferences? These were some of the key questions we discussed as a group upon reflection. Such critical reflection can only come if students are invested in the process and case – something hard to convey, or ensure, in case-based academic analysis in the classroom. Our post-conference dialog also highlighted the importance of neutrality; to get parties to talk to each other and to move past the harm, neither party could feel re-victimized or feel like no one was there to support them (see Cobb and Rifkin 1991). In our reflections all agreed that the greatest benefits were felt by the respondent, which in some sense runs counter to the usual victim-centered philosophies associated with RJ processes. From the post-conference and evaluation survey we found that the Greencastle resident's sense of 'justice' was fulfilled and deepened by seeing the student moving toward a better place and understanding the consequences of her actions. The experience of reflective observation provided student facilitators with a voice in debates about conflict process to carry into the classroom. The students came to the conclusion that a lot of learning remained to be done about restorative processes and best

practices – this created a critical space to develop both pedagogy and ongoing critical applied practice.

While participation in the process was beneficial for the participants, the greatest learning outcomes were arguably for the students involved in the facilitation process and observation. The students had a real experience in grasping the complexities of their small role in possible conflict transformation and the challenges of the practical application of theory. Their post-conference engagement in reflection was a valuable learning process that is too often forgotten in real-life experiences and theoretical discussion of either conflict processes/dynamics or discussion of changing unjust systems. In our exuberance to solve conflict we often forget the pedagogy of change requires higher order thinking and critical reflective analysis. The experiential learning of pre-, during, and post-conference interaction represents a critical grounding for conflict intervention pedagogy for campus change.

The need to create this opportunity for student practice arose from concerns that the liberal arts curriculum often focuses too intently on theory and students are left without an understanding of how to make the connections between theory and practice, or between theory and life outside of campus. The world outside of campus revolves around practice and students are often thrown into the world with little preparation post graduation (see Carstarphen et al. 2010 for a similar critique of postgraduate programs in conflict and peace), but practicing theory in the protection of an academic setting allows students to learn the application in a safe, constructive, and reflective environment. When engaging in discourse about traditional notions of justice, these students now had a practical experience to fall back on to justify their critiques and challenge their previous assumptions. Similar to student internships, such RJ initiatives can provide experiential learning of situations and dynamics that professionals face everyday – something that cannot be fully simulated in a classroom setting. Students involved in this program engaged in deep experiential research and critique of restorative practices, identified leadership needs and developed leadership skills, and sought and created training resources, all the while simultaneously learning important conflict resolution skills like facilitation, deep listening, and confidentiality. This initiative challenged students to synthesize learned theory with best practices to create a program aligned to DePauw's mission and vision while experiencing firsthand the barriers to institutional and systemic change.

Furthermore, since peace and conflict studies, as a relatively new formal academic discipline, lacks a disciplinary history such experiential learning is critical to graduating majors. Many potential employers will not know the discipline and being able to resource practice experience in finding employment will be critical. Graduating students will have to explain countless times to potential employers the real-life relevance of the theory they learned. Having real experiences in which to ground their descriptions of this emerging field will be an indispensable tool in today's competitive marketplace. Conflict is everywhere and this skills training can prove invaluable in many leadership roles. One relevant example: the student author has successfully facilitated several restorative conferences based on the model she practiced at DePauw with her elementary students while teaching through Teach for America. Further, and likely most importantly, students with these experiences will better be able to understand their potential roles in conflicts and identify who has been harmed and how to empathetically identify what they can do to repair the harm. Through their experiences in reflective process they learn to think about the work they do in a critical and team-oriented way and to internalize steps critical to

ethical decision-making and leadership. They get practice with constructive self-criticizing, absorbing and evaluating the criticisms of others, and developing productive response to these criticisms – all skills useful in any future line of work or study in which understanding others' needs and perspectives is critical. Again, the pedagogical benefits associated with this justice practice outpace the pro-social outcomes to the immediate community and extend peace pedagogy in ways impossible to reach in the traditional classroom alone.

