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Restorative Practices: Graduate Students' Perspectives Seen through a Transformative Learning Lens: A Dissertation

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RESTORATIVE PRACTICES: GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES SEEN

THROUGH A TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING LENS

A DISSERTATION

submitted by

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Abstract

This dissertation explores students' learning experiences in a newly accredited graduate school focused on Restorative Practices Theory, which enables people to restore and build community collectively. This exploration was conducted using a Transformative Adult Learning Theory lens in order to understand graduate students' perspectives regarding their learning experiences. Data were gathered using a qualitative and quantitative mixed method concurrent nested strategy design (Creswell, 2003). Fifteen total participants at multiple phases of graduate study made up the sample, including both current students and alumni. Participants were involved in a semi-structured interview, submitted a previously completed course reflection paper and gave permission to access previously completed Course Improvement Surveys. Through the triangulation of collected data this dissertation describes students' perceptions of their formal learning experiences and found that: restorative processes cultivated emotional and relational learning, participants learned and implemented restorative concepts, classroom environment mattered to participants, and evidence of transformative learning was present in the students reported experiences.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background and Context

The motivation for this study lies in my professional career working with at-risk and delinquent populations in Southeastern Pennsylvania. When I graduated with an undergraduate degree in criminal justice from Temple University located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, I knew that I wanted to work with adolescents. After transitioning through some entry level employment opportunities working in highly structured youth treatment institutions, I decided to take a position as a drug and alcohol counselor at Community Service Foundation (CSF). It is with this organization that I became committed to its mission and philosophy.

The CSF mission is: "Dedicated to providing education, counseling, foster care and other services to help young people and their families to grow and change through restorative practices" (CSF & Buxmont Academy, 2010, para. 3). Restorative practices is defined as a social science that uses a cross discipline approach (education, counseling, criminal justice, social work, human resources management, leadership) which includes processes that build community proactively while responding to harm in a way that is inclusive to those that have been affected (International Institute for Restorative Practices, n.d., para. 4). Restorative Practices Theory is the study of these processes that engage people, allow for free expression of emotion and believe people are competent to behave in a way that maximizes positive behavior (Wachtel & McCold, 2001).

Wachtel and McCold (2001) describe these processes on a continuum from informal to formal practices that include: affective statements, affective questions, small impromptu conference, circle or group, and formal conference (see Figure 1). They state that as one moves

towards the formal end of the continuum, more people are involved, the processes are more

structured and take more time to coordinate. Restorative circles are an example of a restorative

process on this continuum that is referred to frequently in the restorative practices literature and

by the participants in this study (see appendix A for definitions of terms). Restorative circles are

structured processes facilitated by a knowledgeable person in Restorative Practices Theory

(Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2010). Costello et al. (2010) describe in their book *Restorative*

Circles that these particular circles have a broad application and include proactive and

responsive processes that can be used in settings from elementary schools to prisons. They state

providing structure to a discussion within a circle allows for quiet voices to be heard while

dominant voices become quieter. Circles are typically started with a question or a problem posed

by the facilitator. Circle participants then share their perspective regarding the facilitator's

prompt. The circle can stop after one "go-around" or continue until the issues are resolved or

until participants have nothing further to add. It is an orderly process, and many times a "talking

piece" is passed around the circle and only the person with the talking piece can speak.

Figure 1 – Restorative Practices Continuum –
(Wachtel & McCold, 2001)

INFORMAL				FORMAL
affective statements	affective questions	small impromptu conference	group or circle	formal conference
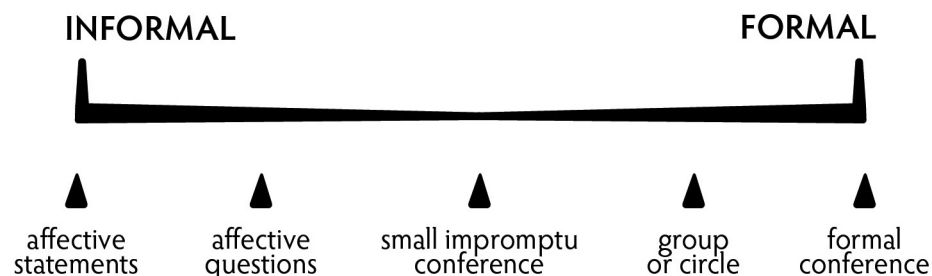
Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel (2009) describe more generally how the other examples

on the restorative practices continuum are translated into daily occurrences for educators.

Affective statements can be used when a teacher states an emotional response such as "that

scared me when you did that" instead of "don't do that." An affective question can be relational such as: "how do you think you affected him when you did that?" In this example, a teacher would then wait for a student's response, replacing a more traditional response (e.g., lecturing) with a restorative question. A small impromptu conference would include those who were directly involved in an incident. A teacher could ask the restorative questions (see appendix A for a listing of the questions) to resolve the issue. A restorative group or circle includes multiple people and can be a way of building relationships or responding to a situation. Formal conferencing takes the most time to prepare for and could include extended families, victims, community members, offenders and those stakeholders who are motivated to support reparation of harm or family planning to deal with abusive situations, kinship care or safety plans for children.

Within Community Service Foundation (CSF) there is a culture of engaging young people and their families to help them learn and grow in times of conflict and misbehavior. These youth and families are engaged in multiple interventions including the restorative processes indentified on the restorative continuum. CSF programs facilitate circles multiple times a day including community building circles, staff meetings and responsive circles to problems within the school or foster care communities. Interactions between staff and students include affective statements and questions throughout the day. If an incident or situation is serious where a youth is facing placement or has committed harm against someone, a formal restorative conference is held. My epistemological framework is grounded in this restorative perspective and in the areas of counseling and educational practice. The counseling field has heavily influenced my worldview as it pertains to youth development, behavioral change, and addictions counseling.

Many of the youth CSF serves have committed crimes, are struggling with their families and have acted out in hurtful ways towards others. CSF believes in approaching youth in conflict in a way that supports behavioral change while stopping harmful behaviors. These approaches are not unique or newly created, but are a combination of processes facilitated in a concentrated form and carried out intentionally to create the best possible outcome for youth and those they effect. From years of implementing these practices at CSF, a conceptual framework began to develop to better explain what made these combined approaches successful as compared to popular punitive approaches. The practices were already happening when I began at CSF, but the articulation of the restorative philosophy was just developing when I began employment.

For the past 25 years, the United States juvenile justice system has been driven by punitive measures as a response to misbehavior for juvenile delinquents. Based on research completed by Lipton, Martinson and Wilks (1975), rehabilitation of offenders does not reduce recidivism. Several programs were developed to resemble militaristic boot camps, and "get tough on crime" political agendas created sentencing polices that supported punishment and did not offer treatment for youth offenders (Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Campman, & Carver, 2010). However, over the last five years, Lipsey et al. (2010) have completed meta-analysis studies that support the use of treatment to reduce recidivism and within these findings they state that restorative practice approaches to offenders are considered an effective approach. Many practitioners and treatment systems have argued for years that accountability without treatment is not effective. Lipsey et al. are now providing the research evidence to support these claims.

The restorative justice movement heavily influenced the development of restorative practices approach. The evolution of restorative practices can be traced to restorative justice

ideals such as including stakeholders affected by misbehavior and reparation of harm. Zehr (2002), a scholar in the Mennonite community, describes three basic assumptions in restorative justice: 1. when people and relationships are harmed, needs are created, 2. the needs created by harms lead to obligation, 3. the obligation is to repair the harms. Restorative justice offers a contrast to punishment and rehabilitation models by empowering the offenders and victims to repair harm directly rather than having the courts intervene and take control of the response and recommendations to treatment (Zehr, 2002). Zehr, known as the grandfather of restorative justice, is a theorist motivated by his Christian faith within the Mennonite Community. Mennonites are dedicated to nonviolence, peace and focused on principals such as atonement.

Restorative practices moves beyond the justice perspective and includes disciplines such as education, counseling, and child welfare. I have witnessed the growth of Restorative Practices Theory for over 16 years. This new theory, practice and accompanying field of study, has gained popularity throughout the world as many cultures are dealing with similar conflict and violence within their communities (Morrison, 2003). Restorative practices has now been implemented across the world in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Hungary, Ireland, Netherland, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom and throughout the United States. Finding ways to deal with conflicts that include the direct stakeholders and those affected by the conflict has the possibility to help create healthier communities across the globe that allow for reintegration rather than casting offenders away in prison systems (Braithwaite, 1989).

Within the last ten years the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) has developed this Restorative Practices Theory, from professional development events to creating a formal higher education entity. As a sister, non-profit institution, CSF was influential in the creation of an accredited graduate program in counseling and education specifically dedicated to

the study of restorative practices. Masters degrees are awarded in Restorative Practices and Education and Restorative Practices and Youth Counseling. I was invested and involved in this institution's creation and was a member of the first graduating class in 2008. I also currently teach as a lecturer at the IIRP.

I became interested in teaching others about restorative practices in order to find better ways to impact thinking and create pro-social learning environments. These environments include participatory learning opportunities that help adult students deal effectively with conflict, crime or misbehavior within a school setting. This research study focuses on the experiences of graduate students learning how to implement these practices. Most of the participants were also practitioners within a social science field (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2010) and were able to provide insight on their experiences in relation to Restorative Practices Theory. There is limited information on how adult learners who are professionals in the allied fields perceive these approaches and how they learn about them. In order to better understand this, it is essential that the voices of adult learners in this field be heard.

Through participant responses, I was able to capture a better understanding of students' interpretations of restorative practices. Specifically, this research provides insight into the understanding of adult learners who are learning about restorative practices at IIRP. Students from the IIRP were chosen to investigate this learning because this is the only graduate school dedicated specifically to teaching restorative practices. I am deeply embedded in this work; as such, I wish to help advance and improve the field through this research.

Problem

Restorative practices is now defined as an emerging social science that provides individuals with specific processes for dealing with anti-social behavior and conflict including

bullying, violence, wrongdoing and crime (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009). Costello et al. (2009), theorists within the restorative practices field, believe that these processes offer an alternative to current zero tolerance models when dealing with crime and/or misbehavior. This approach has also gained popularity as a way to create positive school culture through community building processes (Costello et al., 2010). Since restorative practices is a new theory, it is critical that research be conducted to explore the understanding of such theory and how it is being interpreted. As an inside researcher, I am able to understand the intricacies of the theory, comprehend participant jargon and provide a more in-depth view of the participant experiences.

Students attending the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) are expected to learn about these alternative approaches and begin to understand the conceptual shift from traditional perspectives regarding systematic punishment and discipline to participatory engagement in building social bonds. The assumption is that they will then implement the new approaches into their practice (International Institute for Restorative Practices, n.d.). In this sense, students are self-selected as they choose to align with this approach. However, making this conceptual shift may trigger resistance and conflict in the learner. This shift may or may not happen and little is known about whether or not this conflict exists and how it affects an adult learner. In addition, students may learn about these concepts, but not change their behavior or practice.

One way this shift can be seen is through a Transformative Learning Theory lens as described by Mezirow (2000) and Cranton (2006). Transformative learning describes how students come to change their points of view and challenge their current ways of thinking. The IIRP hopes that students have opportunities to reframe the way they think and respond to these alternative processes for dealing with wrongdoing, community building, and violence. If

students are already connected to, practice and understand restorative practices, these experiences should expand their knowledge base and challenge their thinking.

This research examines if there is a link between the IIRP student experiences and Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Cranton, 2006). This includes: how these adults learn about restorative concepts, what elements they find meaningful and what they are critical of. This research further examines how adults perceive their learning experiences in the IIRP's academic environment.

Research Question

How do students describe their learning experiences in a graduate degree-granting program focused on restorative practices?

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to capture the experiences of IIRP graduate students as they study Restorative Practices Theory. This inquiry has explored these learning experiences in light of Transformative Learning Theory and research. Through a mixed methods approach to research, this dissertation provides insights into how the participants view learning by gathering data from three sources. This study includes analysis of semi-structured interviews, course reflection papers and institutional survey results.

Significance of Rationale

This research could help further define Restorative Practices Theory by drawing in learning theories that have not been previously discussed in the restorative practices literature. The larger social impact of this research includes learning ways to better understand how adults can cope with today's anti-social behavior in our communities. Formal systems could help shape a better tomorrow whereby the next generation could benefit from advances in learning about

improving social connectedness. Much attention has been placed on the harmful actions of others, from bullying to school shooting and this research study provides insight into how adult students learn about and conceptualize Restorative Practices Theory. Their contributions can potentially help stop the perpetual violence in our communities. Restorative practices offers a way of matching advances in technology with successful ways to build connected communities that reduce harm in our society.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review discusses Transformative Learning Theory as to how it provides a model that can be used to understand the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) graduate students' learning experiences relating to Restorative Practices Theory. Multiple theorists define transformative learning, but the framework utilized for this study is mostly influenced from a constructivist epistemological framework defined by Mezirow (2000; 2009) and Cranton (2006). Both Transformative Learning and Restorative Practices Theories will be described in this chapter since they provide a foundation to this exploratory study and inform the research question. In addition, an exploration of current research and theory development as well as critical factors will be presented in order to further understand their significance.

Restorative Practices Theory

Restorative Practices Theory describes ways to improve relational connections through the use of processes that promote emotional exchanges and affective expression (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009; Wachtel & McCold, 2001; Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2010; McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead, Kane, Riddell & Weedon, 2008). Since this study is focusing on students who are in a graduate school that is specifically focused on restorative practices, it is important to understand the underlying concepts, elements and meaning of this theory.

The cognitive process of creating knowledge through logical thought is only one part of the learning equation according to Glasser (1988). He believes that experiencing emotion along with creating knowledge is what allows for change in thinking and behavior. Glasser is known for his work in both education and psychology disciplines. His theory creations include reality

therapy, and Control Theory (recently renamed Choice Theory). Glasser believes that most issues are related to relationships and that people have direct control over themselves in acting and thinking, similar to Goleman (2006)'s concepts of emotional intelligence. This perspective is a foundational block of restorative practices and was influential in helping define restorative practices as a theory.

The Maori culture, indigenous people of New Zealand, has been identified as the originator of restorative justice processes. Maori youth were disproportionately overrepresented in the justice system and a process was created to have many stakeholders decide on making things right when an offense occurred (Wachtel, 1997). Wachtel described the original process as follows: The offender along with their extended family members attend a meeting with the victim of the crime to decide how things were going to be made right and to restore the harm that had been committed. A discussion would ensue that describes the incident and the details of the harm. The family then processes how one of their own will make things right again. This is an example of the early justice models that began the restorative justice movement.

Inherent in the restorative practices vocabulary is the concept of being "restored." To be restored is based on an assumption that there is a response or reaction to someone or something. However, this vocabulary may be misleading to a reader and does not include the more global context of restorative practices. Rather, restorative practices is a way to build relationships to create an overall perspective for discussing human interactions (McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead, Kane, Riddell, & Weedon, 2008). Restorative practices is defined as a way to connect, reconnect or restore relationships (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009). Relationships and human connections are critical factors throughout education, psychology, sociology, criminal justice, welfare, human resources and other social science disciplines (Goleman, 2006; Cranton, 2006;

Zehr, 2002; Costello et al., 2009). These scholars stress that humans function best when they feel heard, engaged, empowered, humanized and connected in a way that promotes growth and learning (Freire, 2002; Knowles, 1998; Wachtel & McCold, 2001; Zehr, 1990; Zehr 2002).

