Teaching Transformative Justice for Social Change

A thesis project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Communication Studies

By

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ABSTRACT

Teaching Transformative Justice for Social Change

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This research project investigates how transformative justice can transform individuals and communities who struggle with everyday issues related to injustice and inequity. The transformative justice model offers an alternative approach to crime and conflict, one in which communities can move towards equity and liberation rather than maintaining the current systems of retribution and punishment (generation FIVE, 2007). Transformative justice helps us uncover the cause of acts of injustice by situating problems in their social context and taking into account the broader picture to better understand what happened and why. This research project entails designing and facilitating workshops on transformative justice with undergraduate students in an Intercultural Communication classroom at a university in Los Angeles, California. The classroom is an effective and appropriate choice because it is a site of transformation and change. Working within a critical qualitative framework, the research methods used are critical pedagogy, questionnaires, and elements of autoethnography. Through participant questionnaires, my field notes, and classroom observations I present and analyze the three main themes that
emerged during the series of workshops. The themes are 1) self as agent of change; 2) transformative justice as everyday praxis; 3) transformative justice through education. Students who participated in the workshops began to see themselves as agents of change and recognize the value of addressing root causes of social issues in order to create a more equitable and just world.
Chapter One

Introduction

We are living in times that are defined by significant struggles. These struggles are shaped by increasing inequities, violent wars, a turbulent economic climate, troubled politics, and overwhelming damage to our environmental surroundings. Not only do these struggles further perpetuate injustice and inequities in our society, they disproportionately impact marginalized and disenfranchised groups. Due in part to the distribution of decision making power in our society, marginalized groups who are most impacted by injustice are the least likely to be in a position to formulate policy around social justice issues. Those least likely to be negatively impacted by social injustice are making decisions that affect those most impacted. Through exclusion and an imbalance of power, many communities are left wondering how they can change and transform a social system that enables these inequities. Transforming our society and moving closer to social justice is a task that each of us must undertake. Boggs (2011) comments:

I cannot recall any previous period when the issues were so basic, so interconnected, and so demanding of everyone living in this country, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, or national origin. At this point in the continuing evolution of our country and of the human race, we urgently need to stop thinking of ourselves as victims and to recognize that we must each become a part of the solution because we are each a part of the problem. (p. 29)
Issues of social justice, in the broadest sense, arise when decisions are made that affect the distribution of benefits and burdens among different individuals or groups. In other words, how dominant groups maintain power over subordinate groups. Concerns surrounding social justice are complex. These broad and far reaching issues include, but are not limited to, sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, ableism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism. As a result of these types of oppressions, large disparities exist on measures of income, wealth, education, housing, occupation, and social benefits. These disparities are neither new nor randomly distributed throughout the population, but occur in patterns along such major social divisions as race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, and physical ability (Thornton & Zambrana, 2009). Addressing these ‘isms’ require recognizing issues of equity, power relations, and institutionalized oppression (Goodman, 2001). In addition, it also means that we need to understand the intricate overlapping and intersecting among the various types of oppression. In essence, we cannot just work to eradicate racism; we must simultaneously work to eradicate all forms of oppression. This process begins when we acknowledge that these problems do not occur in a vacuum rather that they are part of a complex web of systematic oppression and inequities, each supporting the other. Because these issues are imbedded in our social structures, identifying the cause of these and other forms of oppression presents a difficult task. In addition, the process of taking action and confronting these concerns can feel insurmountable and overwhelming. Because inequity and oppression are deeply woven into the tapestry of American life, it impacts and affects each of us. Braswell, Fuller, and Lozoff (2001) comment on this impact:
The way we structure our social institutions can have profound effects on how people behave. When we allow racism or sexual (or other kinds of) harassment to be tolerated in our schools and businesses, we invite reactions that may be violent. When we do not allow equal opportunity and social justice, we invite fraud and deceit. (p. 40)

In essence, tolerating and allowing acts that are demeaning and unjust, rather than challenging and changing them is inviting injustice into our communities. Dr. King (1958) describes this as cooperating with evil. He writes, “He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting it is really cooperating with it” (p. 51). My work for social justice centers on challenging and changing the injustices that take place in our communities.

The complexity of these issues can place people in conflicting positions; on one hand, there is the need and desire to live in a caring and just world; and yet, on the other hand, painstaking questions arise such as “where do I begin?” The activist, writer and revolutionist Boggs (2011) writes, “Because the problems seem so insurmountable and because just struggling for our own survival consumes so much of our time and energy, we view ourselves as victims rather than embrace the power within us to change our reality” (p. 33). The truth is that most people feel hopeless and alone when faced with finding solutions to societal problems. Yet, it is critical for each of us to recognize that we have the power to create change. As social actors we play a role in the social action that takes place, and this role can be pivotal for creating change. People as producers and agents of change can help reshape the landscape of our society.
Significance of the Study

Although sometimes difficult to imagine, change is possible. This change is more easily envisioned when we begin by challenging everyday practices of injustice and inequity. When we challenge everyday instances of injustice (racist remarks, sexist behaviors, homophobic comments, exclusion in our classrooms, etc.) we initiate the process of changing the overall social structure that promotes and enables these acts to take place. Stemming from my interest in activism and desire to create a society that provides equal access, inclusion and accountability on an everyday basis, I began exploring alternative ways to respond to and behave in situations where inequity and oppression presents itself. This exploration led me to a close examination of various alternative justice practices. Transformative and restorative justice, peacemaking criminology, and community collective action are each approaches that provide the possibility for change. These alternative justice practices are not simply the latest fad; rather, they are a fusion of ancient, traditional and modern wisdom about how to keep human relationships and communities alive, free, open, and constructive, especially when conflicts arise (Pranis, Stuart, & Wedge, 2003). Although rooted in indigenous philosophy, these practices are now commonly used as an alternative to or in tandem with the criminal justice system. I have found, through my research that incorporating these practices into our everyday lives can lead to more peaceful co-existence and can be a catalyst to create social change. Informed by alternative justice practices, we can undertake the task, or more accurately, our obligation as human beings, of creating a society that is concerned with fairness and equality, rather than dominance and
exploitation. Alternative justice practices operating on grassroots levels present new paradigms to promote social change.

Because these practices address the underlying systemic causes of conflict, crime and injustice, they demand that we think about creating change on a holistic level. This holistic level asks us to address the causes of our societal issues, rather than just treat the symptoms of injustice. Additionally, these practices assert that punishing or alienating people only further perpetuates the problems; thus, the alternative paradigms require us to come together and work collectively--even with those who have wronged us--to create change. Unveiling these systemic causes of crime and conflict allows us to address the root of social concerns. Additionally, these alternative paradigms provide us the opportunity to have collective conversations that can lead us toward social justice. Collective action as a means to bring social change has been used throughout history. We have seen Gandhi unite India and use collective action to achieve self-rule, and Denmark use collective action as a defense against Hitler’s regime. Working with others to create change has the power to reshape our social landscape.

**Purpose of the Study**

The overarching purpose of this research project is to investigate how alternative justice practices can transform individuals and communities who struggle with everyday issues related to injustice and inequity. Specifically, this research focuses on understanding the potential of transformative justice to address social concerns and to bring about change. The transformative justice model offers an alternative approach to crime and conflict, one in which communities can move towards equity and liberation rather than maintaining the current systems of retribution and punishment (generation
Transformative justice can be used to address a broad scope of community concerns. For example, domestic and child abuse, bullying, homelessness, harassment, and other types of violent acts can be explored through a transformative model. In fact, the community concerns that transformative justice can tackle are endless. I offer a brief example based on a true story of middle school bullying and violence to illustrate the potential of a transformative justice approach. Jeffrey has been teasing and taunting Daniel because of his described “queerness.” It is also reported that Daniel asked Jeffrey to a dance, which elevated the teasing to a new high. Many students, as well as school staff were aware of this volatile relationship. Jeffrey brings a gun to school and shoots Daniel resulting in his death. Jeffrey is sent to jail and will spend a large portion of his adult life behind bars. Although lacking intricate detail, this is a typical story, one which plays out in schools across the United States. Because similar tragic events continue to occur, it is not difficult to conclude that our response to them as a society is ineffective. However, when we apply a transformative justice model to this scenario, we can see possibilities for change.

Transformative justice helps us uncover the cause of acts of injustice by situating problems in their social context and taking into account the broader picture to better understand what happened and why. When we address what caused these and other types of social concerns, we can address the structures, attitudes and conditions that allow them to take place. In this case, we would begin by identifying the symptoms: bullying, teasing, taunting, killing, collusion, violence, access to weapons, drug abuse, domestic violence, etc. In the process of engaging in transformative justice, the community who is involved identifies the possible causes of the event: hate, prejudice, misunderstanding,
fear, beliefs, values, homophobia, and heteronormativity. This process makes clear how the symptoms and causes are two distinct categories. What we typically see in our institutionalized justice system is treatment of the symptoms, not the causes. Transformative justice asserts that to prevent these types of events from continuing to happen, we need to treat the causes. This stance is similar to one of the basic aspects of Dr. King’s philosophy of nonviolence. King (1958) asserts that “attacking the forces of evil rather than the people who happen to be doing evil” (p.102) is an essential part of the peacemaking process. Transformative justice aligns with Dr. King’s philosophy by digging deeply to uncover the root of the problem. It also engages the community in transforming the situation, so that justice can be realized. Practicing transformative justice in our everyday lives can help build connections between community members. These connections provide the foundation that is needed so that societal issues and concerns can be dealt with by the people impacted, not left to be addressed by the institutions that so often helped create the problems. It is my belief that a transformative justice model can help us become more socially conscious, thus motivating us to work within our communities to solve problems and challenge the inequities of the status quo.

**Description of the Study**

Social change can and does begin with me; thus, I initiated this research project to motivate others to create change within their communities. This is important because the issues surrounding social justice are conditions created by humans; therefore, sustainable change is possible only when we collectively create the conditions to promote that change. With this in mind, my research project entails designing and facilitating workshops on transformative justice with undergraduate students in an Intercultural
Communication classroom at a university in Los Angeles, California. The classroom is an effective and appropriate choice because it is a site of transformation and change. It is also a site where meanings about justice and injustice are negotiated. Further, the classroom can be used as a social laboratory to critically engage students in participatory democracy. The questions that guided this study are, “how would students respond to the goals of transformative justice?” and “how can students use transformative justice practices in their everyday lives?”

The workshop design and facilitation uses a critical pedagogy approach. Critical pedagogy is a natural choice for this project because it is grounded in the belief that education is a means for social transformation. It also aims to expose unjust and inequitable practices, while serving as a foundation to advance issues of social justice. Critical pedagogy plays a pivotal role in this classroom interaction. Lather (1992) defines critical pedagogy as "that which attends to practices of teaching/learning intended to interrupt particular historical situated systems of oppression" (p. 121). My work in the classroom draws upon the diverse experiences of Intercultural Communication students and encourages them to act on their knowledge. Further, together we can illuminate the power that they have to change and transform structures so that social justice can be realized. In essence, I am answering the call to action placed by Broome, Carey, De La Garza, Martin, and Morris (2005) in the field of Communication Studies and more specifically, in Intercultural Communication. In their writing, activism is viewed as “action that attempts to make a positive difference in situations where people’s lives are affected by oppression, domination, discrimination, racism, conflict and other forms of cultural struggle due to difference in race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation,
and other identity markers” (p. 146).

Discussing these topics using a critical method of teaching encourages students to discover their capacity for change and what role they can play in ending oppression. With its focus on ending injustice, critical pedagogy seeks to understand and eradicate the suffering of all people. By recognizing that everyone has a role in creating a more just world, critical pedagogy has the ability to take these conversations to a level where change can be realized. The critical pedagogue views human suffering as a humanly constructed phenomenon, which can be eradicated if the collective will to do so exists (Kincheloe, 2008). The premise of my work is that if we want to live in a better world, it is up to each of us to take a role in shaping it.

This research moves me closer to my goal of living in a world that it socially sound and deepening my commitment to justice as an educator. In the following chapter, I review the literature that has informed this research project. This review begins by highlighting the various models, methods, and practices within the field of alternative justice. Both contemporary and indigenous practices are explored. I found restorative and transformative justice, peacemaking criminology, and community collective action approaches the most informative literature. Moreover, because of its concern with the systemic roots and potential to use conflict to transform, I identified transformative justice as having the possibility to stimulate social change. However, all of these practices inform each other, therefore there is overlapping between the various models, giving any alternative justice practice the potential to shape a new social landscape.

In addition to alternative justice practices, chapter two also explores the systemic foundations of injustice that create socially unjust communities. The literature explicated
for this research focuses specifically on racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. Each of these ‘isms’ operates in overt and covert ways to create systems of oppression. These systems are characterized by dominant and subordinate relations and are socially constructed and reproduced (Goodman, 2001). The discussion of these tools of injustice is facilitated through a critical pedagogical teaching style. Critical pedagogy as a practice of teaching is outlined in chapter two.

In chapter three, I discuss the methodological approaches I take in my research on teaching transformative justice for social change. Working within a critical qualitative framework, the research methods used are critical pedagogy, questionnaires, and elements of autoethnography. I explicate pedagogy and autoethnography as a form of research and scholarship. The pedagogical aspect of my research was made possible through the development and facilitation of three workshops during the fall 2011 semester. These workshops were designed to engage students from the same section of an Intercultural Communication class over a five week period. At the end of the workshop series, students completed an anonymous questionnaire, which allowed me to determine if the learning objectives were met. Finally, I use elements of autoethnography to discuss my experience with pedagogy as praxis and to reflect on the process of researching and discussing a crucial and often challenging topic.

In chapter four, I provide a detailed overview of each of my transformative justice workshops. I discuss the design of the workshops and provide a rationale for the design decisions that were made. In addition, using the participant questionnaires, my field notes, and classroom observations I present and analyze the three main themes that emerged during the series of workshops. The themes are 1) self as agent of change; 2)
transformative justice as everyday praxis; 3) transformative justice through education.

In chapter five, I summarize my research and discuss the overall implications of this project. In addition, I provide further research suggestions for teaching transformative justice for social change. My summary describes the strengths and limitations of my project, including whether or not the questions that guided my study, which were outlined in this chapter, were answered.
Chapter Two

Literature Review: A Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Introduction:

A Historical Contextualization

We need a new vision--a holistic approach to justice that addresses the problem, rather than only treating the symptoms. Rethinking justice from traditional perspectives gives us the potential to transform ourselves, our beliefs, our relationships, and most importantly the way we treat each other. Informed by traditional and indigenous ways of practicing justice, Western concepts of restorative and transformative justice, peacemaking criminology, and community activism, alternative approaches to problem solving have formed. Although this list is not exhaustive, these and other alternative justice practices began emerging in the United States during the mid-1990s as practices that could parallel, or support the criminal justice system (Pranis, 1999). Indigenous responses to crime that do not sever community ties by sending people off to prison offer alternative approaches to address injustice by rebuilding the bonds that keep communities intact and people on healthy, responsible paths.

