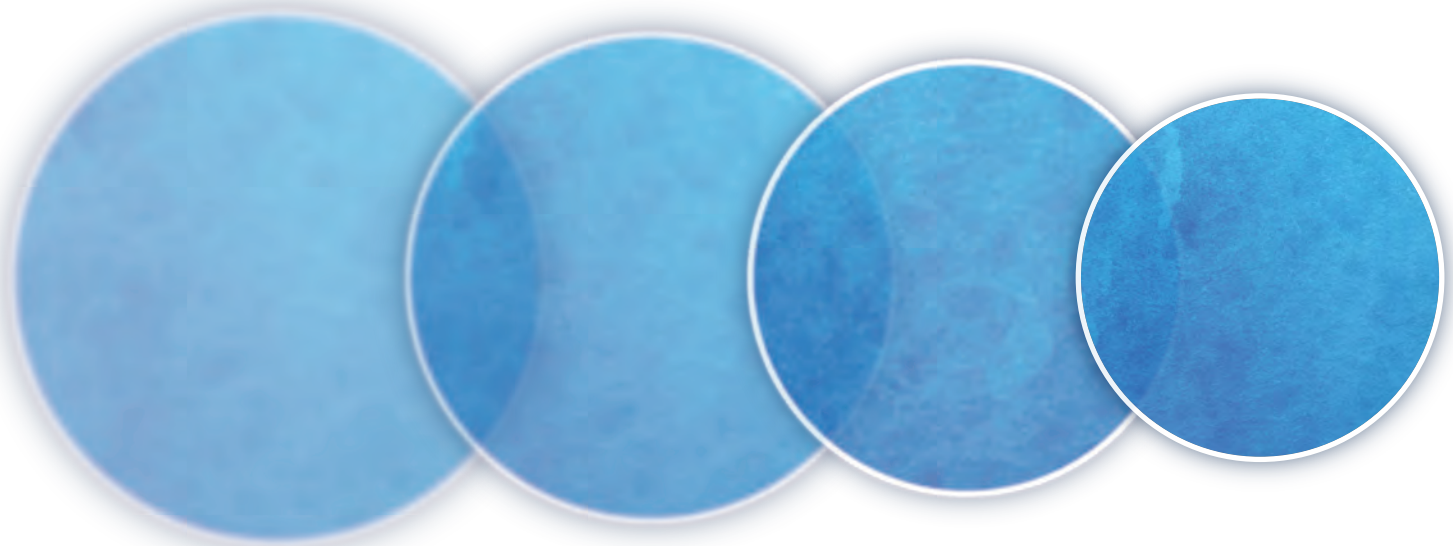


THE IIRP RESEARCH AGENDA

Research Priorities to Generate New Knowledge and Spur Innovation



INTRODUCTION



The International Institute for Restorative Practices (the IIRP) strategic plan for 2025 initiates a research pillar to “create research initiatives that generate new knowledge and spur innovation.” One way to advance the work in this pillar is to create a research agenda – a document that lists priority areas to guide research institutions in conduct and support of research and scholarship. A research agenda will formalize the IIRP’s broad organizational effort to align and uphold our mission and vision and bring the research pillar to life. It is both a bold statement of our intent and a framework to proactively advance the field of restorative practices through research.

The research agenda takes us beyond a statement of belief in our work and turns it into action. We must be able to understand how we can direct our resources to advance restorative practices as a field of inquiry that can help us explore fundamental aspects of relationships and the experience of community, and apply those insights to some of the world’s most pressing needs and challenges. It will serve as a guide for discourse at conferences and academic symposia, drive future grant programs and proposals, challenge ideas and narratives, and provide insights on developing new courses. The agenda, and the research it initiates, will inspire collaboration between students, alumni, faculty, staff, and our extensive network of partners across the globe.

CREATIVE PROCESS BACKGROUND



In 2021, a small group of IIRP faculty and staff volunteers, called the Research Agenda Working Group (RAWG), convened to begin the process of creating the agenda. The working group members included:

- Gina Baral Abrams, Director of Research and Program Evaluation & Associate Professor
- Craig Adamson, Provost & President of CSF & Buxmont
- Sarah Chang, Program Evaluation Specialist & MSW Intern
- Keith Hickman, Executive Director of Collective Impact
- Claire de Mezerville Lopez, Community Engagement Specialist
- Fernanda Fonseca Rosenblatt, Assistant Professor
- Courtney Tobin, Senior Institutional Analyst

The team designed and implemented a seven-step process to craft the agenda, and ensured that the process was inclusive, participatory, accessible, and above all, restorative.



Step One: Scoping

The team reviewed several publicly-available research agendas from higher education and social services-related associations and agencies. We quickly learned that though they varied widely, most agendas included a small number of well-defined research themes and specific research questions under each theme.

Step Two: Draft Themes

Seven research themes that can advance the research pillar were defined, including evaluating program delivery and impact, the applicability of restorative practices as a field and its growth as a profession, and its place in a multicultural, multidisciplinary world.