Key principles of restorative practices include doing things "with" people not "to" them or "for" them (Wachtel & McCold, 2001; McCold & Wachtel, 2000). In Figure 2, a construct is presented that describes how people in authority can simultaneously apply control through limit setting and support in order to do things "with" people. Wachtel and McCold (2001) believe that when a person in authority provides limits to behavior while supplying abundant support, this creates the optimal opportunity for people to learn and make behavioral changes. The other perspectives

Figure 2: Social Discipline Window

HIGH

control (limit-setting, discipline)

TO	WITH
punitive	restorative
neglectful	permissive
NOT	FOR

LOW — support (encouragement, nurture) → HIGH

Adapted by Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel from Glaser, 1969.

create an imbalance of too much control without enough support—the paradigm seen in our current correctional facilities. When authority figures offer too much support without control this can create a permissive situation (e.g., enabling parenting). Having neither control nor support creates a neglectful situation. According to Wachtel and McCold (2001), when people are engaged in a restorative "with" manner they are more likely to cooperate and make lasting changes in behavior.

Restorative processes allow for people whose voices are typically not heard an opportunity to be heard, reducing the overpowering voices of dominant figures. Family Group Decision Making or Family Group Conferencing (European term) is an example of a formal

restorative conference process that creates a way for a family to develop a plan that is specific to their family's individual and cultural needs (Burford, Pennell & MacLeod, 1995). This is an inclusive process that is utilized in child welfare and delinquency systems that focuses the family and stops the professionals from controlling family processes in the United States, Europe and abroad. The extended family is invited as a way to balance power imbalances and widens the support network. Waites, Macgowan, Pennell, Carlton-LaNey and Weil (2004) found that six focus groups thought the Family Group Decision Making Conference was a valuable approach and was congruent with their own cultural traditions and beliefs. These cultural communities in North Carolina included African American, American Indian and Latino/Hispanic groups. These focus groups believed that the Family Group Decision Making Conference process was an advantage over the current system. The participants appreciated the opportunity to resolve their own problems, and allowed for a culturally supportive environment (Waites et al., 2004). This formal restorative conference is inclusive of multiple family members and other people that the family identifies as supportive in order to create a plan for the individual that the family system can implement.

Restorative practices also provides an educational framework of practical classroom approaches that allows connections and bonds to be created and sustained (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010). As in justice models, education faces similar problems of creating social justice within its systems. However, there are concerns with utilizing concepts created in a justice system that automatically translate to an educational perspective. Assumptions about misbehavior and those affected are inherent in this translation that needs further discussion as per McCluskey et al. (2008). They caution the use of justice terms such as "shame" and "offender" in the education field. For example, in a justice setting, a person who misbehaves is considered a

criminal and in an education setting the term "wrongdoer" is used (McCluskey et al., 2008).
McCluskey et al. warn that disciplines should be careful of cross-referencing concepts and
assumptions without truly understanding the impact of such words. According to McCluskey et
al., a crime is drastically different and creates different dynamics than those created by a
"wrongdoer" in an educational setting. They are studying this transition in their pilot study of
primary and secondary schools implementing restorative practices in Scotland. McCluskey et al.
find that the overall philosophical and conceptual framework of restorative practices is useful in
educational settings with practical processes supporting this perspective, but they raise concerns
about Affect Theory being used as a primary theoretical foundation for restorative practices in
education. McCluskey et al. concerns should be further explored. Within this study, cross-
referencing of terms is used to move between disciplines.

Successful processes discussed by the McCluskey et al. (2008) study include restorative
circles, restorative conferences, staff empowerment and alternative to punishment models that
include engaging and participatory activities. The researchers believe restorative practices
responds to students' needs regarding violence, bullying and social justice issues within the
school systems. They describe the Scottish educational model as one that is focusing on the
whole school community and believe that restorative practices supports this holistic approach.
They describe restorative practices as "wider than the approach of restorative justice" and
focuses on all staff and students both proactively and responsively (2008, p. 211). This study
also looked at the complexities of the Scottish educational system. The researchers believe that
there should be a dynamic approach to these complex needs and "restorative practices are seen as
offering ways to manage these fairly and positively, to prevent conflict and harm but,
importantly, still allow the expression of difference" (2008, p. 211).

Within the Philadelphia School District, there have been many disparaging reports about high dropout rates and violence within the school system (Mezzacappa, 2010). The Philadelphia School Reform Commission was created and included community and district stakeholders to devise a plan to overhaul classroom approaches. Mezzacappa (2010) reported on the Commission's findings that call for: " …increased peer mentoring and changing the approach to discipline to one that focuses more on restorative practices and less on punishment" (para. 17). The ineffective zero tolerance policies have created a need for a strategy that promotes restorative learning environments (Machi, 2010). Since this school district is in the same general geographic region as the IIRP graduate school, this might be an indication that restorative practices is becoming part of mainstream thinking and is gaining awareness in media.

In New Zealand, Buckley and Maxwell (2006) discuss the introduction to restorative practices as a whole school theory. They also state, as McCluskey et al. (2008) did in their Scottish study, that building values in the school culture is what is important. They described the implementation of restorative practices as "… a school environment based on core restorative principles of inclusion, repair harm, and reintegration, reinforced by strong support networks (Buckley & Maxwell, 2006, p. 7). From Philadelphia to New Zealand, issues are similar within educational institutions needing ways to create healthy learning environments for students. IIRP students are learning how to apply restorative approaches in a variety of settings, including educational settings.

Not only are reports springing up throughout the world, but there is evidence that Restorative Practices Theory is being discussed across disciplines. Education and criminal justice disciplines have created similar approaches to adult learning and restorative perspectives. Birzer (2004) discusses the need for classrooms to move from teacher-centered approaches to

more dynamic learning experiences for adult learners. Birzer's intent was to provide insight for the criminal justice educator and to challenge current learning practices and discuss transformative points of view. Birzer's work calls for adult learners to encounter engagement, feedback and reflection as part of their educational experiences. Within justice literature there is a strong correlation to learning theories. Braithwaite (1989) continues Birzer's (2004) thoughts of changing rigid justice beliefs and creating more learning opportunities as he states: "learning theories can do much better than the other dominant theories in accounting for what we know about crime, and they can do this without resort to constitutional determinants" (p. 52). Williams and Robinson (2004) question the ideology of the criminal justice system in the United States and ask for students and academics to challenge the current conservative "habit of mind" (p. 374). Again, vocabulary and language are parallel to Mezirow's (2000) concepts of critical reflection, habits of mind and points of view. Adult Learning Theory has become embedded in disciplines outside of education and has begun to challenge traditional adult learning educational perspectives.

Critics of restorative practices state that within the postmodern world the idea of "community" is drastically different and people are not situated in close knit socially connected groups as they once were (Masters, 1997). Much of this criticism was in a response to an Australian criminologist named John Braithwaite (1989) who published a book called *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* (Masters, 1997). Braithwaite (1989) discusses how stigmatizing shame only perpetuates crime whereby societies that create opportunities for reintegration of offenders would reduce recidivism. Braithwaite proposed creating ceremonies that allow for the offender to take responsibility while surrounded by those who were affected, but allow for inclusion back into the community. As Braithwaite calls for interdependency and

communitarianism to create these ceremonies: "current popular (and sociological) sentiments are that these are being rapidly broken down by modernity" (Masters, 1997, p.39). These sentiments of neighborhoods and community becoming more and more disconnected would undermine the notion of building community where there is none. However, community can be defined at a micro level such as classrooms, school buildings and neighborhoods or where people feel connected.

If community is present at some level, then restorative practices concepts could challenge current ways of dealing with conflict and anti-social behavior as well as build community proactively. How should we view this shift? Transformative Learning Theories provide conceptual frameworks to view how an adult learner may perceive this shift and what the process might look like. Restorative practices is based on creating relationships and building social capital. Transformative learning discusses authenticity in learning environments and the need for real relationships between students and the instructors (Cranton, 2006). Creating authenticity and creating opportunities for "real" learning exchanges is at the core of both of these theories.

Summary. Restorative Practices Theory offers processes that engage participants in ways that proactively build social connections while also offered structured responses in times of misbehavior or crime. Elements of restorative processes include empowerment, engagement, openness, structure, relationships and connectedness. From a systemic perspective, Restorative Practices Theory also is positioned to challenge current punitive education and justice policies and provides effective alternative responses to these situations.

Adult Learning Theory

Adult Learning Theory has been built on the concept that adults learn differently than children, which Knowles (1998) defines as andragogy. Knowles, also known as the grandfather

of Adult Learning Theory, contends that adults' learning depends on need and life experience. He believes motivation for learning is life-driven or problem-centered. Though there are certainly developmental differences in regard to cognition and life experience, Knowles asserts that adult learning should be centered on motivation, which can be applied across the developmental spectrum. Adult Learning Theory has proven to be fertile ground for development. If the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) Graduate School can understand how adult learners experience learning, then it can find better ways to teach and develop students.

The roots of theory development specific to the field of adult learning in the United States can be traced back to the early part of the 20th century, including Dewey's (1920) call for practical education, the founding of the American Association for Adult Education in 1926 (Hiemstra, 1995), and Lindeman's (1926) book titled *The Meaning of Adult Education*. From these early works more groups and advocates further explored adult education, specifically creating a need for ideas, concepts and theory development. Through adult learning scholarship, themes have emerged as theoretical foundations to explain adult learning. Historical educational research was focused towards children and youth and their intellectual development (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Erikson, 1959). The emerging discipline of adult learning allows us to explore through research and inquiry how adults develop thinking and meaning making. Gaining a better understanding of what practices, processes, themes and environments create or promote growth for an adult learner is important to this study.

Transformative Learning Theory has emerged as a way to describe the learning process for adults. A transformative learning perspective could be helpful in exploring a basically

unknown emerging discipline such as Restorative Practices Theory since it tries to provide opportunities for adult learners to view human relationships from a different perspective.

Transformative learning. Mezirow (1978), a leading constructivist in the adult learning literature, developed the concept of transformative learning for adults. He describes that when transformation does happen that certain elements are present and include reframing of assumptions and beliefs that are then applied in practice. Perspective, reflection, experience, and interpretation are the main threads throughout the transformative learning literature (Cranton, 2006; Freire, 2002; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Knowles, 1998; Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, 2000). Kegan (2000) builds on the theory by discussing adult learning theory from a constructive developmental framework and argues that people learn over time and gain rational epistemologies that create their worldview. Transformative Learning Theory provides a cognitive approach to understanding adult learners' processes of learning and their creation of meaning.

Mezirow (2000) further defines adult learning processes through his description of "habits of mind". "A habit of mind is a set of assumptions – broad, generalized, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience" (p. 17). A habit of mind is similar to an expression of an opinion or point of view, but is rooted deeper in morality and experience. Mezirow and Cranton (2006) describe a point of view as a result of the way people describe their habit of mind. A habit of mind is specific to an individual and encompasses socio-cultural perspectives and environmental components that people encounter every day. Habits of mind are the way a person compares and measures experiences so that they can interpret their world. These habits of mind are emotionally, intellectually, and unconsciously connected and defended (Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Cranton, 2006). Mezirow (2000) and Cranton (2006) argue that learning is

more significant than knowledge acquisition and that internal factors contribute to the learning process as much as external factors. Mezirow (2000) and Cranton (2006) contend that individualized development, rather than mass information consumption, is what truly advances learning.

Challenging this habit of mind is central to learning and it is within this challenge that restorative practices seeks to change punitive perspectives that influence justice and education systems (Wachtel & McCold, 2001). For example, if an adult student perceives punishment as a valuable way to create lasting change in behavior, Restorative Practices Theory challenges this belief and provides alternatives for direct stakeholders to be involved in the reparation of harm committed by all types of offenders, young or old (Wachtel, 1997; Braithwaite, 1989).

A person can experience a situation of a knowledge conflict when information that is being presented does not match what is already known; Mezirow (2000) describes this as a disorienting dilemma. The dilemma triggers critical reflection and an inventory of what is known to be true by that person. Johnson and Johnson (2009) argue that purposely creating conflict and controversy within the classroom can help learners to critically evaluate information and named this process "constructive controversy." They describe how many educators avoid conflict or see it as too risky within the classroom setting. A common thread throughout adult learning and restorative theories includes a situation where prior knowledge is called into question to a learner and is compared to new information that is being presented. Johnson and Johnson said this about conflict:

> When individuals are confronted with different conclusions based on other people's
>
> information, experiences and perspectives, they tend to become uncertain as to the

correctness of their own conclusion, and a state of conceptual conflict or disequilibrium is aroused. They unfreeze their epistemic process. (2009, p. 41)

Cooner, Quinn and Dickmann (2008) tried to capture the process of challenging current ways of thinking in a research project that looked to measure school principal intern experiences. Their research included documenting the change process through having participants journal and record their reflective thoughts of challenges throughout one school year. What Cooner et al. (2008) found was that it was difficult to document the change process for these new leaders and though there seemed to be evidence of a change in thought processes, but it was not explicitly apparent. This is an example of the complexities of research looking to articulate a process that can be intimate and personal to each learner. However, the goal of examining change process through reflective writing is key to this research and to Transformative Learning Theory. As in the Cooner et al. study, a core data source for this study is students' reflection papers.

Critical reflection. Transformative learning theorists argue that reflective processes are necessary in order for learning to occur (Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). Mezirow (2009) discusses the need to further articulate the difference between reflection and a more substantial process of learning called critical reflection. The critical aspect of reflection is central to transformative learning (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). Mezirow (2000) defines critical reflection as challenging existing values, beliefs, and assumptions. It is not simply a response to information or facts; it involves gaining a deeper understanding of perspective and meaning. Critical reflection, in terms of restorative practices, might include the understanding of this theory as a way to encourage emotional exchanges of dialog rather than just a set of reactive processes implemented for misbehavior (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009). According to Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel

(2010), school administrators and teachers may find zero tolerance policies ineffective at creating healthy school environments, but through offering students opportunities for meaningful emotional exchanges through restorative circle processes, they could create healthier classroom and school environments. These concepts are part of the curriculum at the IIRP and are taught in foundational courses for all graduate students (International Institute for Restorative Practices, n.d.).

More recently, Brookfield (2009) has explored the meaning of critical reflection as it relates to Critical Theory. He states that the word "critical" needs to assume that people are challenging dominant political structures in order to transform themselves. "Critical Theory views thinking critically as being able to identify, and then to challenge and change, the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs" (Brookfield, 2009, p. 126). Within this context, reflection becomes an opportunity for people to challenge ingrained beliefs and power structures. This is done through changing one's own beliefs, confronting those in power, and setting more beneficial expectations for new leaders.

From a restorative practices perspective, traditional justice and educational systemic structures of punishment and expert decision-making roles (i.e., judges, lawyers, principals, disciplinarians) become challenged. Restorative processes remove these power structures by placing the responsibility to create restorative plans in the direct stakeholder's hands (Wachtel, 1997; Wachtel & McCold, 2001). Costello et al. (2010) describe responsive restorative circles as one example of these processes. Here, instead of a school disciplinarian following a code of conduct and giving out suspensions or detentions, a circle is held to deal with a situation. Costello et al. (2010) describe a specific responsive circle scenario as each person speaking about the wrongdoing by questions that facilitator asks. Everyone has an uninterrupted

opportunity to speak about how they have been affected by the student's misbehavior and each offers suggestions on how to make things better. The circle is concluded once everyone feels they have had enough to say. For any of these processes to be successful, Costello et al. (2010) suggest that practitioners or facilitators should understand how emotion and Affect Theory (see appendix A for definitions of terminology and are discussed in next section) impact the facilitation of healthy exchanges and dialog within circles.