These alternative justice practices are not the latest fad; rather, they represent a fusion of ancient and modern wisdom about how to keep human relationships alive, free, open, and constructive, especially when conflicts arise (Pranis, Stuart, & Wedge, 2003). These modern day practices have roots in many indigenousness practices. Consider the Maori justice process, which is based on the notion that responsibility is collective. The desire to understand why an individual offends is linked to collective responsibility. The
Maori believe that the problem does not lie within the individual, rather that the offense took place because of imbalances within the social and family environment. Moreover, these imbalances need to be addressed in a collective manner (Tauri & Morris, 2003). Contemporary alternative practices of justice are also linked to traditional Indian law\(^1\), where punishment is not the driving force (Zion, 2005). For example, Indian systems of justice uses an egalitarian mode of justice where talking things out leads to consensus, setting it apart from Western justice. Further, Indian law is primarily focused on healing, whereas Western law is focused on punishment. For example, the Iroquois, one of the most studied Aboriginal Peoples of North American Nations, sustain a worldview that is holistic, contextual, and a cyclical or circular way of understanding life and human circumstances (Cousins, 2005). On the other hand, the Euro-Canadian outlook presents a time-bound way of thinking. It could be argued that the collective response to crime and accounting for the larger framework in which crime occurs enables Indian law to maintain a more peaceful existence within the nations it governs.

Restorative justice as a field has claimed links to various indigenous and religious traditions, particularly from Australia, New Zealand, and North America. Linking restorative justice practices to traditional ways grounds them in historical and cultural contexts by acknowledging wisdom and functionality of indigenous traditions. However, it is important to recognize the effect of colonization on indigenous justice practices. At various times, colonization sought to exterminate, assimilate, “civilize,” and Christianize these communities. Cunneen (2004) points out that linking Western practices to indigenous communities can serve to trivialize, patronize and appropriate.

\(^1\) The author uses the phrase “traditional Indian law” to refer to the laws developed and enforced by the nations of Indians within the modern states of the Western hemisphere
A simple linkage of Western practices to aboriginal or indigenous communities and practices can deny the complex effects of colonial processes. These processes often demonized and changed indigenous practices, therefore it is critical to remain cognizant of this and not appropriate practices in a way that might trivialize the contributions of indigenous wisdom. This research is presented through a Western perspective using modern ideas of justice.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the potential alternative justice practices have to create social change. I begin this project by examining social injustices and inequities and asking what other possible ways exist to dismantle the structures and worldviews that promote these unjust and destructive treatment(s) of people. Encouraged by the possibility that transformative justice offers to create change, I designed and facilitated three workshops on the practice with undergraduate students in an Intercultural Communication classroom at a university in Los Angeles, California. The purpose of these workshops was to begin conversations about transformative justice that can be used to reach a broader community.

This literature review provides an overview of the basic tenants of various alternative justice movements, different forms of oppression, and the core elements of critical pedagogy. I begin the alternative justice literature review with restorative and community justice because it is the most researched form of alternative justice, and often serves as a base in which we can use to understand other alternative models. I also discuss transformative justice, collective action and community accountability, and peacemaking perspectives. If we were to chart these practices using a mind-mapping technique, we would find the numerous ways they overlap and enhance each other. After
situating alternative justice and its ability to create change, I provide a review of several social injustices. The tools of injustice that are discussed are racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. Although this list is not exhaustive, it does reflect the social injustices that are most often discussed in the college classes I teach. Because they are often a topic of conversation, I felt that it was important to work to understand them and develop my workshops around these injustices. Finally, this literature review will explicate critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is one of my research methods, as well as the foundation of my teaching practice.

**Alternative Justice**

**Restorative / community justice.** Restorative justice is grounded in community action and collective accountability. Restorative justice, also referred to as community justice, is an alternative method of conflict resolution and way of addressing crime. The primarily goal of restorative justice is to heal and restore broken relationships, as opposed to punishing hurt with hurt as the traditional justice system does. Liebmann (2007) offers the following definition of restorative justice, “Restorative justice aims to restore the well-being of victims, offenders, and communities damaged by crime and to prevent further offending” (p. 25). Practitioners of restorative justice are concerned primarily with the healing of all parties involved and affected by the incident. Parties included in this healing are the victim, offender, families, communities, and any other person touched by the incident. The emphasis of community justice is to restore the relationship between the offender and the victim, as well as maintain social and moral order in the community (Braswell et al., 2001). Recognizing that the traditional justice systems’ primary concern is punishment, restorative justice seeks to provide a more inclusive and healing result.
Although the term restorative justice is relatively new to our vocabulary, this method of addressing conflict and healing communities has been used by indigenous peoples for centuries (McCaslin, 2005). Braswell et al., (2001) cite two reasons why communities would want to move away from our current criminal justice system and towards practices that have been used in many tribal communities. First, there is the general feeling among many that the criminal justice system does not work. Second, there is concern that the system does little to rehabilitate or change the behavior of the offender. It is here that we can begin to see overlapping of the peacemaking perspective and restorative justice perspectives. The peacemaking perspective advocates that to address conflict and crime in society it is necessary to understand and address the systemic root of the problem.

Restorative or community justice practices are guided by five principles. First, practitioners acknowledge crime as primarily an offense against human relationships. Second, restorative justice recognizes that crime is wrong and should not occur, but from these experiences opportunities and dangers emerge. The opportunity comes in recognizing the injustice, restoring equity and respect, and empowering communities. The danger exists when those affected feel alienated, more damaged, disrespected, and disempowered. These responses contribute to feeling less safe and less likely to cooperate with society. The third principle of restorative justice is similar to the concept of peacemaking. This practice parallels peacemaking in the sense that it attends to two needs, the need created by the offense and the cause of the offense. For example, when we begin to look at the cause of crime and violence in our communities, we often find addictions, lack of social or employment skills, etc. Attending to both needs begins the
process of creating peace in our communities. Fourth, restorative justice views the situation as a teachable moment, and that support and accountability must be provided on behalf of the community. The fifth and final principle that guides restorative practices is the awareness that not all offenders will be cooperative. In those instances, outside authority will be consulted to determine what consequences should be imposed.

Although restorative justice is guided by these and other principles, it is important to understand that it is a process. Restorative justice rejects the traditional linear course that the criminal justice system follows. Instead, practitioners view restorative justice as contextually specific and as a living model (Woolford, 2009). For example, no two situations are identical with the same circumstance or same emotional connections. Because of this, it is not possible to apply a “one size fits all” approach to resolving conflict and crime. Additionally, because restorative practices are concerned with healing and restoring community, the process is continually evolving. The social situations, challenges, people, and practitioners continually change, reform and adapt to new concerns and future challenges, which lends to the notion that it is a living model (Woolford, 2009).

With its core focus on healing and restoring relationships, restorative justice uses communication as a tool for accomplishing its goals. However, it goes beyond “talking things out”. Sullivan and Tiffit (2004) add that “it also has to do with taking action, first, in meeting the needs of those engaged in the immediate conversation and, second, in designing and living in social arrangements that prevent both interpersonal and structural violence from occurring” (p. 391). This type of effective dialogue occurs in a space where people take themselves seriously and know they are taken seriously (Sullivan &
Tifft, 2004). Participants must feel safe and respected and believe that their story is worth telling. It is through each person’s narrative that the community can collectively move towards understanding and healing. Hence, the cultivation of each person’s voice and active participation of all is imperative to the restorative justice process.

The process of restorative justice can take place in many different ways. Because each situation is unique and brings its own history and narratives, there is no blueprint for restorative justice. Forms of restorative justice include but are not limited to victim-offender reconciliation or mediation, family or community group conferencing, victim-offender panels, and restorative circles. Briefly, victim-offender reconciliation or mediation is designed to allow the victim and the offender to work with a trained mediator to develop a creative and collective solution to resolve their conflict. The basic objectives are to identify the injustice, make things right, and consider future actions (Braswell, 2001). Family or community group conferencing expands upon victim-offender reconciliation or mediation by inviting families and the community to take part in the resolution and healing process. The concept behind victim-offender panels is that it helps provide healing for parties that are not willing to meet face-to-face. For example, a rape victim might find it too traumatizing to meet with her/his offender. If that is the case, the victims and offenders will swap parties. In these cases, the victim is not speaking directly to the person who harmed her/him, rather a person who has committed a similar offense. The victim plays an educative role by allowing the offender to see the human damage that their crime has caused (Braswell, 2001).

As with other collective conflict resolution methods, restorative justice has its limitations. Lofton (2004) cites the primary concern that restorative justice fails to
adequately address the socio-economic roots of crime. In essence, restorative justice would not be necessary, if as a society we worked to eliminate the root of crime, such as deprivation and inequity. Although restorative justice is effective at raising awareness of the cause of crime, it offers no strategy for preventing it. On the other hand, when combined with other practices, such as a peacemaking perspective, transformative justice, and community action, restorative justice is able to meet these needs. The next limitation that Lofton calls our attention to is that restorative justice focuses on crime at an individual level, not on larger crimes perpetuated systemically. Concern is also raised over the simplistic labeling that restorative justice uses. Referring to parties as “victims” and “offenders” only reinforces and supports the status quo assumptions about crime, rather than addressing the reality that the offender is likely a victim as well. Finally, restorative justice programs are often tied to the State. If this is the case, they may actually serve to extend the power of the criminal justice system over more people, rather than fundamentally change the system (Behrendt, 2002). generation FIVE (2007), an organization that uses a transformative justice framework cites restorative justice models as paying insufficient attention to family and community power relations, subordination of survivor needs for the sake of community restoration, values that may be sexist or homophobic, and patterns of racial or economic disempowerment within a community. Exploring restorative justice provides us with a foundation in which we can begin to build our understanding of transformative justice.

**Transformative justice.** The current approaches to crime and conflict that are used within our justice system do not address the root causes of problems, nor do they provide a foundation for communities to envision their neighborhoods as safe, healthy
communities without crime. A transformative justice model offers a transformative approach to crime and conflict, one in which communities can begin to move towards equity and liberation rather than maintaining the current systems of retribution and punishment (generation FIVE, 2007). According to Morris (2000), transformative justice uses the power unleashed by the harm of a crime to let those most affected find truly creative, healing solutions. Barak (2003) expands on this definition by adding that “transformative justice seeks to move victims from vengeance to forgiveness, from defensive hatred and alienation to altruistic empathy and protectiveness, as it seeks to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and harmed in our society” (p. 323). Furthermore, Quinney and Wildeman (1991) write about what they call social transformation. Acknowledging that social transformation and transformative justice are two inter-related concepts, they add that the transformation begins with the awareness of human suffering, right understanding, compassion and service (p. 113). The foundation of transformative justice lies in seeking to heal and repair harm, while at the same time deconstructing the root causes and transforming the dominant practices of our institutions.

Changing the deeply embedded social, political and institutionalized ways of responding to crime and conflict is not a simplistic process. In fact, “the goal of dismantling oppressive structures is shortsighted, and perhaps impossible, if we are not also prepared to build alternatives” (generation FIVE, 2007, p. 6). Transformative justice is such an alternative to help move towards a socially just and liberating society. The transformative justice model has the capacity to address all forms of violence and conflict. This is possible through the goals that transformative models follow. First,
survivor safety, healing and agency are at the forefront of the process. If survivors do not feel safe and are not valued in the process, then moving towards transformation will not be able to occur. The second goal is accountability and transformation of those responsible. The collective nature of this process is particularly apparent for this goal because accountability is a responsibility of the community and requires access to ongoing support. Third, community response and accountability is necessary because transformative justice relies on the fabric of the community to support community members and cooperatively respond to problems. Finally, transformative justice works toward transforming the community and social conditions that create and perpetuate violence, i.e. systems of oppression, exploitation, domination, and State violence (generation FIVE, 2007, p. 5). Without this transformation, crime and conflict in our society cannot be fully understood.

Because of its healing components, transformative justice models are often referred to interchangeably with restorative models; however, there are distinct differences (Harris, 2006). Morris (2000) tells us that restorative models often leave out the past and the social causes of events, and accept the idea that one event can define what is right and wrong. Harris (2006) describes transformative justice moving beyond restorative justice is three distinct ways. First, it is concerned with justice issues wherever they arise (families, schools, neighborhoods, work, or on a national or international level). Second, it extends the scope of the inquiry beyond the immediate situation into what are often unrecognized and unchallenged assumptions and paradigms underlying current economic, political, criminal justice and social arrangements. Finally, it seeks to effect change on a structural level while at the same time addressing the interpersonal
harm. generation FIVE, a community group that works within a transformative justice framework to end violence acknowledges that they initially began organizing under the more familiar restorative justice framework. They eventually rejected this model because of its co-optation by the State and the implication that justice had at one time been present, in order for it to be restored (generation FIVE, 2007). Morris (2000) adds that the dominant type of crime that fills our courts is part of a much larger picture. Just like restorative justice, transformative justice is concerned with healing the wound that the crime created, but transformative justice seeks broader answers. With these answers, we can use crime as an opportunity to transform the lives of victims, offenders, and the whole community (Morris, 2000).

Writings that detail transformative justice models are relatively limited. Of the organizations that use a transformative justice framework, generation FIVE has a robust outline of their model. Their writing discusses why transformative justice is necessary for liberation, the principles of transformative justice, and how to develop transformative justice practices. According to generation FIVE (2007), “transformative justice is about building the capacity of individuals and collective to address larger conditions of inequity and injustice as well as to challenge State violence” (p. 1). Although their primary focus surrounds child sexual abuse, generation FIVE also addresses other forms of intimate and community violence. They advance that a transformative justice approach can move communities toward equity and liberation, as opposed to accepting the inequality that the current State and systems maintain (generation FIVE, 2007). The use of a transformative justice model requires collective action, as well as community building and accountability.
Collective action / community accountability. As communities are faced with growing social injustices, collective action approaches are becoming increasingly critical. Often people feel powerless and unable to motivate change when they think of doing it on their own. Collective action invites the question “what can we do,” rather than “what can I do.” People engaging in a collective approach to community organizing that emphasizes the process of empowerment, transformation, and advocacy present a new paradigm for crime prevention and conflict resolution (Klein, Luxenburg & Gunther, 1991). Collective organization is not necessarily about addressing a specific issue. When a solid foundation is built, collective action can create an environment in which historic or current incidents surface and preparations are made to address the existing conditions that allow incidents to occur (generation FIVE, 2007). Building the foundation for these conversations to manifest is the key component to insure success. Some of the ways in which generation FIVE (2007) suggests that community capacity can be strengthened, includes cultural work, consciousness raising groups, education, organizing campaigns, and violence intervention and prevention.

Specific principles of the collective approach to crime prevention and community organization are presented by Klein et al., (1991). First, by recognizing that the problem is system-focused, rather than problem-focused, a community collective dealing with a specific system (e.g. crime prevention) that has commitment and linkages to other small, focused collectives (e.g. economic development, housing and health coalitions) must be established. Second, individuals affected by the system are empowered to offer alternative explanations for problem. Third, by offering alternative messages to affected communities, the structure that mediates changes in social order (e.g. families and
churches) is empowered to advocate for institutional transformation. For example, when communities unite and begin to share ideas and messages of hope, we often begin to see grassroots movements to create change form. Finally, by empowering communities to advocate with other coalitions of interests, the stage is set for a reordering of priorities within the current social and economic order.