Step Three: Gather Insights

Input from a wide range of stakeholders was solicited, including all members of the IIRP-CSF-Buxmont consortium and their boards, students, alumni, and external partners. We commissioned the development of a new interactive website called the “Research Agenda Gallery Walk” and invited stakeholders to engage with the themes and reflect on the following questions in a discussion board:

- What do you hope the IIRP will have learned about this theme 10 years from now?
- What areas of existing knowledge can the IIRP build on?
- What are some gaps in the IIRP’s current knowledge of these themes?

Step Four: Qualitative Analysis

Over four months, the team open-coded and themed the rich and expansive pool of data collected from the Research Agenda Gallery Walk.

Step Five: Draft Research Questions

We combined the seven themes and questions to form the first draft of the research agenda, with the number of questions for each theme directly correlating to the amount of feedback each theme received.

Step Six: Open Review

IIRP faculty and staff were invited to review and offer feedback on the draft agenda.

Step Seven: Final Agenda

Revisions were incorporated and the final version of the research agenda was presented at the IIRP Committee of the Whole in December 2022.

We are proud to present the IIRP’s Research Agenda, and hope that the themes and questions woven together in this living document provide inspiration for the IIRP as it strives to progress the field of restorative practices.

THEMES AND QUESTIONS



Core Tenets of Restorative Practices

As the IIRP works to become a research home to the field of restorative practices, we must establish a clear definition and strong foundation of core tenets for the field. This prompts us to (1) continuously and critically question and assess our understanding of how the tenets work together to strengthen relationships between individuals and social connections within communities, (2) determine whether the current core tenets of restorative practices are the right ones, and (3) develop and test new tenets as needed.

1. In what ways do the core tenets of restorative practices reflect broader social themes that influence healthy relationships and communication?
2. What is the best language to conceptualize relational dynamics in restorative practices?
3. How can the core tenets of restorative practices reflect their diverse origins with respect and authenticity?
4. How do the core tenets of restorative practices change with different cultures, societal contexts, and individual differences or needs?
5. How do the core tenets of restorative practices align with or diverge from trauma-informed practices and theories? How are these tenets employed in relation to historical harm?
6. The concept of WITH is central to our current conceptualization of restorative practices. How can WITH be operationalized across a diversity of relational spaces, including physical, abstract, and virtual?
7. When implementing restorative practices, is there an ideal ratio of proactive activities compared to responsive activities, and how does this distribution influence communities' experiences and outcomes?
8. How can the fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices better reflect the many types of relationships and power differentials between people?

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Although restorative practices is a specialized field, it cannot thrive without examining the broader complexity of humans and the environments in which they live - that is, the myriad influences on relationships and community. We have an opportunity to invite collaboration with professionals from various fields to establish a wider audience, strong networks, and more sophisticated collaboration across fields; to invite fresh questions that might not occur to us; and to produce integrative theories that will be mutually beneficial. We need to understand how other perspectives can make restorative practices better and how restorative principles can strengthen the work of other fields.

1. How are the core tenets of restorative practices aligned with other theories and frameworks that describe individual cognition, behavior, and self-conception?
2. How are the core tenets of restorative practices aligned with other relational theories, social sciences, and frameworks?
3. How do the core tenets of restorative practices influence and align with theories and frameworks that influence community and systemic change?
4. What does restorative practices offer that is unique to restorative practices? What concepts of restorative practices are not unique to restorative practices, but defined or described differently in other fields?
5. How does shared or different understanding of restorative practices concepts affect how we can collaborate with other fields?
6. When is restorative practices a stronger asset as a separate framework designed to bolster other fields, and when can it be complementarily woven into various frameworks?
7. How can restorative practices align with current social movements?

Restorative Practices as a Multicultural Field

In restorative practices, we embrace cultural humility and reflexivity in our work, as one's culture and lived experiences underscore every social interaction. At their core, explicit restorative practices are congruent with social justice and equity aims. We have an opportunity to demonstrate how restorative practices advances these objectives, and more fully shape this multicultural field. Looking back, we can better understand how the historic roots, cultures, and traditions of restorative practices influence current-day frameworks. Looking ahead, we can explore how existing frameworks should progress to ensure that the language, narrative, and concepts reflect many cultures within our society.

1. How can we better articulate the roots and history of restorative practices, including the specific indigenous people who influenced it, what their contributions were, and how those concepts/practices have changed (or stayed the same)?
2. How can restorative practices methods and interventions embrace culturally-specific factors on communication?
3. How is mindset work and self-reflection around racial bias central to realizing restorative practices?
4. How do various cultural expressions of emotion and respect influence our authentic relationships and connection?
5. How do key restorative practices like psychological safety, trust, and authenticity differ for white and BIPOC practitioners/participants?
6. How can we reconceive the concept of WITH as a dynamic that is strongest when it is initiated and sustained by anyone, not just by leadership of any group or the powerful or privileged of a dominant culture?
7. How can restorative practices acknowledge, address, and incorporate the material differences that those with marginalized and oppressed identities face, so as to not perpetuate harm?
8. How can restorative practices create an authentic space for all and emphasize the sharing of power and vision?
9. How can the discussion of shame and power in restorative practices account for cultural privilege, systemic inequities, and racism?
10. How can restorative practices contribute to the growing literature on dehumanization, humanness, and the universal nature of human dignity?
11. How can restorative practices work to resist oppressive systems of dominant cultures?