       Emotion and Affect Theories. Within the adult learning literature there are gaps in the understanding of emotion, affect, social learning, and the creation of environments that promote transformational learning. Mezirow (2009) states in his discussion about Transformational Learning Theory that: "One view is that I have neglected the role of imagination, intuition, and emotion" (p. 27). Mezirow discusses rationality as a key component of critical reflection. However, according to Imel (1998) and Boyd and Myers (1988), too much emphasis is placed on Mezirow's rational thought. It is Boyd's contention that it is the extra-rational that creates transformational learning (as cited in Imel, 1998).

       In Goleman's (2006) work, learning is described as highly emotional; Goleman believes that when a person is challenged by unknown or confusing information, his or her initial responses are emotional, not rational or logical. Restorative practices allows for free expression of emotion while minimizing negative affects through facilitating processes with structured questions that elicit multiple stakeholder participation (Wachtel & McCold, 2001; Nathanson, 1992). Within scripted restorative conferencing processes, victims and offenders come together with their families to discuss a crime. Wachtel (1997) tells stories of restorative conferences where the facilitator has a script and asks specific questions to each participant eliciting responses that not only allow for feelings and emotions to be expressed, but also works toward a

resolution. Since emotional expression is central to learning and restorative practices, students'

responses to the interview questions and content in their reflective papers were examined for

themes and narratives that include emotional expression.

Nathanson (1992) discusses Affect Theory as a system of innate, hardwired responses to

stimuli. He states that negative affects are the result of an interruption of positive affects.

According to Nathanson, affects are what happen immediately and emotion is what is tied to the

affect from previous experiences. Shame is one of the most frequent negative affects that

humans experience (Nathanson, 1992). Within the context of learning, people could think their

own perspective is the correct one and new knowledge could challenge them and spark the

interruption of a positive affect, creating, according to Nathanson, a shame affect response.

Depending on a person's past learning experiences, this moment could initiate weak or strong

feelings. For the adult learner, not understanding a new concept or seeing others gain

understanding before they do could trigger a shame response, causing the learning to enter the

Compass of Shame.

Nathanson (1992) believes that a person's negative response to shame can manifest in

four ways: avoidance, withdrawal, attack self and attack others. He calls his paradigm the

Compass of Shame, structured visually to resemble a directional compass. If people experience

the affect of shame, they go to one of the poles of the compass, exhibiting behaviors and

emotions that resemble that shame response. People who are skilled at regulating their emotions

and understand shame can exit the compass very quickly, but others who find their emotions

overwhelming, could experience the poles of the compass for long periods of time. Tomkins

contends that affects should be communicated freely in order to minimize the toxic nature of the

negative affect of shame (as cited in Nathanson, 1992). Within the context of learning and

restorative practices, shame can be a powerful affect, and it is important that facilitators or professionals understand what is happening. Restorative practices offers ways for participants in these processes to move from these more toxic negative affects to positive affects even in the wake of having committed or participated in a crime (Wachtel, 1997).

Goleman (2006) discusses the need to regulate emotion in oneself and to better understand relationships with others. He discusses the concept of emotional "hijacks" at times when the cognitive side of the brain has not yet understood the stimuli. Once a positive affect has been interrupted, according to Nathanson, (1992), Goleman's (2006) work would then allow for people to find ways to emotionally cope with these negative affects. Restorative practices offers ways to reconnect positive feelings and emotions in times of conflict (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009). This is done through allowing the negative affect to be expressed in a constructive way, which builds more positive affects and emotions and results in restoring relationships (Costello et al., 2009). If someone has done something wrong and is feeling worthless because of their poor decisions, a circle or conference would offer the ability to reconnect and repair the harm with those affected, thus moving from more negative affects to more positive affects (Costello et al., 2009). Goleman (2006) points out that people have different experiences in regard to emotion and that these experiences could form positive or negative emotional scripts. These scripts could become apparent within a restorative process and empowering participant choice to experience these processes is essential. According to Goleman (2006), connecting experience through our thinking and our emotions is the best way people learn.

Experience and learning. Transformative Learning Theory holds that through reflection on experience, one can create new knowledge and ultimately form perspectives that allow us to compare future events to past experiences in order to better understand our own worldview (Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). Experience is discussed as an essential part of learning within adult learning literature. According to many of the adult learning theorists, experiential learning combined with reflection enhances the learning process (Cranton, 2006; Freire, 2002; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Knowles, 1998; Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, 2000; Dewey, 1997). Smith (1996) cites Brookfield as describing experiential learning in two ways. First, it is applying knowledge in a relevant environment to enhance learning. An example could include an internship or an experiment within a natural setting as in action research. The second way is learning through reflective processes in our everyday lives.

Like the theorists mentioned, Kolb (1984) also includes experience, reflection and experimentation as part of a learning construct (see Figure 3). He links together experience, reflection, creating meaning and active experimentation as ways adults learn (as cited in Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, 2000, p. 24). This cyclical representation provides a framework for how

Figure 3: Leads to four kinds of knowledge:

Atherton, 2011/Kolb, 1984

reflection and experience are part of a process that creates opportunities for learning. Kolb

(1984) utilizes this construct to discuss how knowledge is created and has applications in describing learning styles. Many of these cycles can be occurring simultaneously and over long or short periods of time. Kolb is expressing how adults are continuously in this process and are active within learning. Whether it pertains to an event or a perspective on society, critical reflection is a process of questioning reality combined with what one believes to be true in their world (Cranton, 2006).

Experiential learning as a theory has been explored through research which has shown that adults who participate in experienced based learning produce a solid foundation for developing knowledge. Holsinger and Ayers (2004) provide a learning experience for students through the development of an undergraduate course that expected students to become mentors to incarcerated youth. Outcomes were favorable in the satisfaction levels of mentor and mentee. This research highlights the need to build relationships with forgotten populations or those who might have more difficulty creating connections with people outside of their known social network. The mentors worked with delinquent populations instead of just reading about building social bonds with people exhibiting anti-social behavior. The students had an opportunity to apply some of their knowledge, interact with others, build emotional/relational bonds and take meaningful action within a learning environment. This study shows that experience, emotion and reflection can have positive outcomes as a model for learning. In this example of a project-based internship in higher education, students were placed in real life situations followed by a reflective process of writing that captured students' learning.

Rogers, Bolick, Mason and Anderson (2007) provide another example of experiential learning within higher education classrooms. Their research study identified feedback loops from student to teacher as an important pedagogical process. Rogers et al. describe how teachers

enrolled in a master's of education program utilized an action research project to promote communication between students and teachers. They found that through action research processes, teachers became more open to feedback and information that aided in developing changes in curriculum and delivery of concepts. Teachers were willing to listen more intently while completing an action research project compared with traditional lesson planning because it was seen as a collaborative process with students and teachers. Through these experiences, the belief that the learner has something to offer these teachers improved their practice. The authors cited a noted increase in relational connections between the teachers and students.

There are experiential models built into the current credentialing processes for teachers. Green and Ballard (2010-2011) describe student teaching methods as potential teachers spending several weeks observing classes and then taking over the class as the primary teacher. Green and Ballard's study looked at an alternative model that had senior student teachers become school district paid employees for an entire year while completing course work. They found that the student teachers had more meaningful experiences compared to traditional student teaching models, and school districts reported higher competencies in student teachers who completed the alternative full-year model. Green and Ballard described the critical aspect of experiential learning that incorporated Adult Learning Theory as part of the model creation with positive outcomes.

These studies provide insight into how adult learners perceive experiential learning and the effect that learning has on practice. Within the IIRP curriculum, project based learning is part of the foundational courses (International Institute for Restorative Practices, n.d.). From the preliminary data collected for this study, project based learning surfaced several times for students as an important part of their learning.

Participatory Learning. It is evident in adult learning literature that an educator's approach to their students is critical to how students learn and whether or not the experience is meaningful (Cranton, 2006). Many traditional educational approaches include a teacher-centered focus (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). In transformative learning literature, a distinction is made between instruction and facilitation of learning (Freire, 2002; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Cranton, 2006; Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, 2000). Dewey (1997), in the eighteenth reprint of his popular book *Experience and Education,* describes a break from conventional education. Dewey's pioneering approach confronted obedience models of education and created an experiential continuum for learning moving towards a facilitation perspective. His approach does this by creating environments that promote discussion of experience that is not overly controlled by the instructor.

Cameron (2002) discussed how creating dialogue and contradiction within student's learning fosters social change. This seemed reminiscent of Mezirow's (2000) critical reflection and disorienting dilemmas, for example, when a person is faced with a conflict within their worldview. Cameron went on to discuss "knowledge production" which places the "teachers and students as equal subjects in the learning process" (p. 1). Within the adult learning literature, many pedagogical styles have a tone of empowering students and discussing the complexity of students' learning needs. Imel (1998) confirms this perspective by calling for role definition for learners and teachers. McCluskey et al. (2008) discuss restorative practices in the context of secondary educational settings whereby the focus is to encourage participatory learning of students by having teachers facilitate dialog and exchanges involving everyone. This supports what Imel (1998) contends, that teachers have a responsibility to establish trust and rapport while modeling learning and accepting change. Within this context, learners are responsible for

creating their own learning environments in order to promote transformational learning. From this perspective, students have a more integral role in choosing how to learn, as power within the classroom is shared.

The role an adult student plays within the classroom can significantly impact their learning experience (Imel, 1998). For IIRP graduate students, does the participatory nature of restorative practices influence how they experience learning? Adult Learning Theory and supporting research state that participatory learning is essential to students feeling empowered and engaged, but power issues become complex and can result in political and ethical considerations.

In the context of knowledge production, the role of power and authority in a facilitated classroom begins to change, creating a more horizontal authority model. Freire (2002) also challenged the traditional view of learning whereby the teachers were the ultimate knowledge holder and then would fill the students with their expert knowledge. Freire used "banking" as a metaphor to describe this top-down approach, and knowledge deposit as a way to describe traditional educational models and methods. What stood out in Freire's work was his description of passive learning within the learning process. Freire called for a more interactive style of teaching and learning. He was considered to be a radical from political perspectives because he taught illiterates how to read and to be active in their community.

Freire's (2002) work was profound in that adults learned how to read and, in a short period of time, were able to vote. Freire's work with adult learners resulted in freedom, increased human rights, and the learner's opportunity to have a voice. While Freire's work is inspiring and created avenues for those oppressed to gain a voice, the question arises: Is pushing someone to challenge their own core beliefs and worldviews ethical? Ettling (2006) raises this

concern about transformative learning processes. She challenges the issues surrounding educators that push students to challenge their habits of mind and create conflict that was not previously present. In Brazil, Freire's work was ethical and allowed a class of citizens to gain civil liberties. However, Ettling (2006) believes that when those in authority push people without understanding the possible consequences, it could be harmful such as in the above example that people could have been persecuted based on their learning.

This critique of transformative learning results in a caution to educators about the ways in which they approach learning processes. There are evident power and authority interactions that are assumed in educational processes by the educator and learner (Brookfield, 2005). Ideology seems to be present in learning, even if it is based on Critical Theory. Ettling (2006) looked at these issues from two perspectives: ethics related to purpose and ethics related to practice. She calls for an educator to know oneself and to understand what they are asking of their students. Her position raises appropriate concerns regarding transformation and creates a dilemma that is worth further discussion. These ethical considerations are similar to therapists exploring people's beliefs that can produce either internal or interpersonal conflict for the client. Professionals need to know their own limitations around dealing with conflicts that may arise for the client, and only engage in relationships that have clear boundaries, are safe, and include transparency (Yalom, 1995).

Ethical considerations concerning teaching techniques could impact how students perceive their learning experiences. Since Restorative Practices Theory includes exchanges of emotion and human interaction in times of conflict, understanding power dynamics provides insight into how to conduct these processes ethically as Ettling (2006) suggests. Students do

choose a program at the IIRP knowing the philosophy and a goal of transformation is explicitly stated, thus reducing the ethical concerns of manipulation.

Power and authority issues are also common discussions in restorative practices as in the adult learning literature. Christie (1977) does not describe his argument in a restorative context, but the tenets are similar. Christie calls for the deconstruction of power imbalances and expert models that steal conflict away from those that have been impacted. Specifically, Christie described criminal justice systems and attorneys stealing the conflict away from stakeholders and how they create new vocabulary and procedures only understood by the experts. Restorative practices has its roots in Christie's position and has developed from the perspective that people and communities are competent and able to deal with issues themselves. This is also congruent with Glasser's (1988) work that states people should exercise choice and are competent to make their own decisions. As these concepts converge they are centered on our social need to be connected to other human beings in a meaningful way (Nathanson, 1992; Goleman, 2006).

Learning in Groups. Learning can be viewed from an individual perspective or as collective learning within a larger group. Collaborative learning for adults is another continual theme in Adult Learning Theory. Adult learners can excel in settings that include collaborative learning such as small groups, mentoring groups and project based learning (Lawler, 2003; Gilly, 2004; Shank, 2005; Imel & Zenglar, 2002). Working together in a cooperative way challenges the individualistic competitive system of learning. According to Senge (1990), teams learn as they move towards a collective goal. Only recently has attention been focused on collaborative groups and potential for more learning opportunities for all participants (Shank, 2005; Taylor, Marineau & Fiddler, 2000). Kasl and Elias (2000) state that adult educators create positive learning conditions when interpersonal communication, boundaries, competence and inclusion

are all present. These authors create a strong argument to create learning opportunities so that individuals and groups learn from each other, which is in direct contrast to teacher-focused environments. Since most of the IIRP classroom experience takes place in a circle format, much of the class experience could be seen as an individual learning in a group setting, or it can also be viewed as a group learning as a collective whole or maybe both. The IIRP's educational philosophy states:

> We also believe that learning occurs best within a participatory learning community with students actively engaged in their own learning and interacting with their fellow students, and that learning should not only build capacity for the future, but should address current problems and challenges facing individuals and society. (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2011-2012, p. 5)

Yalom (1995) believes that combining people's experiences with a group creates richer exchanges and deeper learning for each individual and for the group. Imel and Zenglar (2002) found in a study of collaborative groups that participants reported learning from each other. The collaborative nature of this process allows for many interactions that build relationships, engage classroom experience and create a forum for dialog. Taylor, Marineau and Fiddler (2000) also found that group learning supports individual participant's growth. "Academic and workplace settings, learners can be enormously rich resources for one another, perspectives are wider and more varied, examples are richer and deeper than those proved by text or an individual instructor" (p. 303). This is a good example of Imel and Zenglar's discussion of deeper learning where multiple perspectives are included to provide for varied influences in learning. The IIRP curriculum includes group projects and group learning processes called Professional Learning Groups (PLG). According to Costello et al. (2010), these groups are also a form of a circle

where a person shares their project uninterrupted for a predetermined amount of time and then asks for feedback from the other circle participants. The key to the process is that the person presenting cannot respond to the feedback until the end of the process and will only state a few things they will take action on based on the circle participants' feedback. According to Costello et al., by providing this structure, participants cannot reply to feedback with "I've tried that" and allows participants to listen to suggestions without judgment. This creates an atmosphere of brainstorming without participants limiting the conversation or minimizing feedback.

Yalom (1995) describes therapeutic groups as a way to help members express and participate in each other's experience. He believed that transformation happens as an individual within the group process gains perspective through feedback and expression of experiences. The same can be said for the type of circles used in restorative practices. Yalom (1995) explains that interpersonal learning can be described by three major concepts: 1. the importance of interpersonal relationships, 2. corrective emotional experience and 3. the group as social microcosm (p. 38). Yalom's work is based on individuals who come to group counseling because of social dysfunction or mental health diagnoses. These participants rely on the group to aid in becoming more healthy and able to manage in real life situations. The group becomes a micro-community of the larger world. A professional facilitates the group, but according to Yalom, the therapeutic factors that develop during the group come from the interactions between individual participants, not from the facilitator. If implemented correctly, restorative processes include several of Yalom's therapeutic factors and are seen within the IIRP group processes such as compassionate witnessing process (see appendix A for definition of process).