As described, this approach enables the community to become the focus for developing community solutions, thus creating and retaining social and community control. Klein et al., (1991) assert that by accepting a collective action approach, individuals can begin transforming and empowering their own communities. Further, individuals can empower themselves by not accepting the paramilitary alternatives of the dominant society, thus presenting a self-determining collective alternative to the criminal justice system. Although collective organization holds great promise, it is not as simplistic as it might seem. Incite! (2003) follows a principle of self-determination, which enables them to be flexible and remain fluid. This principle acknowledges that “community accountability strategies will not work in all communities at all times” (p. 2). Because of this awareness, they evaluate their strategies within different contexts and constantly re-evaluate them for their effectiveness and fairness (Incite!, 2003).

Besides empowerment and transformation, community approaches promote accountability. If an offender is removed from their community, it removes them from daily accountability, and may not do anything towards rehabilitation (Ross, 1997). Furthermore, when a person is removed from their community, they are further hindered from developing ethical relationships within a community context (Smith, 2009). Throughout the United States community accountability organizations have formed with
two central goals: 1) to recognize the victim in the process and; 2) to hold the offender accountable for their actions. Community accountability organizations are not just theoretical; there are many operating within the United States. Below is a briefing on several of these programs in the U.S.

*Friends are Reaching Out (FAR Out).* This community accountability organization focuses on domestic and sexual violence. Located in Seattle, this group provides a space for people to have conversations that are aimed at transforming the violence that takes place within the queer community. The premise behind this group is that when people are abused, they become isolated; to address this, FAR Out has created safe spaces where people can talk openly about their relationships. By talking openly, it is easier for friends to hold each other accountable. In addition, the group works to keep communication open between friends, so that they are more likely to share their stories of abuse and be less apt to live secretly. This model is successful because it is based on preexisting friendships. Using these friendships, the community begins to build the capacity to respond to violence. As a result, these alliances can be used to meet the needs of domestic abuse within the community (Smith, 2009).

*Sista II Sista- Sisters Liberated Ground.* Operating in Brooklyn, New York, this organization uses a community based accountability model to monitor violence in their community. This group of young women of color addresses violence against neighborhood girls, committed both by the police and by other members of the community. Started after one young girl was allegedly killed and another sexually assaulted by the police, it now monitors violence in the community without relying on the police. Initially it began as a video monitoring project, but it has grown into a project
which empowers community members to monitor their streets for violence and hold each other accountable. Sista II Sista’s goal is to eradicate neighborhood violence, while at the same time providing a political education (Smith 2009).

Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP). This Chicago-based group is organized and led by women under the age of 18 who are involved in the sex trade. They focus on creating judgment-free spaces where these women can develop strategies to keep themselves as safe as possible, while respecting their self-determination. After concluding that the criminal justice system criminalizes these women, and does little to promote their safety, they developed their own violence reduction strategies and work to hold perpetrators accountable. Using a harm-reduction approach, which focuses on safety based on their current conditions, YWEP avoids prescribing how these women should live their lives. These judgment-free spaces also provide resources for these young women to explore their dreams and goals (Smith 2009).

generation FIVE. Concerned with ending child sex abuse, they use community organization to develop strategies to stop it. They contend that child sex abuse is both a social justice and an intergenerational issue. Through educational workshops they engage the community to develop meaningful response tactics. For example, at one workshop a group of elderly women organized to monitor local parks and if they witnessed abusive behavior toward children, they collectively intervened. Generation FIVE rejects restorative justice models because they do not address the oppressive power structures, racism, sexism, classism, or heterosexism. Instead, they use a transformative justice framework, which works to transform the oppressive structures of society in order to build a just and nonviolent world (Smith 2009). Their general principles are to promote
survivor healing and agency, promote offender accountability and transformation, and to develop community response and social conditions that create and perpetuate child sexual abuse (generation FIVE, 2007).

*Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA).* This Seattle-based anti-rape organization proposes that community accountability requires a “jazzy” approach. They assert that no one model will work for all contexts, so they pride themselves on being flexible and creative. CARA began by monitoring incidents of police brutality, particularly incidents that took place after responding to calls of domestic violence in poor neighborhoods. The primary focus now is to develop strategies to address violence that does not involve relying on the State. Their idea of creating community accountability involves community organizing, critical dialogue, artistic expression, and collective action as tools to build safe, peaceful, and sustainable communities (CARA, 2012). Some of their principles include recognizing the humanity of everyone involved, prioritizing self-determination for the survivor, identifying a plan for safety and supporting the survivor and others within the community, organizing collectively, considering political consequences, and preparing to be engaged in the process for the long haul (Smith 2009).

*Incite! Women of Color Against Violence.* This group was formed to continue efforts to develop strategies to end violence after a successful antiviolence conference in 2000. The goal of Incite! is to address community and State violence simultaneously. They use an alternative approach to addressing domestic violence, which places women of color at the center of the analysis of and organization against it. With collective action as their primary principle, they assert that reliance on the criminal justice system has
taken power away from women’s ability to organize collectively to stop violence. Additional organizing principles include, prioritizing safety for survivors, providing space for self-determination, rethinking and building community, and exposing the ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system to address gender violence (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, 2003; 2006).

**Peacemaking Perspective**

Similar to collective action and community accountability, the foundation of a peacemaking perspective involves looking beyond the violence that takes place in our communities and attempts to understand and address the causes for that violence. Challenging the war perspective as an effective and humane policy approach, a peacemaking perspective offers a radical shift in the way communities and society can address crime and issues related to social justice. The peace perspective emphasizes social justice, conflict resolution, rehabilitation, and a belief that people need to cooperate in democratic institutions in order to develop meaningful communities (Fuller, 1998). Also unique about this practice is that it aims to achieve a greater sense of trust and social safety (Arrigo, 1999). Further, the peace perspective is an inclusive policy model which aims at empowering all individuals and giving them an opportunity to control their destinies (Trebach, 1990; Quinney, 1993; McDermott, 1994). Finally, Braswell, Fuller and Lozoff (2001) point out that the individual is the necessary starting point for the peace perspective. Through personal change and transformation, a path to social and institutional transformation can be realized.

The peacemaking perspective is a humanist approach to solving socially rooted problems. This perspective is considered radical because of its emphasis on peace and
social justice. Quinney and Wildeman (1991) press the idea that human transformation is necessary to achieve peace and justice. Consequently, human transformation takes place as we work to change our social, economic, and political structure. These systems are interconnected, so much so that a change in one system produces change in the other. However, this change must begin at the intrapersonal level. Because these systems are woven so tightly together, suffering on a personal level prevents us from addressing the suffering that occurs on a social scale. Quinney, who is credited as the primary writer of a peacemaking perspective, provides a foundation for human transformation. The Buddhist belief of impermanence, meaning that reality is in flux and every action brings a certain result, acts as the starting point. When an action is motivated by greed or hatred, the inevitable result will be human suffering. Quinney and Wildeman (1991) suggest that we cannot achieve peace and social justice unless we work to achieve peace and justice within ourselves. The process of making ourselves better human beings, while creating a more social just and peaceful society is done simultaneously.

When we acknowledge that the process of peacemaking begins within, the question then turns to how to implement a peacemaking process. Arrigo (1999) who uses the preaching of Gandhi’s satyagraha to inspire his work, writes how to use peacemaking in the face of violence. First, reflect on ones’ own feelings. Second, introduce oneself to the apparently weakest or quietest victim. Third, listen to the victims fear and pain and attempt to understand and empathize. Finally, offer ways one might confront the people in power next. Putting these strategies into practice in ones’ everyday life, will begin the process of repositioning attitudes, so that a more peaceful existence is realized.

What is unique about a peacemaking perspective, is that is operates at many
different levels. It recognizes that individuals, communities, and institutions are interconnected and that a peacemaking perspective must be practiced throughout each level of these relationships. Fuller (1998) presents four levels of a peacemaking perspective. First, at the international/global level they envision interconnectedness between all living things. The broad level concern here is taking care of the environment and opposing war. Second, the institutional/societal level explores systems of government, economics, and religion. The focus within this level is how rules are developed and implemented. Third, the interpersonal level looks at how individuals treat each other in conflict and dispensing power and privilege. This aligns itself with the belief that to understand and fully appreciate restorative justice practices, we must first imagine and experience just and restorative relationships in our own lives (Sullivan & Tifft, 2004). Finally, the peacemaking perspective applies at an intrapersonal level. For a peacemaking perspective to be fully realized, individuals must forgive their own transgressions and learn to make peace with their soul. To develop these four levels, Fuller (1998) was informed by religious and humanist traditions (e.g. love, compassion, and forgiveness), feminist traditions (e.g. equal rights, equal opportunities, and cooperation), and critical traditions (e.g. social justice, enlightenment, and emancipation). The peacemaking perspective has strong roots, which helps make realizing social change possible.

Another tool used to understand the peacemaking perspective is the pyramid of ideas (Braswell et al., 2001). At the foundation of the pyramid are the nonviolent teachings of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. The use of state violence (police force, capital punishment, etc.) with the intent to punish into conformity is outside of the
bounds of the peacemaking perspective. Above nonviolence on the pyramid is social justice. This is important to the process because even if the situation is resolved in a nonviolent manner, the underlying social justice that gave rise to the problem still remains. At the core of the peacemaking perspective is the attempt to resolve and/or address the underlying issues that gave rise to the conflict, thus addressing social injustices. The next critical element of the peacemaking paradigm is inclusion. Braswell et al., (2001) assert that all people who are affected by a criminal justice system decision should be included in the decision-making process. For example, the victim(s), the offender, the community, and even more tangentially affected parties such as families and schools should be able offer input on the outcome. The idea behind this concept is the possibility to present more creative and effective ways of solving and addressing the problem. In addition, the source or root of the problem is more likely to surface and be understood. Because of its inclusive nature, peacemaking values the offender’s voice in the decision-making process. If we shut this person out of the process it only further alienates him/her from the community, making it more difficult to reintegrate back in. Transformation and rehabilitation of the offender and the community can only be realized if the resolution process is inclusive.

The next concept on the peacemaking pyramid is the concept of correct means. Found in religious traditions and advocated for by Gandhi, correct means demands that offenders be given their constitutional and human rights (Braswell et al., 2001). The fifth step on the pyramid is ascertainable criteria. This concept aims to ensure that the means of justice is not only objective, but is understood by all (Braswell et al., 2001). Finally, the peacemaking pyramid presents the Kantian concept of the categorical imperative. The
peacemaking pyramid presents only one of the possible ways of comprehending this radical way of approaching crime and its socially rooted origins. Regardless of how it is presented, the peacemaking perspective invites us to consider the presence of violence and democracy in society and in our lives. Arrigo (1999) expands on this by adding that “it considers how people, in the mist of conflict build trust, community, and peace rather than distrust, separatism, and war” (p. 51).

The peacemaking perspective differs from our traditional societal and institutionalized response to crime and conflict. Because of this, many people discount it as being too soft on social problems. Fuller (1998) acknowledges this perception as understandable, but asserts that the peace perspective offers a more inclusive view of the crime problem. With its’ goal to transform both the individual and the institution that produced the environment conducive of conflict and crime, this perspective demands justice from both. Furthermore, the peacemaking perspective sheds an uncomfortable light on the patriarchy, racism, and social class bias that exist within our institutions (Fuller, 1998). Finally, because of the goal to address the root of the issue, is it critical that peacemaking is not confused with peacekeeping (Braswell et al., 2001). Peacemaking challenges the war-making frame of mind that has saturated our culture and society. It is uncomfortable, and often difficult to envision that the problems plaguing our society are rooted much deeper than previously thought. As the system currently operates, it is quicker to seek retribution in the form of incarceration, rather than address the issue(s) that are at the root of the problem. The peacemaking perspective seeks to create socially just communities and work toward the process of social change and peace. One way that it does this is through the use of peacemaking circles.
**Peacemaking circles.** Through the use of peacemaking circles communities can engage in collective action and shared accountability. Peacemaking circles offer a fundamental approach to conflict and crime by asking who is accountable. In the peacemaking circle process individuals are held accountable, but they also explore the collective dimensions of accountability (Pranis, Stuart, & Wedge, 2003). Similar to restorative and transformative justice, circles ask if social, cultural, racial, and/or economic conditions have been ignored, giving rise to the problem (Pranis et al., 2003). As with other alternative approaches to problem solving, peacemaking circles view conflict as an opportunity, which is capable of bringing communities closer together. Using a restorative approach to forge healing and rebuild broken relationships, peacemaking circles operate under the premise that all human beings desire good meaningful connections with each other.

Circles offer a new paradigm to how we respond to crime and violence and create social order. Pranis et al., (2003) present the following four shifts as the foundation of peacemaking circles. First, peacemaking circles move people from coercion to healing. To exercise this, circles engage in a “power-with” as opposed to a “power-over” approach. Second, circles shift from solely individual to individual and collective accountability. Part of the collective accountability involves asking if our attitudes or behaviors create tension within our communities and if this might contribute to imbalances, misunderstanding, and inequities that perpetuate conflict. Third, peacemaking circles aim to shift from dependence on the State to greater self-reliance with the community. When dependence is placed on the State, communities are left in the role of spectator. When communities work together to resolve conflicts, they begin to
cultivate trust and provide their community with an opportunity to learn and grow. Finally, peacemaking circles reframe justice from “getting even” to “getting well”. By operating under the premise that conflict occurs because of ills within our communities, circles can begin the process of healing. Additionally, because circles are less concerned with punishment and more concerned with cultivating our human capacity to change and transform, they offer a human-centered approach to conflict and crime (Pranis et al., 2003). With its humanistic approach, peacemaking circles hold great promise for organizing a collective accountability model. This model has the capacity to explore the challenging issues of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism.

**Tools of Injustice**

Systems of oppression are characterized by dominate and subordinate relations. These dynamic relationships are socially constructed and reproduced (Goodman, 2001). Depending on our social identity, or how we are socially categorized, we are socially constructed into dominant or subordinate group(s), also referred to as being privileged or marginalized, oppressed or oppressor, or majority or minority (Goodman, 2001). Dominate groups are able to exercise domination and oppress their subordinates through a process known as hegemony. McLaren (2009) defines hegemony as, “the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force, but through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as church, the state, school, the mass media, the political system, and the family” (p. 67). It is important to note that although one may be oppressed through one socially constructed category, one could be the oppressor in another. Occurring on interpersonal and systemic levels, oppression often manifests through prejudices and unlawful discriminatory acts. Types of
oppression include, but are not limited to: racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. Although each of these types of oppression is manifested from different social constructions, all forms of oppression are ultimately linked to the exploitation and domination of both natural resources and human populations (Darder & Torres, 2009). To fully achieve liberation from one type of oppression, we must be able to recognize the interconnected nature of all types of oppression.