Restorative Practices Applied in Various Settings

Restorative practices has primarily been associated with the criminal justice field and K-12 school settings. However, as the IIRP grows and includes professionals from different fields, we must examine the potential for the explicit practices to be successful in a wide range of human-centered settings. We must also understand how restorative practices impacts these settings and whether there are differences across settings.

1. Are the principles of restorative practices universal across settings?
2. What restorative practices processes are most effective for specific settings?
3. Which settings would find the most value in the addition of restorative practices?
4. What is the difference in professional needs for restorative practitioners working in different settings?
5. What is the best way to facilitate collaboration between restorative practices professionals and professionals in other fields?
6. Is it possible to have an online restorative community? If so, what might that look like?
7. What are the impacts of restorative practices in non-professional contexts (e.g., live-in communities, religious communities, parenting and families)?
8. How can restorative practices influence ethical decision-making regardless of professional practice?

Learning and Adopting Restorative Practices

The IIRP has welcomed learners from around the globe to learn and collaborate in the growing field of restorative practices. As the world's first graduate school wholly devoted to teaching restorative practices, we have a unique opportunity to study how people best learn and develop restorative skills and competencies. As agents of community change, we also must understand the psychology of our learners and the sociology of the communities with which they interact. Specifically, we must examine the factors that influence the likelihood of them adopting restorative practices as a new way of relating with others.

1. Are current restorative practices curricula, programs, and pedagogies applicable for all individuals, communities, and cultures?
2. What would a restorative practices pedagogy look like?
3. How do we develop the praxis of restorative practices distinguished from theory?
4. Are there conditions that cause people to learn and adopt restorative practices differently (e.g., age, developmental stage, neurodiversity)?
5. How does the mode (e.g., in-person, online, synchronous, asynchronous) by which restorative practices curricula is delivered affect learning and adoption of restorative practices?
6. What are the drawbacks and benefits of restorative practices curricula that stand alone, as opposed to those which are infused into other disciplines?
7. What does community readiness for restorative practices adoption look like in different settings and cultural contexts?
8. What are important foundational mindsets a learner must have to succeed at learning/adopting restorative practices?
9. How do prejudices, biases, and individual experiences affect a restorative practices learning process?
10. What is the neurological impact of learning and adopting restorative practices?

Restorative Practices Professionals in the Field

The IIRP Alumni Network continues to grow, with hundreds completing our graduate certificate and Master of Science degree programs. To grow the field, we must study how restorative practices professionals can contribute to a variety of disciplines. We must also help others recognize that restorative practitioners possess special knowledge and skills in a body of learning derived from research, received education and training at a high level, uphold ethical standards, and are well-prepared to participate in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary teams.

1. How is restorative practices distinct from other fields of practice, professionally speaking?
2. How can people specifically dedicated to and credentialed in restorative practices improve the quality of life of groups from different fields and settings?
3. In what roles, positions, and job titles would people with graduate-level education in restorative practices be well-qualified to serve?
4. What are the deeper levels of experience, expertise, and training required of professionals in restorative practices-dedicated jobs, as opposed to others who use restorative practices less formally?
5. How can restorative practices as a set of skills and professional principles be integrated into other professions?
6. What would a code of ethics and standards specifically designed for the field of restorative practices look like?

Evaluating Program Delivery and Impact

As programs and trainings across the IIRP/CSF/Buxmont consortium continue to expand, we must evaluate whether our programs are based on sound logic and theories, whether the methods of delivery are effective, and whether our efforts are achieving the outcomes we seek with the groups we serve. We also have an opportunity to expand how we think about the impact of our efforts, and to include proactive areas of human flourishing in addition to demonstrating that restorative practices reduces problems.

1. How does restorative practices work (i.e., the underlying mechanisms of action), for whom, and under what conditions?
2. What are the recommended program activities that are core to implementing restorative practices with fidelity?
3. Where are the opportunities to involve the community in evaluation efforts, including determining the outcomes that matter most to them?
4. Should there be standardization of instruments used across restorative practices evaluation efforts?
5. Can restorative practices deliver sustainable outcomes over time?
6. What are the long-term impacts of restorative practices in program participants and in communities?
7. How can community-based initiatives or community-driven programs benefit from restorative practices to create spaces for participation, influence, and voice?
8. How can we examine restorative practices as a theory by which to understand how and why a program succeeds or fails to achieve results?
9. What are the contextual catalysts and barriers that enhance the uptake of restorative practices?