Creating collaborative learning environments is no easy task. Langan, Sheese and Davidson (2009) describe an outline for creating collaborative learning experiences. Their

structure for collaborative learning called, "constructive teaching and learning values" includes: collaboration, deep learning, reflection, engagement, and caring (p. 49). Even with an explicit outline that is well intentioned for professors to create such environments, they found students to be resistant during group learning settings, wanting to stick to traditional individualistic processes. This resistance can be rooted in traditional learning processes that have been conditioned and formed in a habit of mind when one feels that learning should be individualistic. Since most of the IIRP classrooms are convened in circles, how might the individualistic learner respond to group learning? Restorative processes could be viewed as going against the grain when compared to individualistic worldviews and current cultural perspectives.

Learning influenced by group members has its downside. Owenby (2002) discusses the "dark side" to learning communities. His main point was concerning non-identified power interests within these communities and how learners should be informed of power issues. Hidden power issues could produce a type of tokenistic empowerment that can be undermining to learning processes and can be manipulative to the learner. As Ettling (2006) discussed the concerns of unethical teaching practices in participatory learning, Owenby (2002) states that uncovering hidden authority and power issues in groups is key to creating a culture for transformative learning. Creating an environment that allows for transparency is essential for true cooperation (Cranton, 2006). Forming perceptions and knowledge based on biased perspectives could lead to Minnich's (1990) description of four errors. She believes that when a group, community or a culture is driven by a narrow perspective, they could create one or all of these four errors of learning while forming an inaccurate perspective: 1. faulty generalizations and universalization, 2. circular reasoning, 3. mystified concepts and 4. partial knowledge. All

of these errors can be part of people's development of learning and what people believe to be true as well as leaving several alternative stories and perspectives silent. In addition, Critical Theory posits that people within groups can perpetuate their own oppression because the political authority has normalized disparity and marginalization (Brookfield, 2005). Both Minnich (1990) and Brookfield (2005) move from individualized adult learning to larger societal issues concerning Adult Learning Theory. Restorative practices is at the heart of challenging current punitive approaches by providing alternative processes to deal with discipline and crime that include stakeholders and gives them an active voice. Providing these exchanges consistently are missing too many times in the current educational and justice systems, which could have been created based on Minnich's (1990) errors.

Social Learning Theory. Learning through observation of others is best described through Social Learning Theory, more recently known as Social Cognitive Theory (Rosenstock, Strecher & Becker, 1988), which describes how a person witnesses another person's behavior and learns how to act and respond, given different environmental factors (Rosenstock, Strecher & Becker, 1988; Bandura, 1978). Within groups or learning process, seeing how others act and respond to their social setting could be important to Adult Learning Theories and can take place in classes where circles are used.

Bandura (1978) looked specifically at how aggression was modeled to other people and how they react to these prompts. He discusses how children and adults learn aggressive behavior through influential people in their life, such as parents. Bandura also describes participants in his study who experienced video or television clips that exhibited aggressive behavior mimicking the aggressive behavior. His study compared this population with those who did not have these visual experiences and found that the aggressive behavior was significantly reduced. Bandura's

work built upon Vygotsky's (1978) social-cultural model. Vygotsky's key factors to learning include relational connectedness and interaction between people. What is notable about these theories is the movement from individual psychology to the importance of a learner's surroundings. These theorists' focus was on children and their development, but the core themes of social learning is extrapolated to adult learning as well. Costello et al. (2010) describe how proactive circles allow for social learning by creating space for circle participants to listen to other participants. Social connectedness and relational interactions are cornerstones to what is conveyed in Restorative Practices Theory.

Summary

As Adult Learning Theory permeates many areas of study, themes are created to describe how adults create knowledge. Critical reflection, conflict, emotion, experience, collaborative learning environments, power and authority are all central concepts to adults' learning. Restorative practices environments allow these themes to emerge in ways that include emotion and affect. According to Costello et al. (2009; 2010), these environments support emotional growth and allow learners to create new meaning. When the pedagogical framework of the IIRP is viewed through a Transformative Learning Theory lens, the learning can be explored to better understand what supports adults' transition from former points of view to new ways of thinking and acting. From an educator's perspective, learning to create these transformative environments "on purpose" would be valuable and connects to the theme of the research question as ways to learn and implement restorative practices. Both Adult Learning Theories and Restorative Practices Theory support content and pedagogical evolution. Research studies on programs that use restorative practices show that students and educators thrive in restorative learning environments (Lewis, 2009). This research builds upon those ideas and offers further

information about graduate students' learning experiences within the IIRP as it relates to

Restorative Practices Theory.

Chapter 3

Research Design

Introduction

This chapter explains the research methods and rationale that were utilized to explore the following research question with rigor: How do students describe their learning experiences in a graduate degree-granting program focused on restorative practices? This chapter explains why a mixed methods approach was utilized, the population and sample of people participating in the study and the data collection process.

The research question looks to explore graduate students' perceptions of, and how they describe, their learning. Learning for individuals can be personal and provide intimate intricacies specific to each student. In order to understand these individual nuances and to capture students' thinking about their experiences, a qualitative study would be most appropriate (Creswell, 2007). However, Creswell (2003) and Patton (2002) describe how a mixed methods design, which includes both qualitative and quantitative methods, provides a richer investigation into a research problem. Creswell states: "Often, this model is used so that the researcher can gain broader perspectives as a result of using the different methods as opposed to using the predominant method alone" (2003, p. 218). The motivation for choosing this design allows for multiple sources of data collection to explore this research question.

Within mixed method approaches, Creswell (2003) provides six different types of method designs based on the research focus and what the study is looking to explore or investigate. According to Creswell, the design is driven by the research question. The six models include: sequential explanatory strategy, sequential exploratory strategy, sequential transformative strategy, concurrent triangulation strategy, concurrent nested strategy and concurrent

transformative strategy (Creswell, 2003). The differences between the designs are based on when the data are collected and analyzed within the process and the order of collection. Applying Creswell's methodology, this study is a qualitative focused study that allows for simultaneous collection of secondary quantitative data, which Creswell calls a "concurrent nested strategy design" (p. 218).

A qualitative focused design was chosen because the primary goal is to capture learners' experiences. The qualitative methods approach utilized in this study is a qualitative description method. A qualitative description method differs from other qualitative approaches, as the goal is to provide "a rich, straight description of an experience or an event" (Neergaard, Olesen, Anderson, & Sondergaard, 2009, p. 2). Neegaard et al. (2009) state that qualitative description approach is utilized in mixed method studies and is ideal for semi-structured interviews and document review. Within the qualitative description approach, analysis includes coding and direct reporting of data. Participants' narratives were explored through interviews and reflection paper reviews as the predominant elements in this study.

The quantitative method provided further secondary information "nested" within the qualitative information. Student surveys that provide feedback on course experiences were collected and reviewed as supplementary quantitative data. This data offers participants' perspectives of courses at the end of each course. Specific questions were chosen for examination in this study that pertains to the social interactions and pedagogy of the classroom environments. Following Patton (2002), there is no one true methodology that will answer the research question in its entirety. He advises that methods should be chosen based on the information the researcher wants to collect to better understand the research question.

Population and Sample

Participants included volunteering graduate students from the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), an accredited graduate program. A population list was created from the IIRP's main student database system, for which the institution granted access. It was determined during the pilot study and through discussions with my committee that students with a minimum of 12 earned credits would be most appropriate for the sample population. Twelve earned credits were chosen as the minimum requirement for participation in this study because the IIRP describes the initial 12 credits as prerequisite to all other courses. These prerequisites are essential to understanding Restorative Practices Theory (International Institute for Restorative Practices, n.d.). An initial list was created with all of the students, including alumni, who earned a minimum of 12 credits by September 1, 2011

Removing students with whom I had a previous direct relationship to prevent a potential bias further reduced the sample population. Also, since I am the Executive Director of Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy (sister organizations of the IIRP), and several IIRP students also work for those organizations, current and former employees of these organizations were identified and removed from the sample population list.

The sample population list included categories that were exported to a blank Excel spreadsheet from the IIRP student database. The information was sorted into the following categories: last name, first name, email address, phone number, whether the student was ever an employee of CSF, Buxmont or IIRP, total credits earned, matriculation status, date degree was awarded if alumni, and program track (counseling or education). Before the exportation of the data, any students who needed to be removed based on the above criteria were separated from the primary list. The sample population list was then reviewed to ensure accuracy, and those who did not meet the criteria were removed.

The original list containing students with 12 or more earned credits totaled 116 students and the total population for this sample is 94 students. Of the 94 students, 13 were men and 81 were women. The 94 students' email addresses were exported from the sample population Excel spreadsheet in order to send an email invitation to participate in this study (see appendix B). Both Lesley University and the IIRP's Institutional Review Boards approved this invitation. The Informed Consent Form was attached to the invitation email in order to provide clear communication of the study's expectations, purpose, and the rights of the participants (see appendix C). On three separate occasions, the invitation was sent via email to the list of potential participants and one additional email was sent specifically to potential male participants in order to recruit a minimum of 15 participants for this study. Having a gender balance that is representative of the student population motivated the additional email to male students. Data were collected between October 20, 2011 and December 16, 2011.

After the first invitation email was sent, five participants responded with interest to participate. I responded to these emails immediately, thanked participants for their interest, and asked them to provide information that would help with setting up the interviews. Information requested included a cell phone number, what region they lived in, the best means of contacting them and a convenient time they would be able to receive my call if that was what they preferred. All responded with contact information and availability.

Participant contact accounting was kept as a separate worksheet that was created in the sample population Excel spreadsheet workbook. Once a student volunteered to participate, that student's row of information was copied from the sample population worksheet and pasted to the participant worksheet. Additional content cells were added from the initial information list from the student database to include location of participant, meeting date and cell phone number.

These additional cells allowed for accurate tracking and a place to see all participant information in one spot.

Approximately two weeks after the initial invitation email was sent, the same email was sent out again to potential participates, minus the students who already volunteered to participate. At this time, I had begun the initial interviewing and simultaneously continued recruiting participants. After the second email was sent to students, six more students volunteered to participate. One student stated that she was interested, but had an extremely busy schedule and was not sure if she could commit to a meeting. I marked this student as an alternate participant in the event that 15 participants did not volunteer. What became evident after this second round of responses was that all of the potential participants who showed an interest in volunteering were women. The sample population was 86% female and 14% male. Despite multiple attempts to recruit male participants, only one volunteered.

I sent a final email to the potential population, minus the volunteering participants, stating that I had the majority of the sample, but needed a few more volunteers. There were six more potential participants who volunteered to participate. One of the six lived in New York City and asked if we could do a phone or Skype interview. I placed her in the alternative sample participation category along with the other alternative participant who was not readily available for an interview. Another potential participant did not reply to any follow-up emails regarding setting up a time to discuss the interview. This person's information was also placed on the alternative list.

There were 18 total volunteers and 15 total participants who were interviewed in this study. Patton (2002) recommends using a sample size that adequately addresses the problem

statement in the context of the inquiry. The sample of participants provided an abundance of data and represents 16% of the sample population studied.

I contacted each of the volunteering participants to set up a face-to-face meeting either by phone or through email. Many of the students lived at a distance from the graduate school even though a significant portion of coursework is conducted in physical classroom settings. I set up interviews in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland. Students traveled to meet with me from these states as well as from Virginia, Washington D.C., and Massachusetts. The initial phone or email conversation after their invitation response included a brief introduction to the study that was paraphrased from the invitation. I asked the participants where they would feel comfortable meeting, a convenient time, and a place that I could audiotape the conversation without excessive background noise. Interviews were conducted in participants' homes, community centers, IIRP offices and coffee houses. If we were meeting in a public place, I emailed a picture of myself for recognition purposes to those participants who had never seen me before.

Data collection

Interviews. Students volunteered to participate in face-to-face interviews, which lasted between forty minutes to one hour. The semi-structured interviews followed an outline of questions, with the flexibility to allow for further explanation and exploratory sub-questions (see Figure 4). A pilot study was conducted for the purpose of developing these interview questions for this dissertation study. Questions were field tested with adult students during the spring term of 2011 and modifications were made based on the feedback and responses from focus group participants, program cohort members and faculty. Questions were not provided before the interview.

Interviews were audio recorded with a Dictaphone and then transcribed by a typist. I stated to each participant that at any time they could stop the interview or ask that I turn off the audio recorder. Two participants choose to stop the audio recorder in order to think about their response. No more than one minute elapsed before the participant turned the recorder back on and answered the question asked. I listened to portions of the audiotape to ensure clearness of the conversation before I sent them to the typist for transcription. All transcriptions were returned electronically to my secure email account.

Interviews started with basic introductions and pleasantries. I tried to provide a comfortable interview environment for participants through basic small talk and asking about their time and ability to find the meeting

Figure 4 - Questions for the interviews included:

What attracted you to take courses at the IIRP?

From your experiences at IIRP, what stands out for you?

Tell me about a class experience that surprised you?

How does this experience compare to your past educational experiences as an adult?

Tell me about a time you were conflicted in class?

Tell me about a pivotal time/class that connected you to your learning?

Have you been able to implement any restorative practices in your work (tell me about one)?

Tell me about one of your reflection papers?

location (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I started each conversation by thanking the participant for volunteering. A hard copy of the Informed Consent Form was presented to each participant before the interview ensued. I explained that the document was the same as that attached to the invitation email and asked that they take their time to look over the document and sign and date it if they agreed with the content. Once the Informed Consent Form was completed, I handed them a participant survey that asked basic demographic information. The first question on this survey asked participants to record a self-selected pseudonym. The other questions related to

gender, age, level of education, state of residence, and profession (see appendix D). This allowed me to describe the population accurately. From that point forward, I addressed the participant by their chosen pseudonym.

Each participant was presented with a brief background of the study and the process of my dissertation research. The analysis process was explained about how the data from the interviews was going to be used. Students were told that this study was to explore IIRP students' perceptions of their learning experiences and if themes pertaining to learning about restorative practices might arise from the interviews. If a participant did not send or bring a reflection paper, they were given the option to email to me the reflection paper that they feel reflects their learning. In addition, I explained that this study is looking at certain questions from each of their course improvement forms. Participants were asked if they had any questions before starting the interview.

Participants were familiarized with the Dictaphone before questions began. They were shown where the stop button was in case they wanted to stop audio recording or they could say that they wanted to stop the interview and the Dictaphone would be turned off. The audio recorder was tested to ensure that it was taping and it was replayed to ensure appropriate audio level. I asked the participant if they were ready and the interview commenced.

All interviews followed the same sequence of eight main questions. Most of the participants answered all questions. After each main question, clarifying questions would follow in order to understand particular circumstances or examples of their answers. I would ask, "tell me more about that?" or, "can you give me an example of that?" These clarifying questions prompted participants to describe their experiences in more detail. Two participants were not sure of their response and asked that we come back to that main question later in the interview.

In both occasions, the participants answered the question after spending some time thinking about their response. At the end of the interview, participants were then asked if there was anything they wished to add. This provided an opportunity for any information pertaining to them, as an adult learner that they thought would be helpful to this study. This was done as a way to ensure information was not missed or if there was specific information that the participant wanted to provide. I may not have asked a question in a way that would prompt a particular response, so this question opens up the interview to have the participant provide any information that they choose. Most participants responded to this question with a clarification of what was already stated or highlighted an area that was important to them and their learning. For example, participants described how circles and feeling connected to their classmates supported their learning in a significant way.