**Racism.** Racism is present throughout our society and is deeply rooted in our systems and institutions. Racism is often difficult to recognize because it has become so normalized in our society. Anderson and Collins (2004) define racism as, “a system of power and privilege; it can be manifested in people’s attitudes but is rooted in society’s structure and is reflected in the different advantages and disadvantages that groups experience, based on their location in this societal system” (p. 81). There are two types of racism that is used to oppress, individual and systemic. Individual racism is a person’s belief about superiority, whereas systemic is complex practices that support economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines (Anderson & Collins, 2004). Because of systemic racism, people are able to benefit from the power and privilege that racism produces, even if they do not consider themselves a racist.

Although racism is generally thought to produce benefits for white people, it can be costly to white people without money and power (Kivel, 1995). Examples of those costs include, assimilating into mainstream and leaving behind “white” cultures and histories, damages to interpersonal relationships, and the distortion of sense of safety and danger (Kivel, 1995). Without doubt the cost of racism to non-white people far surpasses the burden that white people experience; however it is important to point out that
understanding racism must be a concern for all people, regardless of race.

**Sexism.** Although women’s movements have advanced women’s causes and brought women closer to equality, sexism is still prevalent today. Sexism is the belief that men are superior to women. Blood, Tuttle and Lakey (1998) define sexism as, “a complex mesh of practices, institutions, and ideas which have the overall effect of giving more power to men than to women” (p. 181). The power to make and influence decisions which impact all areas of our lives, including economics and politics rest primarily in the hands of men. Even though many people believe that sexism is no longer an issue, it can be seen in how women are perceived and treated in our society (Anderson & Collins, 2004). Gender stereotypes, which apply to men and women, maintain and reinforce the sexist behaviors and language that is present in our society today.

**Heterosexism.** In addition to sexism, heterosexism is a type of oppression that uses one’s sexuality as its group identifier. Heterosexism is the oppression of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people by heterosexuals. The dominant group uses homophobia- the fear and hatred of homosexuality- as part of a system of social control that legitimizes this form of oppression (Anderson & Collins 2004). This is made possible by the dichotomization of heterosexuals as “normal” and others as sexually deviant and therefore socially outcast. Heterosexism privileges heterosexuals by allowing them rights and privileges not afforded to those deemed different. The freedom to display public affection, talk openly about their partners, have their relationship publicly acknowledged and celebrated are only a few ways that heterosexism can be seen in our society (Goodman, 2001). As with other forms of oppression, everyone, regardless of your sexual identity is hurt by heterosexism.
Classism. Classism is the superiority of middle and upper classes to poor and working class. Discussions about classism can quickly put people on the defense, which can make these conversations challenging to approach. This generally occurs because people can interpret discussions about classism as advocacy for socialism and communism (Goodman, 2001). Anderson and Collins (2004) add, “In the United States, the social class system is also marked by differences in power. Social class is not just a matter of material difference; it is a pattern of domination in which some groups have more power than others” (p. 91). The use of power by the superior group enables them to make decisions that not only affect their lives, but the lives of people that do not have any decision-making power. With this power, they are able to insure that the social structure remains in their favor, and that their communities, schools, and public services are funded, whereas those with no power have no voice. In addition, the distribution of wealth helps insure that the class system does not change. With money to attend college, upper and middle class students have an advantage in the job market. When we fail to address the root of classism the cycle is continually reinforced. This cycle is apparent when generation after generation lives in poverty, or lives afluent. Classism is closely tied to racism and gender discrimination. This can be seen in the disproportionate number of women and minorities that live in poverty.

Ableism. Ableism occurs when an able-bodied or nondisabled person assumes superiority or is privileged over a person with a disability. The social practices that tend to disadvantage and marginalize people with impairments, perceived impairments, and physical differences are the result of ableism. The most basic way to understand ableism is to realize that able-bodied people do not need to think about access to buildings,
methods of travel or about needing assistance to take care of everyday tasks. The privilege to able-bodied people is that there is no need for them to be concerned with these things. Superiority is displayed in the assumption that a disability makes someone less intelligent. As with other forms of oppression, there is resistance to exploring ableism. Goodman (2001) credits this resistance to “the fear of facing one’s own vulnerability to becoming disabled” (p. 22). The privileging of able-bodied persons is present in our society. To dismantle the oppression faced by those who have a disability, we must first recognize that ableism exists, and that each of us has the responsibility to challenge it. A possibility for dismantling ableism, as well as other “isms” exists through the practice of critical pedagogy.

**Critical Pedagogy**

Grounded in the belief that education is a means for social transformation, critical pedagogy aims to expose unjust and inequitable practices, while serving as a foundation to advance issues of social justice. To situate the practice of critical pedagogy within the education system, Kincheloe (2005; 2008) provides the following as the central aspects of critical pedagogy: 1) it is grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality; 2) it is constructed on the belief that education is inherently political; 3) it is dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering; 4) using generative themes (experiences that are relevant to students’ realities) it takes first-hand knowledge into consideration.

The education system in the United States has a long history of being unjust and inequitable. Critical pedagogues approach teaching in a way that exposes, challenges, and changes this aspect of schooling. Scholars wring about the oppression and repression experienced through education began in the early 1900s. It was during this time that John
Dewey, W.E.B. DuBois, and Carter G. Woodson began writing about, “the destructive nature of mainstream education” (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009, p. 3). Darder et al. (2009) describes DuBois and Woodson as “sharing a deep desire to transform the social inequalities and educational injustices suffered by African Americans” (p.3). This desire compacted with the recognition that it was important for oppressed people to have access to their histories, DuBois and Woodson began to work toward creating just educational environments. Throughout the 1900s scholarship continued to emerge connecting schooling with the reproduction of a system of social relations that perpetuates existing structures of domination and exploitation (Darder et al., 2009). Social activist Jonathan Kozol worked to expose the social consequences of poverty and racism, while Herbert Kohl used his commitment to community interaction and faith in students to teach. Another key influence in critical pedagogy scholarship is Brazilian educators Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. Freire’s landmark book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed provided foundational work in the arena of social justice in education. Boal used Freire’s writings to develop Theatre of the Oppressed, which provided marginalized peoples of Brazil the opportunity to tell their stories of struggle and oppression. The work of these prolific scholars has been adopted by schools, communities, and labor organizations around the world. Critical pedagogues ground their work in the belief that education is central to creating a just and equitable world.

Concerned for justice, critical pedagogy undertakes a critical examination of the education system and its inherent political nature. This is important to proponents of critical pedagogy because they “understand that every dimension of schooling and every form of educational practices are politically contested spaces” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 2).
This begins when we acknowledge that our education system has been shaped by a deep rooted history of oppression and patriarchy. This can be challenging, partly because dominant power operates in numerous and often hidden ways, but also because if our experience in school was positive, it is easy to assume that others have or will have the same experience. Kincheloe (2008) writes that, “the recognition of these political complications of schooling is a first step for critical pedagogy-influenced educators in developing a social activist teacher persona” (p.2). Because these dominant ideologies often take shape and present themselves through the learning material, practitioners must be aware of efforts to dilute this power literacy (McLaren, 2000). Kincheloe (2008) explains that, “critical teachers must understand not only a wide body of subject matter but also the political structure of the school” (p. 2). Another focus of critical pedagogues is to unpack the increased focus on competitiveness and individual gain that is found throughout our education system. These practices have made it difficult to relate the mission and purpose of schooling to a public discourse that addresses racism, poverty, and sexism (Giroux, 1994). In essence, schooling fails to construct positive social arrangements; rather it reinforces the status quo (Du Bois, 1902). Critical pedagogue Michael Apple asserts that the education system maintains this status quo by working to benefit the privileged and reinforcing gender hierarchies (Kincheloe, 2008). In addition to working to dismantle the status quo, critical pedagogy also has the capacity to advance our understanding of globalization, capitalism, and neoliberal ideals (McLaren, 1998). Undertaking a critical examination of the education system is imperative because the discourse surrounding educational reform disregards any notion of social justice and the building of a democratic community (Giroux, 1994). Critical pedagogues understand the
potential that the classroom provides to highlight and deconstruct the political nature of school, but also its ability to advance change and create a more socially just world.

Critical pedagogy is dedicated to end human suffering. The critical pedagogue views human suffering as a humanly constructed phenomenon, which can be eradicated if there was the collective will to do so (Kincheloe, 2008). To do so, we must develop what Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire refers to as a critical consciousness. This is a dialectical process for attaining liberation and critical hope, a process in which, teachers and students address the nature of naïve consciousness and the maneuvers involved in moving from a naïve to a critical consciousness (Freire, 1973). The awaking of this critical awareness, which Freire describes as conscientização, begins when the critical teacher, through dialogue, seeks out individuals, voices, texts, and perspectives that had been previously excluded (Kincheloe, 2008). Through seeking out those who had previously been excluded, we can develop new forms of understanding, deepen our awareness, empathize with others, and discover our abilities to create change in our global community. By acting as an ethnographer, the teacher uses the classroom as a social laboratory. This approach is important as it allows the “theoretical domain to interact with the lived domain, producing a synergy that elevates scholarship and transformative actions” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 12). The ability to end human suffering exists within each of us. The critical pedagogue’s classroom allows divergent views to surface which enables people to engage critically with issues related to disenfranchised communities.

The final tenant that is central to critical pedagogy is the use of generative themes. Critical pedagogues understand the importance of exploring topics that concern and impact their students. Myles Horton, founder of Highlander Folk School, taught
students that in order for educational change to be effective, it had to begin with the people themselves, those most impacted by the issues (Darder et al, 2009, p.4). An educational revolution begins when students and teachers begin to question what constitutes knowledge and whose experiences are highlighted in our education system. Scholar John Dewey asserted that “education must engage with an enlarged experience; that thinking and reflection are central to the act of teaching; and that students must freely interact with their environments in the practice of constructing knowledge” (Darder et al, 2009, p. 3). With this as the driving force, critical pedagogy is able to situate schooling within a broader framework of human service and community development (Kincheloe, 2008). The ability to value each student’s experience and knowledge begins when everyone is viewed as a student and a teacher, and the line between the two is blurred. The questioning of knowledge construction and the role power plays in that construction is at the forefront of curriculum development. A fundamental concern of critical pedagogy is to deconstruct why some constructions of knowledge are legitimated and celebrated, and why others are clearly ignored. This comprehension is critical so that we can understand whose interests are served and who gets excluded in this process (McLaren, 2009). Another element of critical instruction is the ability to remain self-reflexive. What feminist scholar bell hooks (1994) refers to as “engaged pedagogy”. hooks (1994) describes this as, “progressive, holistic education, which is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy” (p. 15). With this, hooks demands that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization (hooks, 1994). Engaged pedagogy requires that teachers also become part of the process, that they, along with the students, share and open up to the learning process. This requires
that teacher let go of the power and control that one holds in a position of instruction, and recognizes that the capacity to teach comes from the capacity to learn (Freire, 1998). Using the classroom as its platform, critical pedagogy works to liberate the oppressed and unite people through a shared language of critique, struggle, and hope to advance social justice (Kanpol, 1994). The critical classroom is the classroom in which the students’ subjectivities are formed, contested, and played out (McLaren, 2009).

In this literature review, I provided an overview of the basic tenants of various alternative justice movements, different forms of oppression, and the core elements of critical pedagogy. I began with a discussion of restorative and community justice, followed by transformative justice, collective action and community accountability, and peacemaking perspectives. After situating alternative justice and its ability to create change, I provided several tools of injustice. The discussion included racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. Finally, this literature review explicated critical pedagogy. The next chapter will provide my methodological assumptions and approaches.
Chapter Three

Methodological Assumptions and Approaches

In this research project, I take a critical qualitative approach. This approach weaves perspectives, assumptions and methods from both critical and qualitative research. The critical approach used here is informed by assumptions and methods from participatory action research and critical pedagogy. The qualitative approach utilizes questionnaires given to students participating in the classroom and my self-reflexive writing as methods of investigation for this project. Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes (1991) explain that, “The complexity of the world around us demands the deployment of a variety of techniques and strong intellectual and methodological discipline, not a commitment to the hegemony of a single research modality” (p. 19). Moreover, I see this research project as the crafting of a beautiful quilt. I think of the patchwork on a quilt like the patchwork of humanity, with each person representing a mismatched patch on a quilt. Each person on our quilt brings their own uniqueness to our pattern, but when overlapped with other people, it can become a site of contestation. However, it is the differences in the pattern that ultimately makes the quilt a beautiful piece of art. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) comment that, “qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand” (p. 4). Using critical and qualitative perspectives as my methodological approaches is a natural fit for this research project.
Critical Research

Critical pedagogy. This research project takes a critical approach as it is concerned with questioning, disrupting and challenging the status quo. Critical theory is centrally concerned with examining relationships and structures of power with the aim of creating greater justice in the world. Additionally, critical approaches investigate the interactions and implications of the economy, matters of race, class, and gender ideologies and discourses on our social structures (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Claiming the classroom as a site of investigation and intervention regarding these matters is important because of the foundational role education plays in generating knowledge, shaping values, and constructing identities. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) assert that, “qualitative research that frames its purpose in the context of critical theoretical concerns still produces, in our view, undeniably dangerous knowledge, the kind of information and insight that upsets institutions and threatens to overturn sovereign regimes of truth” (p. 279). Thus, the primary research method for this project is engagement, analysis and intervention in the classroom.

Critical theory, which refers to the theoretical tradition that began at the Frankfurt school in Germany in the late 1880s, is sometimes referred to as the “discourse of possibility” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Henry Giroux contends, “that schools, as venues of hope, could be become sites of resistance and democratic possibility through concerted efforts among teachers and students to work within a liberatory pedagogical framework” (as quoted in Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 280). Alexander (2003) describes the classroom as, “a cultural site that places the teacher as both participant and observer in the intense cultural negotiation of lived experience, curriculum, and politics.
of education” (p. 416). Further, Alexander, Anderson, and Gallegos (2005) discuss pedagogy as the process of education establishing culture, explaining that, “it [the classroom] becomes a practiced place; a site in which diverse beings come together in order to engage and negotiate knowledge, systems of understanding, and ways of being, seeing, knowing, and doing” (p. 3). Positioning the classroom as a social laboratory and a site for critical and cultural investigation provides the researcher with significant data.

Using a critical pedagogy framework as my guide, I designed and facilitated three workshops as a method of investigation. The workshops were used to gather data and teach students about transformative justice. The workshops, which were presented over a five-week period, began by establishing a need for alternatives, providing a brief overview of transformative justice, and basic dialogical skill building (e.g. compassion, empathy, cooperation, listening, open-mindedness, and defensive communication). From there the second workshop began shifting the framework of the issue, by looking further into the causes of social issues and identifying the often treated symptoms of these issues. The third and final workshop asked the students to engage in thinking outside of the box. In this workshop we worked together on a case study to challenge the status quo of how we handle, in this case, issues of bullying in an educational setting. The design of each workshop provided opportunity for student reflection and engagement. Central to these workshops was the voice of the student and their community concerns. Facilitation remained student-centered, and allowed for large group discussion, as well as smaller group interaction. This use of critical pedagogy was paramount to this research project.