While problems in initiating the practice persist, the pedagogical benefit to interdisciplinary peace and CSPs are too important to be deterred by institutional roadblocks and entrenched retributive paradigms of justice. The faculty author's experience co-directing Guilford College's CRRC further confirms this assessment. While not all cases are accessible choices for restorative intervention, the need for student offenders and student leaders to have a collective space to process community harms is critical to the creation of a cohesive college community. At Guilford this space has been created and maintained through regular and open community forums on contentious campus issues. From cases of roommate disputes to multi-party disputes over the use of public space and campus resources, a practice program like either the CSP/RJ initiative at DePauw University, or the CRRC at Guilford College, allows students the space and structure to learn from mistakes and build community. Simultaneously, it forces conflict resolution educators to make their pedagogy relevant and engaged. Such programs ground the theory and practice of conflict transformation in such a way that critical and applied learning and community building take place in tandem with theoretical change-based learning.

Conclusions

According to Karp and Allena (2004), even as some colleges and universities have adopted RJ approaches to conflict and wrongdoing on their campuses, very little has been written about the use of RJ in the college setting (see also Meager 2009). This article attempts to add to a growing literature on restorative practices on the college campus by focusing on the fledgling CSP/RJ program at DePauw University and outlining its pedagogical significance to peace and conflict studies students and faculty. As reflective, with an emphasis on experiential learning via the application of theory, RJ processes provide an important and largely untapped opportunity on college campuses. Most campus-wide justice systems are too focused on punitive measures, which do not place enough emphasis on learning outcomes for participants or the wider community. RJ processes have the potential to create a collective relationship of trust, respect, and understanding between college administration and students, town and gown, and faculty and students. Of course, this trust and relationship building requires a transparent system of referral and a clear decoupling of punitive power from transformative change. While many benefits stand to be gained for community standards processes and community life, we believe that the students involved in the implementation and facilitating of the RJ processes stand the most to gain. By extending the classroom-taught theory into a real-life setting, students comprehend the complexities of peace-building processes applied conflict theory. When students leave the theory-based college setting they enter a world that is built on practice. Having real experiences in conflict analysis, group facilitation, and reflective practice as it relates to community protection will better prepare them to face the complexities of real-world institutions and systems. Both students and

the discipline stand much to gain by creating opportunities for experiential learning that ground theory in practice. We hope that more college faculty, students, judicial systems, and peace activists will heed this call and embark on RJ initiatives in the spirit of reflective practice. Given the current economic climate facing higher education and the attenuate increased emphasis on student retention, the many benefits of RJ as applied pedagogy seem obvious.

Notes

1. The question of whether an RJ process should be separate from particular academic departments is a more contested issue. In the case of CSP/RJ program, there remains concern that too close a link to the CSP limits the reach of the program and does not allow non-Conflict Studies majors/minors to be involved in the process. At Guilford College, the CRRC is intentionally linked to the Peace and Conflict Studies Department so that the skills and theories introduced in a core intervention class can be reinforced and deepened. While the issue of linking practice components to academic programs is not addressed in this paper, the many complex and context sensitive issues involved deserve further research and discussion.
2. Terminology for the participants in a RJ conference can become tricky fast. We prefer to use 'respondent' as opposed to 'offender,' due to the negative and retributive connotations that accompany the idea of offenders. Similarly, we hesitate to use the terminology of victim, and instead attempt to humanize the 'victims' of harms as either the too legalistic 'plaintiff' or more manageable 'community resident.'
3. Facilitators and observers were chosen by the learning community based on level of preparation and collective confidence in their abilities. As on-going training is critical in such a program the choice of facilitators is a collective decision, and those with past observation experience must take precedence over those without.
4. It is important to note that Campus Life did not have a representative in the RJ conference largely because the facilitators wanted to be clear on the separation between the Campus Life office and the CSP/RJ process.
5. I place 'neutrality' in single quotes to represent the complexity and interdependence of this term with so many contested and complicated concepts like power, justice, and ideology. For an excellent deconstruction of the concept of 'neutrality' in mediation see Cobb and Rifkin (1991).
6. Fisher (1997) writes about John Burton's idea of controlled communication: 'Burton makes it clear that the first procedures contemplated for the discussion were too rigid, and that the scholars from different disciplines had to relax their usual ways of analyzing and responding to conflict and join with representatives in mutual analysis' (Fisher 1997, 27). This mutual analysis is something that can never be completely planned for or controlled, much less studied in most traditional disciplinary structures of the modern university system.

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