After the participant had nothing more to say, I announced, "the interview has ended" and I stopped the audio recorder. I thanked the participant for their time and their willingness to answer the questions. I asked if the participant had any questions. No participants reported any questions. I explained to each participant that I would be sending a draft of the analysis and results in order to *member check* my work. I invited them to look over the draft I send them to ensure that I accurately communicated their voice within the study. Many participants stated that they looked forward to reading over the report.

Reflection papers. In addition to the interview, each participant provided one reflection paper they thought represented their learning within the IIRP. Each participant was asked to self-select a reflection paper that they had already completed as part of their graduate course work at the IIRP and submit it to me as their document for review. Participants' reflection papers were tracked in an Excel spreadsheet. Three participants provided the reflection paper in

hard copy at the time of the interview. Ten participants provided via email the reflection paper

shortly after the interview. Two participants needed several reminders to send their papers.

Most papers were four to six pages long and provided insight into how a student processed the

course material and how the learning experience impacted the student's thinking and practice.

The reflection paper assignments ask students to write about the course readings, class

experiences and how both of these affect their thinking and practice (International Institute for

Restorative Practices, n.d.)

        Survey. The quantitative method included the collection of participants' Course

Improvement Survey question forms that were completed at the end of each class. After review,

three questions were chosen for collection and analysis that were relational and participatory in

nature. Participants completed surveys over multiple semesters, which were archived by student

numbers. Since each survey completed has a student number on the survey form, these were not

anonymous surveys; therefore, I accessed the IIRP student database and was able to extract the

survey data.

        The Course Improvement Survey allowed students to comment on their experiences in a

particular course and provide feedback to the institution and professor. The three questions

chosen for data collection and analysis on the Course Improvement Survey include: attitude of

professor towards student, level of discussion during class, and in-class activities. Each question

has multiple possible responses as well as multiple combinations of responses. The first level

question is answered by the student with one response expected between the choices of

commendable, adequate or needs improvement. There are additional responses that provide

more detail to this primary response that provides both supportive and constructive criticisms

about the course. Since there are several possible responses, all of them were downloaded and

analyzed. There is also a place on the forms where students can include additional comments entitled "other". Comments from this section are also included in the data. Both primary and optional responses were extracted from the database into an Excel spreadsheet with 81 columns of information.

The Excel spreadsheet columns represent the participant, the course number, the semester the survey was taken, the primary response to the question (commendable, adequate, needs improvement) and the sub-responses to each question. Sub-responses to primary questions included nine to twelve options as supplemental information to describe the primary question. In order to make the primary and sub-responses easier to tabulate in SPSS, each response represented its own column with a number one showing a positive response to that choice. For example, in the first column next to the written response of commendable, there were three columns that represent the possible responses. In the column labeled commendable, a number one would be put in that column, but for the "adequate" and "needs improvement" columns the cell would be left empty. This process continued throughout the spreadsheet with any positive responses coded with a number one. If there was no response to a question the Excel cell was left blank.

These data collection procedures will ensure the necessary information is available for analysis. Sample, qualitative and quantitative data will be used in order to inform the research question.

Analysis of Data

I started to reflect on the data that was being presented during and after each interview. Patton (2002) discusses this phenomenon of engaging with the data as it is presented and believes it adds to the flexibility and authenticity of qualitative research. He continues to state

that a researcher can change or adapt the questions or field study as things may change from when the researcher initially proposed the study to actually carrying it out as new information emerges.

Interviews. The participants' demographic surveys were tabulated in a frequency table in order to describe the sample population (see appendix D). Gender was counted into male or female categories. Race was counted from the following response choices: African American, Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Latino, Multiracial, Pacific Islander or other. To describe where people live, the question asked for their current state of residence. The participants were also asked to provide their current profession and the highest level of education completed including their graduate credits at the IIRP. In addition, from the participant Excel spreadsheet, the number of courses taken was tabulated to include students who had earned between 12-20 credits, 21-30 credits, or alumni. Participants were placed in one of these three categories.

After each interview was conducted, the audiotape of the interview was dropped off to the typist for transcription. A discussion occurred before the transcriptions began with the typist in order to outline what was expected. What was unique for the typist is that the conversations needed to be transcribed exactly as they were said, without editing for grammar and proper English, as she is accustomed. If she did not understand the word after rewinding once, she would type a "?" within the text. Punctuation, grammar, and flow did not matter for these transcriptions, only that the transcriptions represented the exact words of the interview.

Once the transcriptions were completed, they were sent via email in Word format to my secure email account. To ensure accuracy of transcriptions, once the audiotapes were returned, I

listened to segments of the interviews of each tape. The transcriptions were recorded accurately. The interviews were then printed out in order to review them and conduct the analysis.

When conducting the interviews, I became aware of possible themes and patterns that were developing, however the interview transcriptions were not read until after they were all completed. As Creswell (2003) states, reading through all the data to get a general sense of the information is the first step of reviewing qualitative data. The interview transcriptions were read in entirety in order to gain a general sense of the data as Creswell suggests. The second time they were read, I started to underline statements that discussed specific examples of learning occurrences. The focus of this exercise was to pull segments and words that discussed the learner's experience. Reference to course content review of restorative practices, or statements about their enjoyment of the course were not included. Areas of feeling and emotion were highlighted along with expressions of how the participant thought or learned. In order to connect the data to the research question, I followed Creswell's (2003) and Patton's (2002) process of isolating statements that are meaningful to the original inquiry.

The next level of analysis included looking at the underlined statements to see if any themes emerged. From the literature review and the pilot study conducted for this study, general themes were used as category labels. These categories were not permanent, but rather a starting point to code information. If a category needed to be altered or added to, additional labels were created to explain the data. Categories that were originally used were reflection, experience, practice, engagement, conflict, and other. These categories were also the basic foundations for question development.

As categories developed or changed, a new category name was created by utilizing language actually used by the participants (Creswell, 2003). For example, the category "practice"

became "implementation and practice." Narrative descriptions were created through the use of participants' experiences. Barbour (2008) discusses the need to capture data in the larger categories where the intent is "nested." He continues by offering a warning that coding systems can become extremely complex including multiple sublevels of categories that ultimately confuses the original intent of the study. From this feedback, a more general approach was taken to code data into categories.

After reading and rereading the interview transcriptions, I began to pull out the underlined statements to see if patterns started to emerge. Patterns of similar concepts and participant reports of how they experienced learning were placed together. After these statements were placed together, a more thorough analysis of category labeling was completed. Categories for this research project were adjusted from the original list and became: REFLECTION, PAST EXERIENCE, IMPLEMENTATION/PRACTICE, PARTICIPATORY LEARNING, CHALLENGES AND CONFLICT, UNEXPECTED LEARNING, PERSONAL GROWTH, and OTHER. The "other" category was created in order to place statements or ideas that did not fit into named categories, but seemed to have significance in the participant's experience. Having an "other" category was useful for helping to avoid staying stuck and moving on with the analysis, in order to come back to it at a later time. It offered some objectivity and perspective.

Reflective thoughts included times when participants discussed how they were thinking about topics or how they came to create learning though new information. Their thoughts about meaningful moments that changed frames of mind were noted. For example, several students discussed a long ride home after class where they would think about the things they learned and how that challenged them to think in different ways than before.

When participants discussed how they responded to situations before taking IIRP classes or ways they thought in the past, these statements were coded as past experience. Participants would discuss how they would run a classroom in previous years or how they engaged with a student before learning about restorative practices. Some participants discussed their past actions in certain circumstances compared to new learning experiences within IIRP. Participants' descriptions of this comparison or discussions of prior experience as it impacts current learning were coded as "past experience."

If participants discussed how they implemented or practiced restorative practices in their professional career or within their daily life, this would be coded as "implementing/practice." One of the questions asks if the participants implemented any restorative practices and, many times, they were asked to provide an example. If their response included a specific example of actual implementation, these statements would be coded as implementation/practice.

Many participants discussed how sitting in circles and participating in role-plays added to their learning experiences. The category name changed from "engaged in learning" to "participatory learning" to include those times of participant engagement, but to also include times of participant statements that discussed active learning. When participants described their experiences as participating in projects, small groups, large groups or role-plays, they were coded as participatory learning.

An interview question asked participants about experiencing conflict during their experience at the IIRP. Conflict was interpreted in many different ways, including conflict with course content to issues about a grade given for a course. There was intentional vagueness in this question to allow the participant to define and describe their conflict and how they handled it. Some participants stated that they did not experience any conflict or asked to return to this

question later. When a participant did discuss challenges and conflicts, these statements were coded as "challenges and conflict."

Participants discussed surprise or times that they did not expect to learn something. Many times it was a certain concept such as Goleman's (2006) emotional intelligence. Some did not realize that there could be other intelligences. When a student discussed this unexpected experience or surprise, it was coded as "unexpected learning."

Participants shared intimate situations that occurred for them during the learning process at the IIRP. The personal and emotional situations discussed within the context of learning at the IIRP were coded as "personal growth." Most of the statements recorded in this category described a growth experience relating to listening and "witnessing" others' trauma. An influential class that stuck out for many participants was a core class for all students called Foundations for Responding to Harm. In this class, participants described their experience of learning how to truly listen to others and finding ways to support them without adding their own experience or advice. They described compassionate witnessing as a structured process where students are separated into groups and each student takes a turn: sharing about a time of adversity in their life (sharer), facilitating the conversation (interviewer) and observing the process while having a time to have a conversation about what they witnessed in the sharing with the other observers (observers). The focus is on the sharer as they tell their story and the interviewer asks more questions to help understand the situation while the observers listen intently and discuss what they heard (see appendix A for more information about compassionate witnessing). Participants described these activities and experience as life changing or discussed how it impacted them personally. Statements that described personal growth were labeled within the personal growth category.

When students described something that was meaningful to them, but the statement did not fit into any categories, it was labeled "other." These statements were reread again after a week to see if these statements had any significance or fit within another theme. Most of the statements were abstract thoughts. For example, a participant described her boss's personality traits and how that influences her at times. This seemed meaningful to the participant, but she stated it did not impact her thinking or implementation of restorative practices.

Reflection papers. After reading through the interviews, understanding the themes and creating categories, I began analysis of the reflection papers. The categories and protocols used in the interview analysis were also used for analysis of the reflection papers. Each participant chose one reflection paper to submit for content analysis (Patton, 2002). I read through each of the papers to understand the information more generally. The second time I read through the information, I began underlining and identifying categories. For each category, the same process and definitions were used as with the interviews. The third read through was to ensure the statements and segments matched the category assigned. Once the initial overall reading analysis was completed, statements were pulled, identified and matched with other like themes. Statements were coded to ensure the category and supporting statements matched. The same categories for interviews were proven to be effective in the reflection paper analysis as well. Interview transcriptions and reflection papers were read multiple times as a whole and as individual underlined statements. Every document was read a minimum of ten times throughout the analysis process.

Surveys. The survey responses to the IIRP Course Improvement Forms were placed in SPSS in numeric form. Salkind (2008) provided the procedure and process to calculate frequencies of responses. Question choices were labeled as variables within SPSS. The three

questions were listed as "Q1, Q2 and Q3." After each lead heading (e.g. Q1), the list of possible

sub-responses was listed as additional variables. Each possible response for lead responses and

sub-responses were coded with either a number one representing a response to the question or a

blank for non-response. The responses and non-responses were tabulated through SPSS analysis

function. The function for analysis consisted of a descriptive statistical function as step one and

frequency tabulation as step two. Since the responses were not numeric scores or a range of

numbers, mean and standard deviation were not calculated. Output of the analysis included total

possible responses, number of responses, number of non-responses and percentage compared to

total possible responses.

Interviews, papers and surveys combined. So far, the data sources had been analyzed

independently of one another. The final stage of analysis was to look at the data together. Patton

(2002) states that when a researcher is working with multiple forms of data, creating ways to

understand the relationship or non-relationship is critical to interpreting the meaning. Through

this mixed methods approach, the interviews and reflection papers were the primary focus of the

design. Analysis consisted of identifying whether common themes were present in both the

interviews and in the reflection papers. The quantitative data from the institutional surveys

provided supplementary data to provide students' perspectives of the courses at the time they

enrolled in the class. Creswell (2003) states that within a concurrent design, as in this study, the

two forms of data (e.g. qualitative and quantitative) "seek convergence among results" (p. 222).

Creswell suggests that the use of quantitative and qualitative can enhance the inquiry and provide

meaning from different sources. The analysis of the data sources combined looked for common

patterns and outlier data to interpret any possible meaning.

Credibility and quality. Research protocols and procedures were investigated in order to approach the research question through doctorial coursework. After spending two years exploring the possible protocols and procedures to approach this study, a mixed methods approach was chosen because the research question was of an exploratory nature and this approach aligned with my pragmatic worldview. The area that needed development within this study was creating interview questions that participants would be asked during the interview process. A multi-month pilot project ensued that targeted question development with IIRP student focus groups. Interview questions were field-tested with these groups and videotaped for review. Two outside reviewers provided feedback as to interview style, questions asked and possible changes to the interview process. These experiences were included in the development of this dissertation study and added to the credibility and quality of this study.

During the qualitative data collection, rich information was collected that focused on the learning narratives of participants. Core questions allowed for consistency in data, but the secondary questions are what allowed for depth of experiences. Secondary question examples include: "tell me more about that" or "can you provide me with an example of what you are explaining?" I allowed space for participants to explore and articulate what was important to them as a learner while I encouraged their sharing in an affirming and non-judgmental style. For example, some participants spoke freely of their challenges with course information. Though I may have known the answer or could have provided some insight, I choose to listen without comment.

An outside auditor was utilized in order to increase credibility of this study. He was a person with no affiliation with the IIRP or any of the organizations associated with the graduate school. This auditor has a PhD in Sociology and is familiar with Patton's (2002) and Creswell's

(2003) protocols and procedures for mixed method approaches. This auditor has limited knowledge of restorative practices, but is a licensed social worker and educator who is knowledgeable about the content and language used. Confidential copies of statements and underlined phrases were sent to the auditor via email with a list of the categories and descriptions of each. A sample of reflection papers was provided to the auditor that were labeled and coded with categories. The auditor was asked to review the categories and the content to see if he agreed with the data categorization, the names of the categories and whether there were any missing statements that should be part of the analysis. None of the quantitative survey data were sent to the auditor since that analysis was descriptive in nature and used frequency tabulations.

The auditor provided feedback on the category development consisting of the category naming and the statements that went into each category. He specifically supported the creation of the personal growth category since it was a sub-theme found within the coding of a more general reflection category in the beginning of analysis. The auditor was available for discussions about analysis and returned sections of the analysis chapter with edits.

Member checking was used as a form to ensure that the results were written in the way that the participant intended (Patton, 2002). Participants were sent the presentation of findings section for their review. Participants were asked to read over the document and pay particular attention to their pseudonym areas and ensure that I represented their point of view and experiences accurately. Participants were given two-weeks to respond to the email; four participants responded with comments and clarifications that were incorporated in this study.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Findings

(Camden) I concluded course 530 with a deeper and richer awareness of restorative

practices as a way of being; a way of being present, being aware, and serving as a conduit

for change through healing and transformation for myself and others.

Introduction

The results from this study will be provided in this section. Each data source is presented

independently and then an analysis of the relationships between these data sources is provided.

This chapter is separated into five results sections including: sample, interview category results,

reflection paper category results, survey results, and three data sources combined for cross

analysis.