**Participatory action research.** Participatory action research is one approach under the broad umbrella of critical research. Although not fully employed for this
research project, the basic tenants and understanding of participatory action research were used to inform my research. Participatory action research, which is also referred to as action research or collaborative research, is used when the researcher works directly with the participants to develop a deeper and more localized understanding of the problem. Denzin (2000) describes participatory action research as, “acting together, researchers and subject work to produce changes in the world” (p. 20). My project aligns well with several underlying assumptions of participatory action research. Participatory action research emphasizes the interconnected and value of all participants in research. It also stresses the importance of allowing solutions to emerge from the people who are directly impacted rather than being imposed from outside. When discussing participatory action research, Warren and Karner (2010) point out that, “action research is premised on the notion that the researchers and the respondents are collaborative equals- the researchers bring sociological expertise to the team, whereas the respondents bring their local knowledge” (p. 17). This is precisely the type of collective learning environment I seek to create; an environment where everyone is seen as a valued contributor to the research process. Furthermore, participatory action research can be implemented in a classroom and complements a critical pedagogical approach to teaching. In her classroom research on the fluency and literacy of the Cherokee language, Peter (2003) discusses how she turned to participatory action research to respond to “the need for a research approach that accounts for the perspectives and perceptions of a diverse group of stakeholders, defined as anyone who has something to gain- or lose- as a result of this program” (p. 11). Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) also stress the use of a classroom as a collaborative research cite. The valuing of the students’ and teachers’ perspectives throughout this
nonlinear research process is paramount to this multiphase progression of reflection, discussion, research, and action (Warren & Karner, 2010).

**Qualitative Research**

Rooted in understanding the construction of our social world, a qualitative approach allows me to deploy a variety of methods, which allows full study of teaching transformative justice. Contemporary qualitative research in the social sciences is shaped by methodologists from the Chicago School, who were concerned with describing social and cultural change (Warren & Karner, 2010). Since its foundational work in the 1920s and 1930s, qualitative approaches have shifted with our ever-changing social landscape. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe the current wave of qualitative research as the seventh movement (2000-present). During this movement, qualitative research is “asking that the social sciences and humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). This is of particular importance to this project as it seeks to do precisely that, engage in critical conversations. Warren and Karner (2010) point out that, “Qualitative research is connected to social change in two ways; it can be reflective of social change, and it may be focused on bringing about social change” (p. 15). The primary concern of this research project is to understand the potential of transformative justice to address social concerns and to bring about change. Qualitative researchers seek to make this possible by “changing individual behavior, organizational practices, or the laws, structures, and politics of nations” (Warren & Karner, 2010, p.15). My particular approach begins by working to change individual behavior, which can ultimately lead to creating change on a social and systemic level.
**Questionnaires.** At the end of my three session workshop, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaires was two-fold. First, to provide participants the opportunity to reflect on their experience and to identify what they learned during our sessions. Second, the questionnaires provided me with data to help me determine the effectiveness of my workshop design, how students responded to transformative justice as praxis and to see if students planned to incorporate transformative justice into their everyday lives. The questionnaire contained five open-ended questions, and each participant was given approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questions were designed to allow students the opportunity to articulate what they learned about transformative justice. Additionally, future-tense questions such as, “What have you learned from these workshops that you can incorporate into your everyday life?” were asked. The questionnaires were a valuable component of the data gathering process for this research project.

**Autoethnography.** An important element of this research is for me to grow as human being and as an educator. The use of autoethnography as a method informs this project and allows me to use my reflections and experiences during this research project as data. Championed in Communication Studies predominantly by Carolyn Ellis, Arthur Bochner, Laurel Richardson, and Norman Denzin, autoethnography is described as, “the turn toward blurred genres of writing, a heightened self-reflexivity in ethnographic research, an increased focus on emotion in the social sciences, and the postmodern skepticism regarding generalization of knowledge claims” (Anderson, 2006, p. 373). In the broadest sense, “Autoethnography puts the self at the center of sociological observation and analysis” (Warren & Karner, 2010, p. 20). Throughout my research,
particularly during my teaching engagements, I recognized myself as a part of the research process. When Alexander (2003) describes, “the classroom as a cultural site that places the teacher as both participant and observer in the intense cultural negotiation of lived experience, curriculum, and politics of education”, (p. 416) he is not only positioning the classroom as a site of analysis, but the classroom as a site for autoethnographic possibilities. I was not only concerned with teaching transformative justice to intercultural communication students, I was concerned with teaching myself, as seeing myself as a key to social change. hooks (1994) refers to this as engaged pedagogy, which means that “teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students” (p. 15). This is closely aligned with critical pedagogical thought. Critical pedagogues view themselves as part of the learning process, and continually work to dismantle the power structures that exist with the teacher / student relationship. A similar power structure exists with the researcher / researched relationship. Recognizing myself in the research process, and using my reflections as research data, helps challenge the traditional notion of researcher / researched relationship.

Holman Jones (2005) argues that autoethnography is about understanding “how looking at the world from a specific, perspectival, and limited vantage point can tell, teach, and put people into motion” (p. 763). On one hand this involves understanding who I am and my partiality, but also acknowledging the role that I play in shaping the research process. On the other hand, autoethnography recognizes the richness that my life experiences bring to the research process and my potential to connect to students in the classroom. The drive behind this research project is to propel people, including myself,
into motion. Discussing the dual role that autoethnographers hold, Anderson (2006) writes, “They [autoethnographers] should openly discuss changes in their beliefs and relationships over the course of fieldwork, this vividly revealing themselves as people grappling with issues relevant to membership and participation in fluid rather than static social worlds” (p. 384). Atkins (2006) adds that, “ethnographers inevitably affect and interact with the settings they document and are themselves changed in the process” (p. 403). As a researcher of the social world, I cannot help but to be changed by the dialogue I am engaging in that addresses social concerns.

**Role of the Researcher**

I am a female, European American, thirty-two years old, heterosexual, middle class, single mother, and teacher. Although my identity is fluid and ever-changing, it does influence my position as a researcher. The lens in which I view the world has been shaped by my experiences in it. For example, my position as a European American studying and teaching about issues of social justice can bring about certain challenges. Some students might wonder what I have to add to a conversation about something they think I might not be directly impacted by, or others might see me as a person from the dominant group using my privilege to teach others about issues unrelated to me. In fact, issues of social justice relating to classism and sexism have been a major part of my life. Additionally, as a White person, I feel that engaging in conversations about social justice issues helps to build alliances, create solutions, and remove some of the barriers that exist when it comes to dominant groups taking responsibility and being a part of the solution. As a young female teaching in an academy that is dominated by men, I understand that when I walk into a classroom, I must establish myself as a capable and competent
As a single mother of a teenage son, I feel that I enter the classroom with experience interacting with young adults that enhances my ability to establish trust and community. Being a mother further increases my desire to create a world that makes peace possible. Who I am not only impacts my interactions in the classroom, but how I developed my workshops and interpreted the results. As I was developing my workshops, I recognized that to some extent my life experiences and interactions were guiding the content. As the facilitator I acknowledge that I do have control over the content, but as a critical pedagogue I worked to create an environment that would allow generative themes to emerge. I did not want the workshops to be about me and my experiences, rather about the experiences and issues that the students were faced with. While interpreting the data I cannot remove myself from the process, therefore it is important to remain cognizant of my positionality and how that reflects on my interpretation of it. It is impossible to separate the researcher from the research process, acknowledging how this impacts the research is a critical part of the process.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological assumptions and approaches that my research project uses. Critical research, such as critical pedagogy and participatory action research was explicated and argued as accurate methods for this project. Additionally, the qualitative methods that were used and informed this project, questionnaires and autoethnography, were detailed and supported. Finally, a discussion of my role as the researcher was included. The next chapter will provide the workshop designs and rationales, as well as a thematic analysis of the data that emerged during the facilitation of the workshops.
Designing and developing transformative justice workshops entailed numerous decisions and choices that I had to make. I used a critical pedagogy approach in the workshop design and facilitation. Critical pedagogy is a natural choice for these workshops because it is grounded in the belief that education is a means for social transformation. It also aims to expose unjust and inequitable practices, while serving as a foundation to advance issues of social justice. Transformative justice shares similar goals of transforming inequitable systems that allow violence and other community challenges to take place. My workshops served as stepping stones toward transformation.

Informed by the literature, I formulated general and specific goals, and student learning objectives for each workshop. I also developed teaching methods and material that would help ensure the learning objectives and goals were met. The facilitation of these workshops also required that I accommodate various styles of learning. Guided by Kolb’s Model of Experimental Learning, I developed the workshop activities and learning approaches. Kolb’s model advances a four-stage learning process (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation) where the broadest range of learners are reached by moving through the learning cycle (Svinicki & Dixon, nd).

Before I began designing my workshops, I developed four overarching goals for this project. The first goal was that I wanted the students and myself to have an understanding of the self as an agent of change. Throughout this research process I have become aware of my spheres of influence; I want others to recognize theirs as well. The
second overarching goal was for people to recognize the relationship between conflict, violence, and community issues and systemic forms of oppression. This goal can be realized by situating the problem in a social context and taking into account the broader picture. The third goal of my workshop series was to generate alternative methods to address conflict, violence, and community issues. I wanted the alternatives to challenge the status quo and taken-for-granted ways of addressing these issues, which I acknowledge can be uncomfortable. Additionally, the proposed alternative methods needed to include all who were impacted by the situation. Finally, I wanted the alternative methods to be creative and encourage thinking outside of the box. The fourth overarching goal of my project was to reconnect or deepen our connection with humanity. This was an important part of the project goals because the tension and violence throughout the world has desensitized and dehumanized us. Because of this disconnection, it is critical that we examine how we treat each other in conflict and how we dispense power and privilege. Quinney and Wildeman (1991) suggest that we cannot achieve peace and social justice unless we work to achieve peace and justice within ourselves. This project represents the work I am doing within myself to achieve peace and justice in the world.

After articulating my general project goals, I developed a series of three workshops, each one building on the previous workshop. For each workshop I outlined specific goals and learning objectives. Because transformative justice works against the status quo and has the potential of being received with hesitation, each workshop underwent careful planning to ensure that it was presented in a manner that was manageable for students. Similar to building a house, we started with the foundation and
worked our way up. The first workshop introduced the topic of transformative justice and established the need for transformative justice. In addition, we focused on dialogic skill building, so that we could effectively engage in conversations with people who do not share the same perspectives as we do. The second workshop began the process of shifting the framework in which we view violence and other community concerns. In this workshop we began to identify underlying causes of social injustice. The third and final workshop focused on building the skills necessary to generate alternatives and think outside of the box. After I designed each workshop, I developed a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was two-fold. First, to provide participants the opportunity to reflect on their experience and to identify what they learned during our sessions. Second, the responses on the questionnaire provided me with data to help determine the effectiveness of my workshop design and to see how students responded to transformative justice as praxis.

In this chapter I provide a detailed overview of each of my transformative justice workshops. I discuss the design of the workshops and offer a rationale for the design decisions that were made. In addition, using the participant questionnaires, my field notes, and classroom observations I present and discuss the three main themes that emerged during the series of workshops. The themes are 1) self as agent of change; 2) transformative justice as everyday praxis; 3) transformative justice through critical pedagogy.

Transformative Justice Workshops Design and Rationale

The development and design of these transformative justice workshops began with the general goals that were previously outlined, as well as consideration of the
participants that would take part in the workshops. The workshops were developed for undergraduate students in an Intercultural Communication classroom at a university in Los Angeles, California. The workshops began during the fourth week of the semester, in a course where issues of social justice are at the heart of the curriculum. After speaking with the professor of the course, I was able to gauge the readiness of the students and the appropriateness of the material that I would be discussing. This was important because I wanted to ensure that the workshops I prepared were designed with a participant focus and that I began a conversation with the class at a level with which they would feel comfortable.

Workshop one: elements of effective dialogue. The first workshop in my transformative justice workshop series was titled *Elements of Effective Dialogue* and it was facilitated during a 1 hour and 15 minute period to a group of approximately 35 students on September 22, 2011. The design and development of this workshop emerged after I crafted the learning objectives. The basic structure of the workshop was guided by the following:

- Have the group identify social problems we face.
- Using domestic violence as an example, have the group describe how we respond to it [domestic violence] in our society.
- Ask the group to discuss if this response addresses symptoms or causes, and consider the implications.
- Introduce transformative justice as an alternative, outlining goals and obstacles.
- Have the group develop a list of dialogical skills that a transformative justice practitioner would need.
- In small groups, practice using those skills during an in-class activity.
- Conclude with a debriefing of the session.

The intent of this session was to gauge the level of receptiveness that the students had for transformative justice and to establish that this was a conversation worthy of engaging. In addition, I wanted the students to leave with skills that they could immediately put into
practice. The specific learning objectives for this workshop were: 1) to have students understand and appreciate the need for an alternative; 2) to introduce transformative justice and have students identify obstacles practitioners might face; 3) to identify how students have responded during a difficult dialogue and to articulate key elements of effective dialogue; 4) to practice using key elements of effective dialogue.

Once the learning objectives were set, the process of designing the course layout and approaches that would be used to meet these objectives were decided. Because this was the first workshop in the series, it was paramount that I begin to lay the foundation for future conversations. For example, the first learning objective was to establish that there was a need for transformative justice. Without establishing a need for my workshops, students would likely disengage or have trouble figuring out how transformative justice can be used. As I developed the workshop I decided that I wanted the students to establish that there was a need for transformative justice, not for me to tell them that there was a need. This would be possible through the use of generative themes, that is, experiences that are relevant to students’ realities (Kincheloe, 2005; 2008). This critical pedagogical approach takes first-hand knowledge into consideration and uses that knowledge and experience to guide the conversation. John Dewey asserted that “education must engage with an enlarged experience; that thinking and reflection are central to the act of teaching; and that students must freely interact with their environments in the practice of constructing knowledge” (Darder et al, 2009, p. 3). To allow the students an opportunity to establish a need for transformative justice, I asked the group to brainstorm a list of social problems. The list that the students generated included environmental issues, child abuse, human trafficking, sexism, immigration,
poverty, domestic violence, racism, homelessness, and heterosexism. The list was quite extensive and emerged from the group. To continue establishing a need for an alternative I decided to center our conversation on domestic violence. I made this decision for two reasons. First, the impact of domestic violence is far-reaching and most people have in some way been touched by its effects. Second, a significant amount of transformative justice practitioners use a transformative justice model to address domestic violence.

Next, I asked the group how we address issues of domestic violence. The responses included: ignore it, jail time, call the police, banish the violent person from our community, and send the abused to a shelter or to counseling. The students concluded that none of the ways that we currently address domestic violence actually work. In fact, our current methods only treat the symptoms; they do not address the causes of domestic violence. I used this question as an opportunity to draw on the literature from generation FIVE (2007) and their claim that community response and accountability is necessary because transformative justice relies on the fabric of the community to support community members and cooperatively respond to problems.

The second learning objective was to introduce transformative justice and to have the students identify obstacles that practitioners might face. The method of instruction for this learning objective was lecture and group discussion. I began with a basic overview of the primary tenants of transformative justice which include: 1) bringing communities together; 2) looking at broader picture; 3) opening dialogue; 4) listening to all impacted; 5) focusing on individual and collective accountability; 6) developing strategies to address the situation within the community and finally; 7) working outside of the system to create change. I also introduced students to generation FIVE and Friends are Reaching
Out (FAR out). The students pointed out that at the heart of these organizations is the ability to engage in dialogue with a group of diverse people that have varying perspectives on issues. This provided a natural lead-in to my next learning objective.

The third and fourth learning objectives for this workshop were to identify elements of effective dialogue and to practice using them during difficult dialogue. A discussion about effective dialogue was critical because the issues tackled by transformative justice practitioners are multifaceted and people often have different perspectives on how they should be handled. These conversations often involve working with people that do not necessarily agree with you and/or working with someone that wronged you or someone in the community. According to Morris (2000), transformative justice uses the power unleashed by the harm of a crime to let those most affected find truly creative, healing solutions, which would not be possible without dialogue. The elements of effective dialogue were generated though group discussion and were supported by Makau and Marty’s (2001) research. The elements that the class groups generated were empathy, compassion, listening, avoiding defensive communication, keeping an open mind, and cooperation. After generating this list and discussing what each of these means and looks like during dialogue, the students worked in groups of three to practice using them. Again using generative themes, I asked the students to identify a conversation that they have a difficult time engaging in and work with partners to practice using the elements of effective dialogue. After working in their small group, we reconvened and the session ended with a debriefing of the group activity.

Throughout each workshop I made an effort to incorporate Kolb’s four-stage learning process (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization,
active experimentation). In this workshop, I asked questions, rather than gave answers to engage thinking, I had students practice using elements of effective dialogue to engage in doing and watching, and I touched upon the feeling aspect of the model during our debriefing. Another important aspect of critical pedagogy that I used during this workshop was allowing the students the space to help develop the learning material. I did this by allowing them to generate the list of social concerns that we could discuss, as well as the list of elements that they thought were important in dialogue. Because they were contributing to the learning material, as opposed to me tell them what we will learn, I blurred the line and expected roles between the students and teacher. McLaren (2009) points out that breaking down and changing the power dynamics that exist in the classroom provides an opportunity to see whose interests are served and who gets excluded in the education process. Throughout the research and facilitation process, I viewed the students as co-creators of knowledge in our learning environment. Even though I was introducing a concept that was new to them, I was focused on connecting it to their lives and their experiences. My facilitation allowed what Kincheloe (2008) refers to as the theoretical domain interacting with the lived domain.

**Workshop two: shifting the framework of the issue.** The second workshop in my transformative justice series was titled *Shifting the Framework of the Issue* and it was facilitated during a 1 hour and 15 minute period to the same group of approximately 35 students on October 6, 2011. In an effort to ensure that the content of the workshop organically emerged, I designed the second workshop based on our discussion and progress during the first workshop. The basic structure of the workshop was guided by the following:
• Revisit the last workshop- pair and share reflections and/or comments.
• Watch generation FIVE video and debrief.
• Case study- large group discussion about campus incident involving student claiming to have a gun.
• Case study- small group discussions about middle-school bullying and shooting incident.
• Conclude with a debriefing of the session.

The goal for this workshop was to continue unpacking transformative justice, but also to begin to apply its basic tenants to case studies. The title of the workshop embodies what I intended to do--shift the framework. More specifically, during our first workshop, we established that in our society we work within a specific framework to address issues that affect our communities. This framework is punitive, seeks retribution, privileges dominant groups, and is ineffective. Shifting the framework requires that we begin to challenge the status quo and start to generate alternative ways to address issues within our communities. Working with the students to generate alternatives was crucial. In fact, “the goal of dismantling oppressive structures is shortsighted, and perhaps impossible, if we are not also prepared to build alternatives” (generation FIVE, 2007, p. 6).

The two learning objectives that I set for this workshop were: 1) to develop a deeper understanding of transformative justice and its potential to create change; 2) to begin applying the basic tenants of transformative justice to case studies. As with the previous workshop, I took great care to design a lesson that would be inclusive of all learning styles and that would allow the space for generative themes to emerge and to be used as learning material. To meet the first learning objective, I had the participants work with a partner to discuss what they remembered about our introduction to transformative justice. After their pair-and-share, the group watched a video from the organization generation FIVE. The video introduced several important concepts that I used as
discussion material. Based on the video, I asked the group the following questions: 1) what does it mean to build the capacity of communities?; 2) What does a liberatory approach mean and why is it important?; 3) In what ways do state systems often create more violence and harm in our communities?; 4) To prevent violence we have to change the way that we treat each other and the things that we are taught. What are some examples of this? This video helped to reinforce my discussion on transformative justice, as well as provide students with additional support for its potential to create change.

The second learning objective for this workshop was for students to begin applying the basic tenants of transformative justice to case studies. Although we had limited time to discuss what a transformative justice model looks like, I wanted the students to have experience discussing issues that occur within our communities and to do so with a transformative lens. The first case study that we used involved an event that took place on our campus one week prior to our workshop. This event involved a young man, who was wearing a shirt that said “human rights violation,” entering the campus library claiming to have a gun. Although the young man was apprehended and did not have a gun, the event shook our campus community. As a result, classes were canceled, people felt vulnerable, and many began to “otherize” this young man. Exploring this situation through a transformative lens provided the opportunity for students to process what happened on their campus and begin to ask questions about the event.

Transformative justice is concerned with healing the wound that the crime created and seeking broader answers. With this approach, we can use crime as an opportunity to transform the lives of victims, offenders, and the whole community (Morris, 2000). The response to this event where the man claimed to have a gun followed a typical, status quo
framework. This entailed removing the offender from the community and because the justice system views crime as an offense against the state, not people, the details of the case were not made public. These actions can create conditions that perpetuate fear, weaken trust, and can lead to other, more serious events. Barak (2003) explains that “transformative justice seeks to move victims from vengeance to forgiveness, from defensive hatred and alienation to altruistic empathy and protectiveness, as it seeks to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and harmed in our society” (p. 323). When incidents such as this happen, it is important that we do not forget to examine the broad context that it occurred in. These types of events harm each of us, including the young man that has been exiled from our campus community.

Because of their connection or perceived disconnection with the incident, this topic provided the class with an opportunity to use a transformative justice framework to begin to shift the framing of the situation. Working in our large group, I asked the students to imagine what type of questions a transformative justice practitioner would ask. Additionally, because transformative justice seeks community response and accountability, I asked them what it would look like to cooperatively respond to the problem (generation FIVE, 2007). Some of the questions that emerged were: 1) what does a human rights violation mean?; 2) The young man has been arrested and charged, but does that resolve the issue?; 3) What is this incident a symptom of?; 4) Who are the stakeholders? 5) If he were here, what would you ask him?; 6) How can we handle unresolved feelings? Drawing from our previous discussion on the elements of effective dialogue, I asked the students to work with each other to deepen their understanding of this event. As expected, it was difficult for the students to imagine engaging in dialogue
with the young man. Many students felt that he disrupted their day and created unnecessary fear and stress in their already hectic lives. I acknowledged their feelings, and invited them to take the spotlight off of themselves and shine it elsewhere. When we do that, we can illuminate many things that are often left unseen. These questions also invite students to use what philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1997) calls a “narrative imagination.” This phrase is used to describe the complex imaginative abilities required for moral interaction with others. Makau and Marty (2001) define this type of moral interaction with others as giving us the “capacity to imagine the experience of others so deeply that we are able to empathize with them and to experience true compassion for them” (p. 52). When discussing the event that took place on campus, I was asking the students to put themselves in the young man’s shoes. This was a difficult task for students; one that I think must be continually practiced until it becomes an unconscious way of interacting with others.

The second case study that we used for this workshop was an event that happened locally in 2008. This particular event involved a middle school student who was bullied and eventually shot to death by the student that was bullying him. This event was selected as a case study for several reasons. First, because of recent court proceedings the event has resurfaced through the media. Second, during our first workshop, the students identified bullying as a social concern. Third, this is a local incident that students might have an easier time connecting with. Finally, the response to this case used a traditional retributive and punitive framework; one that the class had already established was ineffective. The students worked in groups of three to discuss the case study and answer a series of questions about the event (see appendix A). The questions were designed to
guide students to think about alternative ways to respond to the event, to identify possible causes (hate, prejudice, heteronormativity, homophobia, etc.) and the ways in which we can address those causes. Examining this case using a transformative justice approach supports what Harris (2006) describes as extending the scope of the inquiry beyond the immediate situation into what are often unrecognized and unchallenged assumptions and paradigms underlying current economic, political, criminal justice and social arrangements. Further, asking these questions seeks to affect change on a structural level while at the same time addressing the interpersonal harms that occurred before, during, and after the event. As the students worked within their groups, I walked around the class to listen to their group discussions. It was evident based on their discussions that it was difficult to identify or imagine the underlying causes of this event. For example, one student said to his group members that this would not have happened if there were metal detectors installed at the school. Essentially, the lack of security on campus caused the bullying and shooting to take place. As his group members shook their heads in agreement, I asked them if it were possible that metal detectors were treating a symptom of something. Further, I asked him to clarify if he were suggesting that if there were metal detectors installed this entire incident would not have happened. As the students thought about those questions, I began to see the challenge between talking about creating change and actually articulating what we need to change. I brought the group back together, so that they can share their ideas and I could identify where the class was struggling. I reminded them that a transformative justice model offers a transformative approach to crime and conflict, one in which communities can begin to move towards equity and liberation rather than maintaining the current systems of retribution and
punishment (generation FIVE, 2007). Because some of the basic concepts of transformative justice were proving difficult for the students to apply to the case study, I decided to continue working on this in the next workshop.

**Workshop three: thinking outside of the box.** The third and final workshop in my transformative justice workshop series was titled *Thinking Outside of the Box* and was facilitated during a 1 hour and 15 minute period to the same group of approximately 35 students on October 20, 2011. As with the previous workshop, I designed this workshop based on the progress the class made during the last session. The basic structure of the workshop was guided by the following:

- Revisit the previous workshops- ask for reflections or comments.
- Continue work on the case study- large group discussion about middle-school bullying and shooting incident.
- Distribute questionnaires for student feedback.
- Conclude with a de briefing of the session.

The goal for this workshop was to continue to work to understand transformative justice and apply a transformative justice model to an additional case study. This workshop represented the final opportunity I had to help the students make connections between transformative justice and the potential that has to create social change. Additionally, it was during this workshop that I had the students complete a questionnaire (see appendix B).

The specific learning objective that I established for this session was for students to distinguish between a cause and a symptom. This learning objective is important for two reasons. First, the foundation of transformative justice lies in seeking to heal and repair harm, while at the same time deconstructing the root causes and transforming the dominant practices of our institutions that perpetuate injustice. Second, during the
previous session students struggled when asked to identify the causes and symptoms in the middle school bullying case study. Because working to identify the root cause of an issue is paramount to the transformative justice praxis, it was critical that the students understood the difference. After reflecting on this struggle and discussing it with a colleague, I discovered a way that I could explain it to the students. The example that I used, which proved to be effective, was to use a headache as an example of a symptom. When we have a headache, we generally treat it with aspirin, however that does not treat what is causing the headache; it only temporarily rids us of the symptom. I asked the group what might cause a headache, and was met with a variety of answers ranging from stress, to pollution, to a tumor. It seemed silly and unproductive to continue to treat a headache without addressing the cause of it. However, this is precisely how our society handles violence and other social concerns, which related to our first workshop when we discussed how we handle domestic violence. This analogy provided some clarification for the students.

During our second workshop we began to apply a transformative justice framework to a case study about a middle school student who was bullied and shot to death by a classmate. In the previous session I had the students work in groups of three to discuss the case and answer some specific questions that might be asked by a transformative justice practitioner. During this workshop, I elected to have the class work together on the same case study. Again, this case proved to be challenging for the students to analyze. In the previous workshop there was difficulty in identifying causes and symptoms, whereas now the difficulty was primarily centered on developing alternative ways to respond to the event and address the cause(s). Because the way we
respond to and handle social concerns has been normalized in our society, it becomes
difficult to imagine other possibilities exist. My approach to getting students to think
outside of the box was by challenging the alternatives that they presented and bringing
them back to what we discussed during our previous workshops. What I found was that
the students often defaulted back to a slightly modified version of how the
school/community/justice system responded to the event, or they provided an alternative
that would address the symptom, not the cause. For example, suggestions were made to
install metal detectors, or to enforce gun laws. Although these are alternatives that
certainly could have changed the outcome of the event, they do not address what caused
the event to occur or challenge the structure(s) that invite crime into our communities.
Additionally, because this workshop is focused on disrupting a status quo way of
thinking, I pushed the students to question their assumptions. For example, one student
suggested that the event happened because one of the young men asked the other on a
date. This comment provided an opportunity for everyone in the class to question why as
a society we think it is ok for a young man to ask a girl out or vice versa, but if a young
man asked another young man out then he might have been asking for trouble. As the
workshop unfolded, I worked to validate the students’ responses while at the same time
push them to think more critically about the event.

In addition to this case study, I also developed a case study that centered on the
issue of homelessness in Los Angeles (see appendix C). I developed the case study on
this topic for three reasons. First, during our first workshop, the students identified
homelessness as a social concern. Second, Los Angeles County (where the campus is
located) has over 50,000 homeless people, making it the largest population of homeless
in America (LAHSA, 2011). Third, the recent gentrification of the Downtown Los Angeles area is further displacing our homeless population, bringing new found attention to a concern that many could previously ignore. The goal of introducing this new case study was to give the students an opportunity to begin to think about homelessness using a transformative justice framework. Generation FIVE (2007) reminds us that transformative justice is focused on collective accountability and transformation of those responsible. In this case, homelessness is a human created condition, which requires that we ask ourselves, “What role do I play in creating and allowing homelessness?”

This case study also aligns with critical pedagogy’s dedication to end human suffering. Just like transformative justice practitioners, the critical pedagogue views human suffering as a humanly constructed phenomenon, which can be eradicated if there were the collective will to do so (Kincheloe, 2008). To do so, we must develop what Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire refers to as a critical consciousness. This is a dialectical process for attaining liberation and critical hope, a process in which teachers and students address the state of naïve consciousness and the approaches involved in moving from a naïve to a critical consciousness (Freire, 1973). Critical consciousness can be raised by engaging in dialogue about issues of homelessness and working collectively to identify symptoms and uncover the causes.