The initial section is to provide an overview of the sample and the students who chose to

participate in this study. The qualitative analysis section includes: results from the interviews

and reflection papers, paraphrased concepts from the participant interview transcriptions and

reflection papers, along with supporting participant quotes. Significant participant quoting is

included to capture participant's voices.

Sample

Figure five describes the sample population of this inquiry. The sample included 14

women and one man (93% female, 7% male). Eleven participants are Caucasian and four are

African American (73% Caucasian, 27% African American). The sample included students from

six different states in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern regions. At the time of the interviews,

participants identified their professions as educators (n=6), counselors/social workers (n=4),

attorney (n=1), nurse (n=1), occupational therapist (n=1), business owner (n=1), and

unemployed (n=1). Age ranges of participants included: 20-30 years old (n=1),

Figure 5 – Sample Population						
Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Employment	Age Range	IIRP Credits	Level of Education
AJ	Female	African American	Educator	61+	12	Master's plus 55 grad credits
Becky	Female	Caucasian	Case Manager	51-60	21	Bachelor's plus 21 grad credits
Bonnie	Female	Caucasian	Nurse	61+	30 (alumna)	Master's degree
Camden	Female	Caucasian	Attorney	41-50	18	J.D. plus 18 grad credits
Chelsea	Female	Caucasian	Counselor	31-40	30 (alumna)	2 master's degrees plus 30 grad credits
Christine	Female	Caucasian	Educator	41-50	24	Bachelor's plus 24 grad credits
Dino	Male	African American	Educator	61+	24	Master's degree plus 30 grad credits
Edie	Female	Caucasian	Educator	51-60	30 (alumna)	Master's degree
Jane	Female	Caucasian	Social Worker	51-60	21	Master's degree plus 41 grad credits
Juanita Rose	Female	African American	Educator	61+	12	Bachelor's plus 28 grad credits
Kisura	Female	African American	Occupational Therapist	51-60	27	Bachelor's plus 27 grad credits
Lauren	Female	Caucasian	Educator	20-30	12	Master's degree plus 12 grad credits
Patricia	Female	Caucasian	Counselor	31-40	33 (alumna)	2 master's degrees plus 20 grad credits
Sue	Female	Caucasian	Unemployed	41-50	18	Bachelor's plus 18 grad credits
Sunny	Female	Caucasian	Business Owner/Trainer	51-60	30 (alumna)	Master's degree plus 6 grad credits

31-40 years old (n=2), 41-50 years old (n=3), 51-60 years old (n=5), and 61 plus years old (n=4).

The participants were equally distributed into the category of total IIRP credits accrued. Five

students fell into the 12-20 credit range, five in the 21-30 credit range and five were categorized

as alumni of the IIRP. Eight participants have one master's degree, two have two master's

degrees and five have a bachelor's degree and multiple graduate credits as a measure of cumulative higher educational credits. Credits and degrees earned at the IIRP are included in these summaries.

Interview Categories

  Introduction. The following results represent data collected during interviews with fifteen participants. Interview transcripts were used as a main source of data description for pattern and theme analysis. Interviews consisted of face-to-face meetings where volunteering participants discussed their experiences and provided responses to semi-structured interview questions.

  Reflection. Reflective statements included participants' discussions of how they were thinking about what they had learned and how they were gaining understanding of the concepts. This category included many participant statements and was consolidated to include those statements that represented reflective thinking. Reflections that were discussed as personal change or past experiences became their own themed category and were coded as different themes. Statements in this section include the process of reflective thinking generally, along with reflection on content, restorative processes, educational system comparisons, and interpersonal dynamics.

  For example, Lauren (all names are pseudonyms) responded to a question by providing a dialogue that she had in her head about the Social Discipline Window (see appendix A or refer to p. 12 of the literature review for definition). Her reflective thoughts included: "…I want to figure out, am I doing that? Am I being restorative? Am I working 'with' them, or am I doing something 'to' them?" Lauren shared how she lived a distance from class and offered: "every

time I went to class I feel I learned something different and on the drive home… I would sit in silence in my car…and just keep thinking about the concepts."

Dino was a student who described the reflective papers as a way to coalesce the things he had learned in class compared to prior higher educational experiences. Dino stated: "…it gives me a chance to think about things and process information that I probably wouldn't even dwell on past the classroom time."

Bonnie was intrigued about learning the Compass of Shame, which is a construct that describes how people respond to external stimuli that impacts a person's *affect* and emotion (see appendix A for definition or literature review) (Nathanson, 1992). This content allowed her to rethink some circumstances in her life. "Learning about the Compass of Shame was very instrumental for me because I saw that when anything happened in my life, I always would attack myself, always blame myself for everything." Bonnie continued to describe how she was able to reframe things for herself and create an alternative story stating: "so I could look at my life as a different story than what I had perceived my life to be."

Sunny discussed how the exercises within the class offered opportunities for reflection. Sunny, too, described the Compass of Shame, and recalled how the exercises within the class were reflective. She remembered an exercise that asked students "to think back to an example of when you reacted with shame, how did you react, who were they, did you always react the same way to the same people, or you might have reacted in different ways?" Sunny remembered how this exercise prompted her to think about others in her life and when having certain feelings how she might respond. She described how these personal exercises were helpful to her learning and challenged some of her previous thinking regarding the concept of shame.

Reflective statements became apparent when participants discussed their learning in terms of comparisons. AJ was a participant who has been in the education field for over four decades. AJ had experienced several educational initiatives and new philosophies throughout a long career. What AJ described as reflective thoughts were comparisons to prior learning. "…but in this graduate school you were allowed to really put your feelings in writing and reflect on what you are really thinking whether it's right or wrong." AJ discussed how some of the readings were provocative stating: "readings made you think and made you rethink how you think. Thinking how you think helps me draw upon feeling and emotion and now I have a little more wisdom with me now."

When students looked back to past learning experiences, the category of reflection blended in with past experience. Some statements were difficult to separate into clear categories, however, when a person discussed his or her past experience with an active example of past behavior, the statement was coded in the past experience category. When a participant discussed learning in the context of thinking and challenging their prior knowledge this was coded as a reflective thought.

Juanita Rose reflected on when she first entered the classroom as a new teacher. She thought she was ready to teach, but stated she was ill prepared for dealing with students' behavior. "…for one, I don't think any of them [educational classes] prepared me for being in the classes. They didn't prepare you for classroom control, classroom climate, classroom environment." She continued to discuss how it was difficult when she first started teaching 25 years ago. "Sink or swim. This is the way it goes. As I said here at the IIRP, I'm really learning how to work with people."

In a similar fashion, Christine offered reflective thoughts regarding engaging others, but in a way that was not as explicit as she knows how to do now. She describes how reflection is "a way of organizing my thoughts and examining how I'm feeling and what I am thinking." Christine discussed the thinking and learning behind the possible use of circles within her setting (see appendix A or p. 2 for definition of restorative circles). She discussed how, through reflection, she began to understand some of her inner dynamics within circles at the IIRP and how important acceptance from others was to her. As a response to an interview question, Christine discussed her tendency to look for some acceptance from others, like professors. I asked for further clarification about that dynamic. Christine responded by stating that she had reflected about how important pleasing others had been. "I do think I have that people pleasing, authority pleasing sort of personality and I think it can serve me very well. Obviously it makes me a good employee; it makes me a good person to work with." Christine further described that through reflection she is creating a change in behavior and states: "I've come to that conclusion in a number of my reflections that I do need to use my voice more, worrying less about what other people are going to think about what I'm saying or what I'm writing."

Reflective thinking is evident by the participants' statements and narratives. Comparisons from prior learning to new learning challenged participants' current thinking and knowledge base. Habits of mind were challenged and new learning was apparent within the participants' narratives. Through this process, participants described the emergence of new perspectives.

Past experience. Participants discussed throughout the interviews how past experiences related to their learning. Both personal and professional experiences were shared connecting courses with to new learning. At times, the participants described how their perception of past

experiences changed as a result of learning about restorative practices. For example, Jane described an experience where she was in Papua New Guinea and there was a conflict in the village. The way that the tribal elders and community handled the conflict brought Jane to a core understanding of restorative practices. The harm was committed against the person; the direct stakeholders and the villagers were all involved in the resolution. Jane thought that this was a profound experience, but had not fully understood how meaningful it was to her learning until she began to understand Restorative Practices Theory. "…it gave a new meaning, a new depth of meaning to that experience that I witnessed."

Participants used examples to contrast past experiences. Sue described past learning experiences from the time when she was completing her bachelor's degree. She shared that most of the pedagogy involved professors who "talked at me." She described how she was passive in much of that experience. She described how she was passive in much of this experience, but very active and participated in the IIRP classroom exercises and experiences.

Becky described how she was a trainer within the military and how the process, protocols and procedures were extremely rigid. She described her IIRP experience as less formal and more interactive compared to her military experiences. "I spent about fifteen years of my time as a qualified [military] instructor and the whole idea was, you'll stand, you'll point, you'll say things in a certain way, you will not play with your pen, you will not."

Edie told of looking for an approach that aligned with the way she thought students should be treated. At a professional development day at another school site, she learned about restorative practices. Edie described this event as a turning point, and she wanted to learn more about restorative practices. She wanted to move away from using behavioral point sheets to assess students and instead found ways to engage her students. Edie talked about how giving or

taking away points for students' behaviors did not change behavior, but engaging students in circles and discussions helped build better relationships and changed students' behavior. Edie described how she mostly facilitated sequential and non-sequential types of circles (see appendix A for definition of restorative circles).

Lauren explained that her master's program in educational leadership was mostly about procedure and policy: "…classes were how to make a budget, a school schedule, and law, but none of it was really how to treat people, or talk to people, or help your staff or anything."

Dino also shared his IIRP experience in relation to prior higher education courses. "I think this learning experience was completely different from any I've ever encountered during my undergrad and graduate studies." Dino noted that the key difference at the IIRP was that instructors gave meaningful feedback as learning occurred.

Past experiences were compared to what participants currently know. Christine offered an example of a time when she was supervising people within a retail store and thought that she could have used restorative processes when dealing with staff. She discussed using better vocabulary to help staff resolve conflict by using the specific restorative questions that foster communication and a healthy exchange of emotions (Costello, et al., 2010) (see appendix A for a list of the restorative questions). "There were definitely times, especially when employees didn't get along, when there were clashes, that I wish I had known some of the principles that I know now to give them a chance to be able to talk it through, even simple knowing the restorative questions."

Becky conveyed her past experiences from a more personal standpoint, describing how some of her family members have been convicted of crimes and how that has shaped her

worldview. Becky has had times when people express extreme negative judgments about people who have been in jail, but she believes people have the ability to make things right.

> …having the idea that people can redeem themselves, that people are not pigeon holed as soon as they've made a mistake. I have family members who, like all of us, have made mistakes, and they didn't necessarily get another chance. And so, [restorative practices] really drew me in.

Becky further described how the concept of repairing harm while maintaining a human being's worth was important to her when choosing to come to the IIRP. She connected her past experiences to her current decision-making process.

For some respondents, past professional training contrasted with what they were leaning. For Jane, a social worker, her learning took a different path, as she initially thought that being a social worker was a disadvantage. Her first courses at IIRP were geared more towards educators and classroom settings. She had several educators as classmates, and Jane had never taken educational courses in the past. She chose the educational track to the IIRP program and, at first, compared herself to the other students stating: "I'm a social worker, so I felt at a slight, I don't want to say disadvantage, but I knew a lot less than they did, I had no experience with learning about teaching." What was interesting for her is that even though Jane teaches classes, her learning foundation was conceptually social work: "…though I have been teaching for twelve years…I really identify as a social worker, that's my heart, that's my passion."

Camden, a lawyer, found that Restorative Practices Theory provided a different way of thinking, one that went against her professional training.

Law school certainly teaches you to separate yourself from the process that's going on and be very disconnected and neutral, whereas this [restorative practices] is to engage in the process, be yourself, and you bring something to it that should be there.

Camden went on to describe how when she is involved in exercises in the IIRP classroom or is thinking about concepts, she will revert back to her original training. For her this was a struggle between past professional technique and new connected learning. "It's okay if you bring things up that may not go with your preconception, whereas lawyering you're not supposed to ever ask a question you don't know the answer to." Camden described how the criminal justice system is set up to decide guilt and innocence and to provide evidence towards fact. In contrast to this prior training, restorative practices is to create relationships and to encourage discussion.

Past experience, as a theme, was described with commitment to position or thinking. Participants expressed learning something new that conflicted or adjusted their thinking positions, as evidenced in the above examples. Prior professional training was challenged while participants talked about accepting a shift of engaging others and building relationships, which created Mezirow's (2000) disorienting dilemma especially for Camden. Participants shared personal situations that played a role in their thinking and how important those experiences are to a person's worldview.

Implementing/Practice. This category originally was titled practice, but because several of the participants used implementation in their vocabulary to describe their learning, the title was expanded to more accurately describe this category. Participants described specific restorative practices they have used in their work including: restorative circles, compass of shame, restorative questions, compassionate witnessing (a listening technique), and working with victims of crime (see appendix A and literature review for definitions of processes).

Participants implementing restorative practices in settings from secondary school classrooms to personal family meetings identified the use of circles as important.   Implementing sequential, non-sequential and fishbowl circles at their places of work was a common theme. Participants talked of creating ways to run circles in their working environments as part of projects or as a natural way to begin learning skills to facilitate circles. AJ described how fishbowl circles were implemented with staff in her workplace, an educational setting (see appendix A for definition of restorative circle for an explanation of fishbowl circle). The circles were facilitated to improve communication between staff about the secondary students and how effective teachers were at delivering the necessary educational services.

> …but more importantly we really put in circles here to give each other feedback. And the first thing is again, you got to model it. So I have allowed myself to have the teachers give me feedback in the circle.

AJ, an educational administrator, had the influence and ability to implement circles in order to help staff develop. Other participants implemented circles on a smaller scale. Chelsea, Sue, Lauren, and Dino all discussed using sequential circles within their classroom as a way to introduce content, as a check-in on class work, or as a check-out to determine how an educational exercise went, e.g. journaling exercise.

Lauren talked about the different types of circles she has implemented in her class, stating that she facilitates them at least two times a week. She reported that sequential circles allow for each member to take a turn in order around the circle giving everyone an opportunity to speak; non-sequential circles offer students an opportunity to volunteer to speak and depending on the topic she would utilize either.

I have that leadership and mentoring class and it's a class literally full of high school seniors wanting to be leaders. So I've taught them everything I know about restorative practices and to implement it in class, we do the circles sequential and non-sequential, they're getting better at the non-sequential and I use that as a discussion giving them a topic and then having them…I do sequential for like a check-in on where they are in their project, or how they are feeling about mentoring the middle school kids.

Sue described using a toy "frog" as a talking piece with preschoolers. She stated finding something fun to hold made the children want to be in the circle and hold the frog when it was their time to talk. The talking piece is used in a circle to identify the only person who should be speaking and is a visual reminder to others in the circle to remain quiet until they receive the talking piece (Costello et al., 2010).

Dino discussed using sequential circles in a special education class for older youth as part of a class project. He facilitated circles in another teacher's classroom and seemed to get interesting results. "I found they were late for school every day. They wouldn't come to first period class. When I started doing the circles they showed up on time."

Chelsea described her success of implementing classroom circles (sequential and non-sequential) based on the students' ages: "Good. It's very interesting. It's very different. The higher grade levels are the most challenging because they're not used to it [circles]."