Although careful thought and planning was put into developing this case study, it was not used during the workshop. While my intent was to introduce this case study after finishing the previous case study, the students were not ready to move on. In a traditional method of instruction, the teacher might have moved the class on, regardless of their readiness. However, based on critical pedagogical practices, attention to students’ needs
and processes of meaning making are central to the learning environment. Students’ subjectivities are formed, contested, and played out in the classroom, thus, the learning process cannot be rushed (McLaren, 2009). Throughout the facilitation process I remained cognizant of where the students were in the learning process and what they needed before we could move forward. The case study on homelessness would have provided the students with additional material to learn about and apply a transformative justice framework; yet, the richness of our discussion about the first case study justified our continued focus on it. As a result of the discussions that emerged in the workshops and my analysis of the data, three themes emerged.

**Thematic Analysis**

The data gathering processing for this research project took shape in several ways. First, through my research and design of the workshops I gathered data on transformative justice and teaching practices. Second, through the facilitation of the workshops, I applied a critical method of teaching and conducted student observations. Third, through the use of a post-workshop student questionnaire, I gauged the student’s comprehension of the material, as well as overall response to transformative justice as praxis. Fourth, by using my post-workshop field notes, I reflected on the interactions in the classroom, as well as the changes that I experienced as a person. Three themes emerged from my analysis of the data gathered through these methods. In the following section, I discuss the emergent themes: 1) self as agent of change; 2) transformative justice as everyday praxis and; 3) transformative justice through critical pedagogy.

**Theme one: self as agent of change.** I believe the capacity to create change is within each of us. This belief motivated me to develop and share my research with others,
so we can collectively create change within our communities. Although I have always seen myself as an agent of change, I was certain that I would be working with students who did not necessarily share the same view of themselves. It was my hope that each participant would leave the workshop series with a sense that transforming our society and moving closer to social justice is a task that each of us must undertake. Boggs (2011) stresses the importance of this when she states, “At this point in the continuing evolution of our country and of the human race, we urgently need to stop thinking of ourselves as victims and to recognize that we must each become a part of the solution because we are each a part of the problem” (p. 29).

Although I already viewed myself as an agent of change, this research project deepened my understanding of what that means. When I began my research, I felt discouraged by the unjust practices that take place in our society, most of which take place in full view and with our compliance. I felt that my everyday practices of confronting issues of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism both in my personal life and in the classroom were the extent of my change potential. However, my study of critical pedagogy reminded me that education is a means for social transformation and that my classrooms can serve as platforms to advance issues of social justice. Critical pedagogy has also taught me the value of critically questioning our social systems and the construction of knowledge. I have discovered that critical pedagogy, just like transformative justice calls for scholars to keep digging until you reach the heart of the issue. Through this research process I have grown as a scholar and more importantly as a human being. Further, transformative justice has challenged my way of thinking about justice. When I was working on the case studies that I prepared for the workshops,
I struggled and often found that I would default back to the status quo way of responding to these issues that primarily addresses symptoms rather than causes. When this happened, I would remind myself that practicing transformative justice can be tiring, frustrating, and difficult work, but if we allow ourselves to be discouraged, then we will never move towards realizing justice. Transformative justice requires working against the status quo, which often means that we will be met with resistance from people who are unfamiliar with thinking about and grappling with issues from a transformative justice perspective. Critical pedagogy and transformative justice re-affirm that change towards greater equity, no matter how insurmountable it may seem, is possible.

Seeing myself as an agent of change was only part of my research goal; the other was for the workshop participants to see themselves as agents of change. Throughout the workshops, students’ statements confirmed that what we, as a society are doing to address injustice does not work; further, students asserted that change was needed, and most felt they could be a part of that change. However, the general sense that I got from our engagement during the workshops was that they were not sure what they could do to be a part of that change. On the post-workshop questionnaire I asked, “We are surrounded by conflict, violence, and increasing inequities. Do you see yourself as an agent of change in addressing these issues? Why or why not?” Of the twenty-six responses, fourteen responded “yes,” five responded “maybe,” and seven responded “no.”

The students responding “yes” indicated that my workshops were meaningful and provided them with inspiration to work toward change. One student replied, “Yes, because a real change for the future starts with me, the individual. As individuals teach each other, the community as a whole will change” (Student communication, Oct., 20,
Continuing with the theme of individuals working toward change, another student commented, “Even on an individual level, people have a responsibility to society to minimize inequities. It takes a collective force for an effect on society to occur” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). Another student added, “Yes, because we live in a country of inequities. I believe that change starts with the individual, and then contest the system. The system in this country is the problem for everything we are exposed to, but it’s difficult to make everyone happy” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). In a final comment on being an agent, a student wrote, “I see myself as an agent of change for the better. I contribute to being peaceful and promoting peace. Violence does not solve anything. If everyone were to contribute to promoting peace, the world would be a much better place” (Student communication, Oct, 20, 2011).

Although most students visualized themselves as agents of change, there were students who either did not see themselves as such, or who were not sure if they were. These responses reminded me that change is difficult. They also reminded me that my transformative justice workshops are just one step in the process for these students. Of the responses from students that did not see themselves as agents of change, one student wrote, “No, it does not affect me since I was taught young that violence is not the answer” (Student communication, Oct, 20, 2011). This comment troubles me because throughout the workshop series, we centered our conversations around the impact that social issues, including violence have on everyone, regardless of your direct relationship with it. Moreover, generation FIVE (2007) asserts that community response and accountability is necessary because transformative justice relies on the fabric of the community to support community members and Cooperatively respond to problems.
When people do not see the violence that takes place in their communities as their problem, creating change becomes even more challenging. Another similar comment was made, “I do not see myself as an agent of change. I do not participate nor surround myself with people who see violence as the answer. However, I would like to believe that if I were to see one of my friends in conflict that I would support them.” (Student communication, Oct, 20, 2011). This comment positions the student as removed from the violence that occurs in our society. Because this student does not enact violence, it sounds like she/he does not see it as her/his problem. Further, by prefacing the final comment with, “I would like to believe”, this student does not appear certain that she/he would support a friend in conflict.

The questionnaire also provided a space for students who were not sure if they saw themselves as agents of change to discuss their perspective. The common theme among these students was that it was situational. One student commented, “If it was a conflict that I felt greatly affected me or those who I care about, then yes. It is more of a picking your battle type of situation in that sense” (Student communication, Oct, 20, 2011). In terms of this response, in our workshops we discussed the interconnectedness of human beings. I was hoping to instill in them that because of this connectedness, we need to have the same level of concern for each other, regardless of our relational ties. Commenting further on being unsure about seeing her/him self as an agent of change, another student added, “Yes and no. There are certain occasions where I would say I do try to make a change, but other times no. Sometimes it’s because certain issues are harder to address than others” (Student communication, Oct, 20, 2011). Social change is hard work, it takes persistence and commitment. It also requires that people work against a
justice system that has a view of crime as an offence against the state, rather than a view of crime as an offence against the people (Barnett, 1977). I believe that this systemic approach to justice has influenced how we see our role in creating just communities. When the justice system removes community members from the process and does not acknowledge that crimes fracture the human spirit, people begin to think, act, and feel that way.

**Theme two: transformative justice as everyday praxis.** One of the questions guiding this study was, “how can students use transformative justice practices in their everyday lives?” It was important to me that the students left each workshop with a skill that they could put into practice. During the first workshop we focused on elements of effective dialogue. The skills we practiced were: empathy, compassion, listening, avoiding defensive communication, keeping an open mind, and cooperation. During the second workshop we began looking at community issues using a more critical lens. The skills focused on during workshop two centered on shifting the framework through which we view community concerns by creating a habit of questioning. We asked questions that could led us to identifying causes and symptoms of social issues, and what alternatives we could use address those concerns. During the third workshop we worked together to practice thinking outside of the box. We did this by pushing each other to generate alternative approaches to social issues and challenge the status quo. The skills used here were learned in the previous workshops, but pushed slightly deeper. Each of these transformative justice based skills can be used daily as we interact with people and our surroundings.

To determine if students were able to apply transformative justice skills to their
everyday life, I began each class with a reflection on what we learned the previous week and if they had been able to apply it. Additionally, the post-workshop questionnaire asked the students, “What have you learned from these workshops that you can incorporate into your everyday life?” Finally, my personal reflections provide insight on how I have begun to use transformative justice in my life.

Transformative justice offers us a variety of skills that can be used to create change. During my workshop series, the skills students identified as being immediately applicable in their everyday lives were the skills of effective dialogue. During our first workshop we discussed the dialogic skills that would be necessary to engage in a transformative justice session. The skills that the group agreed would be necessary were: empathy, compassion, listening, avoiding defensive communication, keeping an open mind, and cooperation. These skills are essential for any dialogue, not just transformative justice, which is one reason I think the students responded positively to them. At the end of our first workshop, I asked the students to focus on using these skills, to practice having empathy and compassion, and to really listen during conversations as they engaged with people outside the classroom. These are not revolutionary skills, but they are skills that are often neglected during conversations, which undoubtedly cause many conflicts that we face. At the start of our second workshop, I asked the group for reflections based on their implementation of the elements of effective dialogue. One student responded that she was talking with her mother and realized that her mother was talking over her and not listening. In the past she said that she would have responded back to her mother by also talking over her, but instead she pointed out to her mother what was happening and her mother admitted that she did not realize that she was not
Another student shared with us a conversation that she had with her brother. During a conversation her brother told her that she was passive-aggressive. Instead of getting upset and lashing back, she asked him what made him think that way and she was able to listen to him. These small changes in the dialogical practice can make big differences in our relationships, not only with our loved ones, but with our communities.

In addition to the in-class reflection time, the students also discussed what they were taking from the workshops on the post-workshop questionnaire. One student pointed out that she/he learned, “To open up, listen to people, be aware, and pay more attention to my community, not what just affects me” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). Another student responded, “It is important to pay attention to the way I communicate with others and to be open minded to other’s cultures, opinions, etc. I think it is important to be the type of person that someone can talk to no matter what” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). The theme of changing the way they communicate continued in many responses. For example, “I have learned to stop and analyze a situation. Also, I have learned to communicate with others in a different way” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). And finally, “That we all have to be part of the change, to be able to get positive results we have to engage in dialogue. We should learn how to listen to other’s opinions, not only when it is the same as our own, but when it differs” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). The student responses, both in class and on the questionnaire, indicated that they recognized that their behavior during dialogue was a key component in creating change.

In addition to the students using transformative justice based practices in their everyday lives, it was important that I apply and practice what I researched and taught.
As with any topic, if you really want to learn it, you should teach it. Just like my students, I knew how to behave in dialogue, but after I began researching why it is important to have compassion, to show empathy, and what is actually means to listen and to have an open mind, I realized that I often did not practice these. Studying transformative justice opened me up to possibility, a possibility that begins when we communicate with each other, not at or to each other. Since I began this project, I have made a conscious effort to employ the elements of effective dialogue during each of my conversations, particularly active listening. I feel that my relationship with my son and my students has been most impacted by this. When I listen to understand, I find that the way I see an issue often changes, or is shaped by what the other person is saying. Again, while this may not seem revolutionary, learning to practice and engage in empathetic and compassionate dialogical skills provides the foundation for transformation. Another important transformative justice practice that has become a part of my consciousness is the ability to generate alternatives. The way we respond to issues of conflict and violence in our society is a normalized process. Because of this, it is often difficult to imagine that there are other possibilities. Transformative justice has shown me that there is a more effective way to respond to these incidents, and the effectiveness begins when we work collectively. Working collectively provides a better opportunity to identify causes of social issues and alternative ways to respond to them. Since my project began, I have found that I look holistically at social concerns and other issues and that I am working more closely with colleagues to come up with ways to respond to them. For example, recently there was a surge of attention centered on finding Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. A video, which outlined the crimes that he
committed, went viral on the internet, thus prompting numerous discussions on the subject. I noticed that my experiences during these discussions were changed as a result of my research. In particular, the discussions focused primarily on question asking, whereas in the past I might have accepted the media’s interpretation and perspective of the event. My questioning led me to look at the geopolitical context that enables, hides, or ignores these types of events. Additionally, in the past I might have shrugged my shoulders and said that there is nothing I can do, but this time I acknowledged that there are things that can be done to address all types of social injustice, no matter how big or how far away from home they are. For example, one of the many things that we can do is begin by examining and changing the inhumane practices that occur in our own backyards. It is often easier to dismiss something that is happening on the other side of the world, than it is to dismiss something happening in our own community. Finally, all human beings are interconnected; I believe that the work each of us does in our communities has the potential to touch every corner of the globe. As I reflect on my conversations about Joseph Kony, I can see how researching and teaching transformative justice has been a transformative process for me.

**Theme three: transformative justice through critical pedagogy.** The final theme that I identified is transformative justice through critical pedagogy. This theme emerged primarily in two ways. First, throughout this research process, I began to see how transformative and liberating the education process can be, not only for my students, but also for me. Second, during our class discussions, as well as feedback on the post-workshop questionnaires, students referred to education as a key component of transformative justice and education as creating the possibility for transformation and
change.

The transformative potential of education is a driving force of critical pedagogues. Not only does critical pedagogy offer the possibility of transforming lives, it also works to create justice. Using the classroom as its platform, critical pedagogy works to liberate the oppressed and unite people through a shared language of critique, struggle, and hope to advance social justice (Kanpol, 1994). During my research I began to realize the ways in which critical pedagogy and transformative justice are intertwined with and supportive of each other. Both work to address systemic inequities, and require the inclusion of all voices to fully understand and confront social issues. I realized during my workshops that I could teach students about transformative justice, or I could use critical pedagogy to teach transformative justice. What I mean by this is that the process of teaching about a topic implies that the line between the student and teacher is distinct, that students are there to learn from the teacher. Further, teaching about a topic perpetuates the use of what Paulo Freire (1970) calls the “banking system of education.” It is in this method of teaching that students are viewed as passive consumers in the education process. On the other hand, using critical pedagogy to teach transformative justice is an engaged process. As the teacher, I am part of the learning community, not above it and as a group, we are learning about transformative justice.

In addition to my discovery that transformative justice and critical pedagogy are closely aligned, my students also took note. During class discussions about alternative responses to social issues, many students commented that education would be a valuable alternative. Although not specifically identified in student feedback, it is important to clarify that not all education holds the key to transformation and liberation. In fact, a
critique of the education system is that it often reinforces and perpetuates unjust and inequitable practices and behaviors. However, education approached through a critical pedagogy framework is intended to interrupt historically situated systems of oppression, thus creating the possibility for transformation and liberation (Lather, 1992). In addition to workshop discussions, education was also cited in their post-workshop questionnaires. Specifically when asked, “What alternatives are offered by transformative justice?” a common response was education. Commenting about transformative justice, one student stated, “It teaches society as a whole how to fix social problems like domestic violence. It also teaches individuals how to better themselves and to fix the problem starting with themselves” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). Another student furthers the alternatives offered by transformative justice by adding, “prevention of violence and hate through education” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). Or in another student’s words, “Education, Action, Self-determination, Awareness” (Student communication, Oct. 20, 2011). Judging from these types of responses, I sense that these students recognize the benefit that combining transformative justice and a critical approach to education offers. Further, they identify education as an important component of transformative justice, which is a foundation of the practice.

In this chapter I provided a detailed overview of each of my transformative justice workshops. I discussed the design of the workshops and provided a rationale for the design decisions that were made. In addition, using participant questionnaires, my field notes, and classroom observations, I presented and discussed the three main themes that emerged during the series of workshops. The themes were 1) self as agent of change; 2) transformative justice as everyday praxis; and 3) transformative justice through critical
pedagogy. In the next chapter I summarize this research project, discuss the implications of this research and provide further research suggestions.
Chapter Five

Concluding Thoughts and Future Implications

This research project stemmed from a desire to grow as an educator and my interest in activism. As I began to research transformative justice, I uncovered the possibility it has to create a society that provides equal access, inclusion and accountability. After learning this, it became my responsibility to teach others about transformative justice. With this in mind, I designed and implemented a series of three transformative justice workshops.

My workshop design and facilitation used a critical pedagogical approach. Critical pedagogy was a natural choice for this project because it is grounded in the belief that education is a means for social transformation. As I collectively worked with students, we began to expose unjust and inequitable practices, practices that can be addressed using a transformative justice framework.

Summary

In chapter one I described this project as my attempt to answer the call to action that was made by Broome et al., (2005) to the field of Communication Studies and more specifically, the field of Intercultural Communication. In their writing, activism is viewed as “action that attempts to make a positive difference in situations where people’s lives are affected by oppression, domination, discrimination, racism, conflict and other forms of cultural struggle due to difference in race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, and other identity markers” (Broome et al., 2005, p. 146). Also in chapter one, I outlined my study and discussed why using critical pedagogy to design and facilitate a series of
transformative justice workshops to undergraduate Intercultural Communication students was an answer to that call. The use of a university classroom to facilitate my workshops was an effective and appropriate choice because it [the classroom] is a site of transformation and change. It is also a site where meanings about justice and injustice are negotiated. In chapter one I also posed the questions that guided this study, “how would students respond to the goals of transformative justice?” and “how can students use transformative justice practices in their everyday lives?”

In chapter two I reviewed the literature that informed this research project. I highlighted contemporary and indigenous models, methods, and practices within the field of alternative justice. In addition to alternative justice practices, chapter two also explored some of the ways that we create socially unjust communities. The tools of injustice that were explored were racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. Critical pedagogy, which was used to design and facilitate my workshops, was also reviewed.

In chapter three, I discussed the methodological approaches that I took in my research. Working within a critical qualitative framework, the research methods used were critical pedagogy, questionnaires, and elements of autoethnography. I explicated pedagogy and autoethnography as a form of research and scholarship. The pedagogical aspect of my research was made possible through the development and facilitation of three workshops during the fall 2011 semester. At the end of the workshop series, students completed an anonymous questionnaire, which allowed me to determine if the learning objectives and goals were met.

In chapter four, I provided a detailed overview of each of my transformative justice workshops. I discussed the design of the workshops and provided a rationale for
the design decisions that were made. In addition, using the participant questionnaires, my field notes, and classroom observations I presented and analyzed the three main themes that emerged during the series of workshops. The themes were 1) self as agent of change; 2) transformative justice as everyday praxis; 3) transformative justice through critical pedagogy.

In this chapter, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of my study and address the questions that guided my study. I will also provide suggestions for further research on teaching transformative justice for social change and then, I will end with concluding thoughts.

**Strengths and Limitations**

Throughout this research project I have been able to identify strengths and limitations. One of the strengths of this research is that the message of transformative justice has been spread to others. Although it is unrealistic for me to think that each student in the workshop will have a continued interest in transformative justice, I know that it is now a part of their vocabulary. This is critical because our discussion about transformative justice opened them up to the possibility that there are alternative, non-traditional ways of addressing social issues. Further, this research helped to develop the skill of critical questioning, not only in the students, but within myself. Throughout our discussions we were challenged by questions such as, *who benefits from our current approaches and system(s)?* and, *what are some alternative ways to respond to this event in a way that promotes peace and healing?* These questions challenge the status quo and illuminate that complicity with existing systems will not create change. Moreover, through the use of generative themes, students were asked to analyze and discuss real-life
situations, situations which, are happening in our communities. Making the workshops personal proved to be impactful as it allowed students to see that it is possible to make changes within their communities, and that there are people concerned with making change happen.

A final strength of this research project is that I have a deeper understanding of what it means to be an agent of change. Throughout this project, I have experienced change and I have been a part of change for others. I have been changed through the study of the literature, changed by teaching it to others and have been a part of creating change by teaching it to others. Although I recognize that this project only represents one scene in the very long movie of my life, I move into the next scene as a changed and more whole person. Education is about becoming fully human, about realizing your capacity to do great things. A great strength of this project is that it has done exactly that for me.

The primary limitation for this workshop topic was time constraints. Researching, designing, teaching, and deconstructing a topic of this magnitude takes time. When I designed my second workshop, I did not anticipate the amount of time that we would need to work through our first case study. The case study produced healthy dialogue, which allowed the students and me to work through our thoughts and feelings about social justice. These types of conversations can spark the creativeness and desire to work collectively, which is a foundation part of generating change. Seeing the discussion as beneficial, I made the decision to allow it to organically develop, which meant sacrificing some of the time needed to apply a transformative justice model.

A second limitation that was experienced because of time constraints was the
inability to follow up with the participants. This would have been helpful for two reasons. First, I would have been able to clarify responses that I received on the questionnaires. Not being able to follow up with the participants to clarify their responses made it difficult to interpret and categorize some responses for my thematic analysis. Second, if more time had been available, it would have been useful to conduct a follow up assessment to see if and how the students incorporated what they learned into their lives. Although students indicated that they would be able to use the skills they learned, time did not allow me to determine if this was the case.

In addition to the overall strengths and limitations of this research project, it is paramount that I address my positionality and how that supported and challenged my research. As previously disclosed, I am a female, European American, thirty-two years old, heterosexual, middle class, single mother, and teacher. Each of these parts of my identity greatly influences my research and classroom experiences. I feel that my experience as a mother and as a teacher supported me throughout my research process. In both of these roles I find myself hopeful and encouraged when I look toward the future. I am motivated to move forward and continue to work for social justice when I interact with younger generations.

I also feel that being from the dominant European American and heterosexual groups played a role in the facilitation process. Although being from a dominant group(s) gives me unearned advantages and some degree of credibility in the classroom, the subject matter being discussed also must be considered. In my case, I felt that students might see me as more credible to discuss issues of social justice if I were from a non-dominant group in terms of race. I imagined that some students might wonder what a
straight White woman knows about oppression. Knowing that this would probably be questioned, I used the workshop as an opportunity to discuss a wide range of social justice issues, including those that have impacted me. I also discussed with students the concept of interconnectedness, which asserts a connectedness between all human beings, regardless race, gender, or sexual orientation. Further, my age and gender also impacted this research project. Being a young woman in an academy dominated by men, I am a minority. Because of this, I feel that I must work to establish my credibility. On the other hand, a male colleague, regardless of age, might be met with an assumed grasp of the subject matter. My identity, both unique and fluid, supported and challenged this research process. The lens in which I view the world cannot be removed when I put myself in the role of a researcher. Because of this, it is important that I acknowledge who I am, and how that shaped this project.

Further Research

One outcome of my transformative justice workshops was a realization that there is more work to be done. First, there is relatively little written research about transformative justice, particularly how to teach it to others. I am grateful that the current work will help address some of those concerns, but additional resources that detail the implementation of transformative justice in a variety of settings is needed. Transformative justice is a contextual process, a process that does not come with an instructional manual. I see the benefit in allowing the process to develop based on a specific community, their concerns, and their resources, but I have found through my teaching that students have an easier time conceptualizing a process when it is more concrete. Transformative justice was a new concept to all of the participants in my
workshops. Introducing a new concept, one that challenges traditional ways of thinking, is itself, a difficult task. Additionally, given the circumstances of the thesis project, I was teaching transformative justice using case studies based on real issues but not necessarily ones students had a direct relationship with. Further research that documents transformative justice practices and processes as they are introduced and facilitated to address specific community issues is needed.

Another gap in the research that I identified was how a transformative justice practitioner should navigate a discussion with a resistant student(s), community member(s), or audience. Transformative justice challenges the status quo and reveals issues of social justice, which is often uncomfortable for people to reconcile. Griffin (1997) tells us that, “When we raise social justice issues in a classroom we unsettle both unconscious and deeply held beliefs about society, self, and social relations” (p. 292). Although not necessarily intentional, students could respond to these types of discussions by showing resistance, anger, immobilization, distancing, or conversion. The two primary reactions that I prepared myself to receive during my workshops were resistance and immobilization. In anticipation of these types of reactions from students, I referenced scholars (Goodman, 2001; Griffin, 1997) who have written on the topic of responding to resistance when teaching social justice courses. Additionally, I relied on Makau and Marty (2001) who write about the use of cynicism as a substitute for critical judgment.

Griffin (1997) describes resistance as being “expressed as a refusal to explore or attribute credibility to the idea that social oppression is real” (p. 292). Resistance can be a common response in a conversation about social justice because having our worldview challenged can be painful and uncomfortable. As a facilitator, it is important that I
recognize that resistance is natural and an inevitable part of the learning process. Further, if resistance is channeled properly it can deepen a conversation that might otherwise be shallow. To use resistance as an ally in the classroom, facilitators must create a space that allows students to express resistance without the fears of negative sanctions. This requires that the guidelines for participation are set and agreed upon by the facilitator and participants and then enforced when needed.

Another reaction that I was prepared for was immobilization. This reaction is commonly expressed in students who feel helpless about issues of social justice and feel that the problem is too big for them to make a difference. One response to the feeling of being immobilized is cynicism. A cynical dismisses the need for thoughtful decision making by using an “interpretive framework” that sees “greed, corruption, hypocrisy, competition, and the like [as] permanent and pervasive in human affairs” (Govier, 1997, p. 244). After all, if you dismiss the issues as permanent and pervasive, then you can satisfy any guilt you might have about not involving yourself in creating change. Griffin (1997) suggests that “an effective way to address immobilization is to help students identify the people and groups in their lives with whom they have influenced or to remember individual people who have had an influence on their lives” (p. 296). During my workshops I discussed the work that generation FIVE and Friends are Reaching Out are doing in their respective communities. This was meant to serve as motivation for the students, so that they can identify community organizations that are using transformative justice to create social change. Another area that I focused on during my workshop was identifying specific actions that individuals can take. For example, when we learned and practiced the elements of effective dialogue (listening, empathy, compassion, open
mindedness, etc), we identified specific tools that they would need to engage in difficult conversations about social justice. Being prepared with actions that they can take can empower students and reduce the likelihood of feeling immobilized. Although responses that facilitators of social justice based courses might receive can be challenging, if navigated thoughtfully, these reactions can serve as foundations for learning.

The final suggestion for future research that I offer is that transformative justice should be incorporated as learning components in classes across disciplines. When I began this project I asked, “how would students respond to the goals of transformative justice?” and “how can students use transformative justice practices in their everyday lives?” Through my workshops I found answers to these questions, but these questions also opened up avenues for further research. Students responded positively to transformative justice. They acknowledge that the way our society addresses conflict, violence and community issues is problematic and that transformative justice offers us an alternative. Students also indicated that they had already begun, as well as intended to implement some of the skills that were learned. The promise that transformative justice holds, as well as its positive reception demands that there is a need for transformative justice curriculum in our schools. This curriculum should not be limited to a series of three workshops, rather used as learning components in classes across disciplines. Further, faculty, staff and administrators on college campuses would benefit from transformative justice training. Educational institutes, just like the communities we live in are challenged by issues that can be addressed using a transformative justice model.
Concluding Thoughts

Through my research I have found that incorporating transformative justice practices into our everyday lives can lead to more peaceful co-existence and can be a catalyst to create social change. Not only has this study impacted the way I think and feel about justice, it has been shared with students to hopefully impact the way they think and feel about justice. After finding that students want to engage in these discussions, I will continue studying transformative justice and its possibility for change, and will incorporate transformative justice themes and concepts throughout each class that I teach. hooks (1994) insists that students are ready to break through ideological barriers to knowing, and that they are excited about the possibility of relearning the world. With this in mind, I will continue to create learning environments that make this revolutionary way of learning a reality.
References


APPENDIX A

Schoolyard Violence

Lawrence "Larry" King was a 15-year-old gay student at E.O. Green Junior High in Oxnard, Ca. On February 12, 2008, he was shot twice by fellow student, 14-year-old Brandon McInerney. Numerous students reported that Larry was taunted, teased and bullied because he wore “feminine” clothing and make-up.

Newsweek has described the shooting as "the most prominent gay-bias crime since the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard", bringing attention to issues of gun violence as well as gender expression and sexual identity of teenagers.

Following numerous delays and a change of venue, McInerney's trial began on July 5, 2011, in Chatsworth. The trial ended on September 1, 2011 when the judge, declared a mistrial due to the jury being unable to reach an unanimous verdict. A few weeks later on Oct. 5th, the Ventura County District Attorney announced Brandon would be retried as an adult.

- What are the symptoms?
- What are the possible causes of this?
- Identify the stakeholders; how would you get them involved?
- What possible emotions would come up? How would you deal with that?
- What are some alternative ways to respond to this event?
- What are some ways to address the cause(s) of this event?
APPENDIX B

Based on our discussions of transformative justice in class, address the following:

1. Identify 1-2 principles of transformative justice.

2. What is problematic about how our society currently addresses conflict, violence and community issues?

3. What alternatives are offered by transformative justice?

4. We are surrounded by conflict, violence, and increasing inequities. Do you see yourself as an agent of change in addressing these issues? Why or why not?

5. What have you learned from these workshops that you can incorporate into your everyday life?
APPENDIX C

City of the Stars is U.S. Homeless Capital

The number of homeless in LA County has reached over 50,000 (LAHSA, 2011), making it the homeless capital of the U.S. The largest concentration of homeless in the county is located in a 4 square mile area called Skid Row. It is estimated that between 8,000 and 11,000 people live in the shadow of the downtown skyline.

In recent years, the downtown area has begun the process of gentrification. As a result of this project, shelters are closing, organizations providing services are forced out because of increasing rent, and the homeless are being driven out of their community with nowhere to go. With condos and lofts selling for $700,000 or more and a grand hotel a few blocks away, the rich simply don’t want the homeless to be part of the landscape anymore.

LAPD Chief Bratton’s solutions for dealing with the homeless: arrest and jail them for any minor infraction, from littering, to public urination, to sleeping on the sidewalks. It’s a strategy that’s winning the applause of the business community and real estate developers. As a result of this, city jails are bursting at the seams (reports of 6,000 arrests over a one-year period), which only further displaces the homeless by giving them an arrest record.

- What are the symptoms of the problem of homelessness?
- What are the possible causes of homelessness?
- Identify the stakeholders.
- How would you get them involved?
- What possible emotions would come up? How would you deal with that?
- What are some alternative ways to respond to homelessness in L.A.?
- What are some ways to address the cause(s) of homelessness in L.A.?