Circles were also discussed in regards to engaging students emotionally. These types of circles are specific to the topic that could be causing people to feel uncomfortable and allow for each person to speak in a circle go-around about how they are feeling (sequential). The circle ends when everyone passes, which could be three go-around circles later. Edie described a

situation when a student brought a gun to school. She used a circle to discuss the impact of the situation and how students were feeling.

> I did have a kid bring a gun into my school one day and found out later it was in his backpack, which was in my room. When the kids found that out, they were a little spooked. We used a circle. We had already established the circle, we knew each other, we knew we could discuss things and we used the circle to get through that time.

Christine and Juanita Rose also discussed their experiences with circles, describing the therapeutic benefits of circles. Both of them described the process similarly, even though the circle participants were distinctly different. Christine described seventh graders and how sequential circles were facilitated that offered time for students to share what was on their minds, calling it "peer learning group." These experiences allowed students to gain a voice and get support from fellow classmates by allowing each one to speak in a circle that was not content oriented. Juanita Rose reported similar beneficial results working with homeless people seeking help and support through community based religious services stating: "…it's related to bible and scripture, but it is also based on just listening and talking, the things which restorative practices is really about, the listening to each other." Circles offered opportunities for students and circle participants to share their feelings, and participants in this study found the circle format helpful and productive.

Becky and Kisura implemented restorative practices with their families. They discussed the use of framing questions and empowering their children to express themselves in family meetings and discussions. Becky implemented family circles that included sequential and non-sequential circles, which offered opportunities that were not present before. Becky described how her son was able to take his time and offer feedback without feeling stress to fit-in his

opinions. The talking piece offered a structure for better communication, and they have continued their family circles even after the initial class project. Becky stated: "It's great and we just had a family meeting here not long ago. We'll say 'get the talking piece."

Kisura did not discuss implementing circles, but stated that her questions and the way she changed her interactions and parenting style were based on learning about restorative practices.

Restorative practices gave me strategies that helped me deal with my family, especially my children. I tried using restorative questions and statements and it helped me be a better parent. Now my son is ready to graduate college, and before restorative practices he was not doing anything as powerful and meaningful as actually finishing college.

Participants discussed using other specific restorative processes within their work. Jane described a serious incident at her school involving sexual assault of a female student. The police were involved and the offender also attended the school. The girl decided to not press charges, but Jane stated the student's need for some level of accountability. Jane and the police officer were both trained in restorative practices and they facilitated a restorative conference where all the stakeholders are brought together in order to begin to repair the harm. This scripted process allows the victim to express how they have been affected while the offender takes responsibility for their actions. Jane described getting extra support for this specific conference and thinking that it offered an opportunity for all who were affected to discuss their feelings. "We had police there to make sure she was safe and she knew she could leave at any time. The long and short of it, he went into treatment for sexual offenders, he took full responsibility." Jane expressed how this situation was an extreme example, but she felt that her training in restorative practices prepared her for such a difficult circumstance.

Implementing restorative practices can be as simple as reframing questions. Camden

described how the initial IIRP classes devoted significant time to the formulation and delivery of

questions. Specific ways to frame questions enhanced her way to gain critical information from

children. Restorative questions are framed in a strategic way that allows for more explanation

without blame. For example, to an offender the first question would be, "What Happened?" For

someone who has been affected by an offense, the first question would be: "What did you think

when you realized what happened?" (Costello et al., 2009). Camden stated:

> …as a Guardian Ad Litem, I interview children about issues of abuse and neglect, and
>
> where they want to be and that can be very tricky to get them to talk about what has
>
> happened as well as talk about where they might like to go in the future.

Implementing restorative processes were discussed from multiple points of view. These

perspectives ranged from implementing circles in classrooms to personal exchanges within the

family. Restorative circles and restorative questions seemed to dominant the discussions of

implementation. As stated in the literature review, hands on experiences seemed to add to

participants learning. In Kolb's (1984) terms, participants were gaining concrete experiences.

Processes were practical enough to implement within varied work settings and as projects.

Participatory learning. "Engaged in learning" was the initial category title, but the data

indicated that this area had more to do with interacting with classmates, conducting role-plays

and taking risks to create dialogue with professors. Taking an active part in learning was not

only discussed during the interview process, but was also mentioned at the last question when I

asked participants to add anything I may have missed. Several participants noted that having a

learning environment that was active and that expected high levels of participation enhanced

their learning. Sunny stated at the end of the interview: "We had a lot of experiential, hands on

opportunities, the opportunity to be in small groups and large groups, because that discussion is so powerful for people to be able to suddenly get where they're coming from."

Having the opportunity to discuss the different concepts with their classmates was expressed frequently. Becky described her experience as a response to, "what stands out for you," by describing the multiple opportunities to discuss issues: "…everyone gets input at least a couple times a day." Participating in groups was not always easy for Becky, but she shared how taking a risk in this environment was rewarding. She provided this response:

> …no one was dismissive of another's ideas, and normally I'm not a big group project
> person. I'm really more of an individual project person, but I was a little nervous about
> it, but it worked out fabulously. Everyone was very respectful. I think everyone did a
> little gate keeping, if one person wasn't participating as much, the others would draw
> them in.

Becky ended the interview by stating: "I think the fact that everyone is participating as fully as they wish to makes it a better learning environment for me, the fact that everyone has a chance to talk." Becky was quite vocal about how participation in the learning process was important to her.

Sunny, AJ, Patricia, Lauren, and Chelsea all described how participating in groups with their fellow students and professors allowed for needed dialogue in learning about restorative practices. They commented that the physical layout of the class was not in a traditional theater style classroom, but rather circles and groups set up for dialogue.

Chelsea responded to what stood out to her by stating: "As you went into class you went into a circle. You're not in rows; you're not at desks. You're joining the group."

Lauren described how she was able to participate in several classes in small group exercises that provided amble opportunities to express herself: "…and having small group discussions, I get more out of it because I can process it more. I'm not just after the grade, but I'm after the learning."

Patricia described some more emotional groups in class that provided opportunities for students to share. She said: "There was a structure of the circle that allowed for discussion of difficult topics. It requires the courage of all the students to share."

This framework for participatory learning was repeated by AJ: "They allowed us to teach ourselves. How they let us choose…develop group and teamwork…allowed us to work in small groups and establish relationships."

Sunny continued with this theme of engagement and participatory learning as well. Her response to the last question of "anything else that you want to discuss" was: "We had a lot of experiential, hands on opportunities, the opportunity to be in small groups and large groups, because that discussion is so powerful for people."

Lauren added a bit of a different perspective into how she perceived participatory learning and what it created. She commented on building community with each other and creating a larger network of restorative thinkers. She said:

> I think the idea of building community isn't something that you've really asked me about and I think it what's really important is that it's not just a classroom with students and a teacher, but it's the idea that the community gets built.

Acting out particular roles during class exercises seemed to resonate with some of the participants. One of the IIRP classes included students playing scripted roles as victim, offenders and family supporters. Participants described this experience as a way to gain a better

understanding for how people in that situation might feel or think. Christine provided some insight into this class and stated: "…the pedagogy of the role-plays within IIRP has been powerful, especially in the early stages when you're just learning about the concepts and how they might be applied." Furthermore, Sue described these experiences as: "The role-plays, interaction with fellow students, I think that I put that down on every one of my evaluations that thank God we have that because just having somebody talking at me doesn't really do it for me."

Edie summed it up by talking about the larger picture and discussed what it felt like to learn. She said: "It wasn't, let me teach you. It was come along with me and see what this can do. So, that's a whole different way of, that's a whole different dynamic." Participatory learning included several types of examples from small group class discussions to role-plays that were scripted to create a role effect to increase empathy for that particular situation. Participants expressed the interactive nature of class to be instrumental in their choice to continue taking classes. Interactive group learning is evident from the participant interviews and from a transformative learning perspective several participants described learning from other students rather than just a professor driven lecture.

Challenges and conflicts. A specific interview question was focused on participants' challenges while learning at the IIRP. The interview question was deliberately vague as to how participants defined and expressed their experiences so that their responses would not be led by any inferences within the question. Areas of conflict included: research courses, new projects, and leadership issues that related to internal and external situations.

Several students described times of conflict that related to course content. Challenging areas included a course that was research oriented and had components of math. For Chelsea, this class provided challenges that she did not experience in the other classes at the IIRP.

Chelsea expressed feeling uncomfortable and responded by asking for help from classmates and asking clarifying questions in class. For other participants, the course that included professional projects created internal conflict.

Dino expressed his content challenge while he was doing a project that involved facilitating sequential circles with a class that was unfamiliar to him. The project goal created anxiety and he was not sure how it would go without building prior rapport: "…and the conflict was I felt uncomfortable presenting with a group of kids that I really didn't have for classes."

Juanita Rose did not view herself as a leader and a course that was focused on leadership caused a learning challenge. She stated that,

> I had never considered myself a leader and in both those courses pushed me into leadership roles in term of instituting the projects that I did, in this case at the soup kitchen…I find myself doing things that a year ago, I never would have dreamed.

Kisura discussed this same course, but in the form of receiving feedback from her classmates. A circle format called Professional Learning Group (PLG) (Costello et al., 2010) structures project presentations followed by classmate feedback that focuses on listening and action planning. Kisura struggled with seeing the value of this process and became internally resistant stating: "That would be the PLG. I didn't want to do it. I didn't see even after I listened to everybody else do it, I listened and I didn't want to do it." When asked about how she resolved this conflict, Kisura talked about taking risks and learning to listen. She thought she would just pretend, and so she forced herself to talk with her PLG about a program she was pondering. She shared briefly, and from that experience she gained a list of ideas and support for how to sincerely attempt to be genuinely successful. Kisura described how surprised she was and ultimately that this is where she truly began to understand the value of others' feedback.

Christine offered a different example of conflict. At times, Christine felt guilty because, compared to the other IIRP students in class, her student population was not at-risk or difficult. Christine worked in a private educational setting with mostly privileged children. After hearing the many stories of the graduate students working with underprivileged children, youth, and probationers, Christine did not know if her problems or concerns fit with the class discussion. She explained:

> …so sometimes I feel almost guilty that my students don't endure the same trials and tribulations that other students do, so I think there might have been a little pull back on my part that I didn't want to share too much…I didn't want to present my challenges.

External conflicts occurred and seemed to manifest within interpersonal challenges. Participants described issues with professors and other students that were frustrating and caused discomfort. Edie told about a conflict with a professor who later left IIRP. She expressed: "She made me uncomfortable. I was not open in that class with her as I was in the others because I felt a little judged."

Other issues with professors included conflicts with grades and how the course could have been better. Bonnie discussed a paper and grade she was unhappy with and she asserted herself to resolve the issue with her advisor and the professor.

Jane did not feel comfortable writing her concerns in the course improvement form. Jane said: "…our classes are small and they [Course Improvement Forms] are not given in an anonymous way. We were unhappy with the class, but none of us felt comfortable and we even had a discussion before…we all lied." Jane expressed that this was early in the process and as she went further in the program she felt more comfortable sharing her concerns.

Other interpersonal issues arose between students. Sunny described her conflict as a personal learning experience triggered by frustration with a classmate who "talked to hear herself talk." Sunny challenged her own frustration and found better ways to listen without judgment. It was difficult for her and she described how she began to journal and write about her feelings and emotions as they pertained to her challenges.

Becky described that she felt uncomfortable with some classmates who "were very unfamiliar with the idea of how prison system works, how punishment works, how to respect an individual, even when the individual made a mistake." This conflict arose from some personal experiences and perspectives on people who commit crimes and should be given a chance to change. Some fellow students expressed that people should be punished and never given another chance.

Lack of engagement was an issue for Jane. She described a classmate who did not seem as engaged as the rest of the class. Jane stated that this student would keep herself physically removed from others and struggled to share with the group, which caused tension. These issues escalated into a confrontation between her fellow students and it did not go well from Jane's perspective. She said: "I was disappointed in my classmates in that, that they couldn't resolve it, even if they just agreed to disagree, whatever, but we needed to come to some resolutions."

Participants described challenges and times of conflict without much hesitation. Issues of authority, disagreements, interpersonal clashes and feedback were expressed. Participants discussed if and how issues were resolved and what precipitated the potential change, if at all. Challenges and conflicts are helpful to understand the learning experiences of participants and it is helpful to this study to understand these difficult times as well. According to Yalom (1995) conflict within group processes is seen as a positive sign of working through issues of confusion

or miscommunication for the social microcosm that is created through the group experience. Yalom believes conflict affords opportunities for learning and growth. Even though Yalom's perspective was from a group therapy model, many of the interpersonal challenges discussed in these interviews offer the participants these same opportunities.

Unexpected learning. Participants were asked to share anything that surprised them about the IIRP programs. Several times this prompted a response that described an unexpected or surprising situation, which included judgment or assumptions. Participants were asked to discuss their surprise as it related to their learning.

Christine responded by talking about a self-realization stating: "I was a little surprised that reflecting how I do judge other people…what I found myself doing was judging whether or not other people were similar to me and making assumptions." Through this realization, Christine reflected how, through the circles process and group activities, she found that even with very different backgrounds, there were some core similarities among classmates such as their dedication to young people.

Dino described his unexpected learning as understanding other types of intelligence within himself and stated: "I guess my biggest surprise was discovering that I possessed emotional intelligence and that I could be, on the surface, a person who was more caring and empathetic towards others." Dino went on to say that, through this learning, he did not need to continue in isolation and that learning could be shared with others.

Sunny had a similar experience when learning about motivational interviewing. From her prior experiences as a nurse, it always puzzled her why intelligent people still made the unhealthy choices that they made. According to Sunny, understanding motivational interviewing and the stages of change, which is an empowering counseling technique for clients to identify the

negative influences of issues such as addiction and find internal factors that motivate a person to make changes, helped come to terms with peoples' irrational decisions. Sunny explained that: "…it was a turning point for me. To begin to realize where people stood on, in terms of stage of motivation to change, and what we need to know as professionals."

In addition, Kisura also explained that she was surprised by other people's input and how they helped her learn. They offered her ideas and input that she had not thought of previously.

Bonnie was surprised by her own behavior. She was typically quiet in the beginning of a new experience and has been in other academic settings, but found that as she went along becoming more assertive and discussing issues in class provided for a better experience. Bonnie stated: "I was ready to talk, I was ready to share. So something happened between the first part where I didn't want to talk in circles, and when I came back I was ready to start sharing."

Becky, a caseworker, discussed how an IIRP class project affected and engaged her coworkers. She had asked them to support her project, to meet and discuss what she was doing. She was surprised by their willingness and interest in restorative practices: "…I was just struck, we met for breakfast one morning for our initial planning meeting, and I was just struck that they were so on-board with the ideas that were coming out of the IIRP."

At times, unexpected learning statements crept into the category of reflection. What became clear after the many times of reading these statements and with the feedback from the auditor, was that when a person described the situation as a surprise or unexpected thought, it was determined to be coded as unexpected learning.

Personal growth. This category emerged out of participants talking about their personal experiences related to learning. It was developed from the way the participants described personal times of change and how they articulated this experience. There were no specific

interview questions that prompted these personal responses; they simply surfaced organically. Many of the following statements are reflections of personal growth, but emerged as its own theme. Many of the following statements were originally coded as reflection, but several statements began to create a sub-theme of personal growth. The category was then separated into two themes of reflective thinking and a more specific category of personal growth.

Personal change statements were discussed in the context of classroom content. Camden and AJ described how the Foundations for Responding to Harm class provided an opportunity to look within. Camden stated: "…the Responding to Harm course caused me to look at my own issues of exposure to trauma and how that was impacting my daily life and how I interacted with others." AJ described this course as profoundly changing the way she listens to people and afforded her the opportunity to become a better listener not only for her students, but also for her family. Issues of abuse and trauma surfaced from her childhood. AJ stated that this course offered some healing of these events through connecting with others as part of the class experience.

Lauren described how understanding how to balance "control and support" (referring to the Social Discipline Window, p. 12) without being "mean" allowed for her true personality to show through. Lauren had a reaction to her new behavior and practice stating: "…so I feel like maybe I've kind of grasped the concept – people are saying I'm nice instead of them saying you're mean or intimidating – how people used to talk about me." She went on to describe how this personal growth afforded her the opportunity to build better relationships.

"The personal growth was probably the biggest thing, in retrospect, that was usually significant," Patricia stated in response to a question. She discussed how personal growth was a

key factor in motivating her to continue taking classes. It was more than just learning, it was also about exploring learning opportunities and personal growth as a lifelong learner.

Christine shared that what she learned impacted her family in a time of death. She told a story that included these statements:

I don't know if that is applicable because it wasn't a professional experience, it was a personal experience. But she [mother-in-law] was very ill when we were reading about compassionate witnessing, and just talking about these concepts of feeling empowered and aware versus unaware and disempowered, and I could literally see unfolding those roles in my family as my mother-in-law was dying.

Juanita Rose also followed with this personal theme where she decided to run a Family Group Decision Making Conference with her family around the issue of her will. She said: "I got my husband involved, I have six children and their spouses and we talked about it…we had a great discussion." This conversation and process lead to a plan for how to divide items among the family in the case of their death. She talked about how learning the processes and practicing them added to her comfort of dealing with difficult topics in an open way.

Chelsea and Kisura defined their personal growth as finding ways to be more sensitive to others. They both found that they needed to become more open to understanding different perspectives from other students. They discussed their growth in terms of actually listening and hearing what others had to say instead of jumping to conclusions.

Personal growth was not always easy as Sunny stated: "You have to kind of dig into yourself in order to be able to help others and you learned both of those things at the same time." This statement was in the context of learning about one self and learning how to help others.

Bonnie described her growth by looking at the past and comparing how she engaged other people at the IIRP: "…but I realized that I was shut down all my life from the time I started first grade and then I came here."

The above stories disclose the personal and emotional side of learning. Goleman (2006) would agree that these participants are exploring the emotional intelligence side of learning based on the description of experiences and how emotion, feelings and affects all were present. These statements described how participants became motivated to continue courses, run restorative processes with families and make positive changes in their interactions with those around them.

Other. During the interview process, there were times when the conversations diverged into areas that were not entirely relevant to the question. When a new question was asked, the interviewee often returned to sharing to relevant information. For example, one participant was asking about directions through Philadelphia. Although this brief exchange was about learning directions, it did not relate to learning at the IIRP. Some other examples included discussions around professions, hopes of retirement, what participants thought other students might have learned, and names and positions of co-workers.

Reflection Paper Categories

Introduction. The following results represent data collected through document review of the reflection papers. There were fifteen reflection papers that were analyzed. These documents were used as a main source of data description for pattern and theme analysis. Reflection papers were self-selected by the participants and represented six different courses.

Reflection. This category was filled with examples from the participants' papers. The assignment directs students to reflect and discuss what they have learned and how that learning has impacted thinking and practice.

Participants reflected mostly on their particular learning of the specific course since these were course-based papers. They shared a variety of reflections as to how the course impacted their thinking and practice. From the use of circles to becoming more aware of other people's trauma, participants discussed the impact on their thinking. AJ wrote that listening and compassionate witnessing has lead to a shift in her thinking stating, "I should receive a letter that states: How AJ has learned to listen humbly and without advice."

Witnessing as a concept also came up for Patricia as she reflected on coursework writing: While I felt I learned much in the early IIRP courses, I did not comprehend the depth of skill and knowledge needed to achieve positive results. For example, in course 530 [Foundations for Responding to Harm], I learned about and could describe Weingarten's (2003) four witnessing positions.

The four witnessing positions include observers of violent or traumatic events from positions of empowered and aware, not empowered and unaware, empowered and unaware and not empowered and aware (Weingarten, 2003). According to Weingarten, being empowered and aware is the healthiest position for an observer of trauma.

Christine commented on how restorative practices could be used to reduce conflict. She wrote: "Wherever conflict divides individuals or groups, the thoughtfully applied philosophy of restorative practices has the ability to reconnect them, creating relationships that are stronger than the ones that were broken and bonds where they have never existed."

Juanita Rose and Dino discussed how circles (sequential, non-sequential, fishbowl) impacted their thinking. Juanita Rose took a more global approach looking at today's educational system. She stated,

Circles used in the classroom from the beginning of the school year could help establish expectations, both behavioral and academic, as well as help develop respect, access understanding, check on feelings only to name a few of the many benefits.

Dino's reflection discussed how circles create bonds and provide opportunities for connections that may not have been there before.

Jane described bonds and interpersonal connections as well writing: "RP [restorative practices] is giving me an alternative way to see myself and others and it also helps me to gain a wider perspective on my interpersonal interactions."

Sue and Chelsea described perspective changes as it pertains to the justice system. Sue commented that, "things began to shift in my mind" and described the need to reintegrate offenders back into the community. Chelsea stated:

Several ideas that encompass my thoughts on restorative process include the rethinking of harsh, unsatisfying penalties on offenders as well as victims' right/need to express feelings and participate in the deliberation of appropriate consequences/sentencing, the use of restorative justice and fair process in everyday life, and the significance of actively engaging students in restorative preventive practices starting at a young age in the classroom setting.

Reflection papers included clear written statements and participants' view of their learning experiences. Their experiences were communicated through reflection that identified processes such as circles or witnessing. Conceptual thinking about systems and the need to

create change were described along with the need to create better relationships. Reflective

thinking in this data source was similar to the interviews, but written in a more explicit and

succinct way.

Past experience. Participants discussed how events and situations from their past

supported their learning in the IIRP courses. Many examples were specific to each participant's

discipline. For example, Lauren described dealing with conflict and angry students in an

alternative educational setting stating, "I deal with many angry students. When at-risk students

express their anger, it is difficult to deescalate their emotions."

Jane described her learning in relation to working as a social worker. When gaining

experience in working with those impacted by significant trauma, Jane described learning to

become a good listener without letting emotions take over. She wrote: "As a social worker, we

are taught to monitor our responses to individuals and situations. I am often very aware of the

reactions that go on inside my head and my body." When learning about how to "witness" other

peoples' trauma, these experiences helped support new learning.

Patricia wrote about how emotions in past situations could govern her decisions stating:

"In the past, I would always say that intense emotional expression can be a trigger for me."

Camden stated her experience as an attorney and the necessity to hear certain

information:

> I attempt to access the community and the whole person of the youth in addressing the
>
> issues, whether it be about child abuse or neglect, juvenile delinquency or family
>
> dysfunction and whether it appears in the court or alternative dispute resolution forum. I
>
> have believed that by taking the time to truly listen to the client and hear what they have
>
> to say, we can obtain answers to the problems, which lay before us.

Bonnie compared her learning with past emotional experiences within her family. She wrote about learning how to become more empowered to speak about what concerned her in a healthy way. "My role in the family, I identified with the 'lost child'. I felt like I was the scapegoat of the family. I learned that I was labeled a 'scapegoat' and that the anger and hostility was projected onto me." Bonnie continued to describe that from her past experiences she has become better at currently dealing with situations that create conflict for her.

Past experiences, as discussed in reflection papers, were rooted in emotion and personal feelings. Participants spoke of childhood roles and how emotion and trauma can play a part in our response as professionals. Finding new ways to deal with highly emotive times seems critical for some participants to do their jobs well. Times of anger or abuse calls for professionals to be ready to truly listen to the cues that others may be projecting. Participants shared the comparative views of past experiences with new learning.

Implementing/Practice. Since part of the reflective writing assignments is to discuss how their learning affects practice, participants described how they implemented different aspects of restorative practices in their particular setting. Implementation of restorative practices within these papers included engagment techniques, circles, and compassionate witnessing.

Sunny was writing about a course that included motivational interviewing stating:

I have personally used motivational interviewing techniques in both one-on-one session's with my staff as well as during staff retreats when program or employment changes needed to occur and I needed buy-in from the staff to not only understand, but to be committed to the changes.

For Lauren, including compassionate witnessing within her classroom was useful. She shared:

When students feel they can trust, I will listen to their story, I get to know my students better and can use this information to form stronger connections. I have found a bond between teacher and student that helps in classroom management, decreased stress, and increased learning.

Circles were a popular topic when describing how participants implemented restorative practices. AJ, Edie and Chelsea chose reflection papers that discussed how they implemented sequential, non-sequential and fishbowl circles. AJ explain: "When it comes to facilitating circles, I feel very confident in my skills. I can sense my audience becoming more relaxed and assured of themselves. I have presented more than a dozen workshops using circles."

Edie wrote that: "Once we established the routine of 'circling up' I no longer felt the need to be in charge of when and why we convened. The students often knew when they wanted to talk and what direction they wanted the conversation to go."

Chelsea stated:

I plan on integrating circles at the counseling level (starting this week with a preventive drug and alcohol circle and student/teacher conferences to address issues such as miscommunication and students not feeling protected in the classroom) and will encourage teachers to practice using circles with their students.

Camden described an exercise that helped her identify anger and gain awareness of the physical symptoms associated with anger. Camden tried this exercise with clients she works with, stating:

I have shared this exercise at a group home where one of my youth resides and was quite impressed with the impact of the physical aspect of this exercise and how it triggered

awareness in the youth and his housemates around the nature of their anger and how exhausting it can be to carry it.

Jane told of a situation where she engaged other co-workers in order to create a more collaborative effort. This was in response to issues surrounding students' misbehavior in class and feeling as though teachers were not getting what they needed. Jane implemented a plan explaining:

> I brainstormed with another colleague what we, as union members, could do to support others. We worked together to come up with a proposal to the union on how to build community and show true caring and support for one another."

Implementing restorative practices at the participants' places of work was the overwhelming example written about in the reflection papers. Circles were the most discussed and were described in different formats. Edie and AJ both spoke of circles in educational environments while Chelsea spoke of prevention oriented counseling circle. Participants engaged others in restorative practices processes through projects and practice.

Participatory learning. When participants wrote about their experiences of engaging and participating in learning at the IIRP, it was coded as "participatory learning." Engaging with others in circles, groups and role-plays provided most of the examples in this category. Christine provides an example of how, in an introductory course, she was surprised at how much she felt engaged stating: "I was also impressed by the relationships I formed with my fellow classmates over the span of just two days."

Dino discussed the underlying anxiety of starting a new class with people he may not know. He discussed how the relationships that he built through different small group exercises helped him continue his course work. Dino wrote, "I knew all but three of them. We

immediately reestablished our old bonds by the time the first check-in circle was completed. It was as though we had never been separated." The circle process became familiar to Dino and he welcomed reconnecting with his classmates, while being open to meeting new classmates.

Chelsea also described how the circle process enhanced her experience. She explained that:

> Our in class experience helped us take responsibility (everyone's opinions/feelings were heard as we went around the circle), allowed quiet voices to be heard and leaders to emerge, explored issues on a deeper level, allowed people to learn about each other and build relationships, and encouraged constructive problem solving and exposed us to techniques for facilitating classroom circles using different scenarios.

Patricia and Sue described how role-plays engaged them in the learning process. Patricia wrote: "In the class family role-plays, it was easier to grasp what might contribute to the growth and stability of the family system when the 'structure and sub-system, hierarchies and boundaries' were apparent."

Sue stated: "During the final role-play, I was the third grade sister of the offender who sprayed the mace in school." Both Patricia and Sue explained how the interactive role-plays enhanced their learning, as they were able to experience the actual process, even if it was acting.

As in the interview data, circles (sequential, non-sequential, fishbowl) and role-plays were common examples of participatory learning in the reflection papers. Participants described how feeling connected to other students was important to their learning.

Challenges and conflicts. Narratives of conflicts and challenges seemed to have two themes, the first was interpersonal issues between classmates and the other was dealing with co-

worker conflict. The themes were described in the context of dealing with conflict or frustration and what challenged them inside and outside of the classroom.

Bonnie described an issue with a classmate and the struggle with the classroom dynamics between the professor, the classmate and herself stating: "I felt like the teacher was taking sides with the classmate who was constantly interrupting and dominating the class by talking so much."

Becky and Christine struggled with certain perspectives that were shared that did not align with their beliefs, creating internal conflict. Becky wrote about a moment that struck her about how emotional intelligence was being interpreted and what professions should utilize this theory. She explained by stating: "…it [emotional intelligence] is important in education, but not in another work area in which the workers were easily replaceable. There was a time when these comments would have stunned and upset me."

Christine's experiences related to connections to classmates, beliefs and compatibility. She shared:

> So, for me, conflicts did arise. There were people who I felt connections to, but there
> were others whose lives seemed relatively foreign to me. Although I have lived in
> diverse, urban areas as an adult, as a child I grew up comfortably and naively, in a small
> college town with very little crime.

Jane and Kisura discussed experiencing conflict with others in their workplace. Within the reflection papers, they wrote that with gaining a new perspective they approached the conflict a bit differently than they might have before learning about restorative practices. Jane wrote: "One of the individuals who has been a target of my anger is the Human Resources Director for

our school district. She has not only been disrespectful to me but has really been hurtful to many of my friends." Jane described a way to engage this person to find better ways to work together.

Kisura described the challenge of creating classrooms conducive to learning for physically disabled students as the occupational therapist. She explained:

> One of my teachers seemed to prefer having a special needs student sit in the back of her class, likely so that she could focus on teaching the students most capable of paying attention to her Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) curriculum. I have one other student in her class, who was also seated at an adapted desk, again in the back of the classroom.

Kisura engaged this teacher in a way that confronted the classroom design decisions, but did it in a way that was non-attacking. She worked "with" (referring to the Social Discipline Window) the teacher to create a better plan for the classroom that took into account the needs of all the students.

Lauren expressed her initial concern with the compassionate witnessing exercise. She described the exercise as: a student shares a situation or traumatic event that they have experienced while other students listen to the experience and ask empathetic questions to better understand the situation. Two other students sit quietly, observing the exchange between the person speaking about the experience and the person listening. Everyone is given an opportunity to play back what he or she witnessed in this exercise specific to the person who experienced the trauma. The experiences are kept confidential but things like family death, injury, violence or crime could all be examples of what persons might share. Lauren expressed: "Witnessing these traumatic events in the compassionate witnessing exercise initially made me uncomfortable, but as we completed more sessions, I realized the power this activity had for the person sharing."

Areas of conflict were freely written about just as they were discussed in the interviews. Participants described their challenges with co-workers and dealing with difficult situations. Kisura discussed ways to get the needs of her clients met while confronting an unsupportive perspective of classroom physical space. Also found in these narratives is a sense of empowerment to deal with the issues directly rather than just complaining about them. Issues between classmates were discussed as a conflict between belief systems and worldviews. Since people are discussing issues and opinions that affect others within the classrooms, participants spoke of people respecting each other's point of view.

Unexpected learning. This theme was not as prevalent as the other categories within the document review. When coding, statements that discussed surprise or a discovery of learning that was not intended were the focus. Dino expressed his disbelief of being perceived as a leader even after many years of experience as a teacher. He wrote: "It intrigued me to discover that I too can become a leader. From the readings about what makes a leader, I learned that helping others to find their potential is an important part of the process."

Kisura found surprise in a project she was conducting related to physical movement and learning. Her results conflicted with what she expected, She stated: "I expected that we should get immediate confirmation that movement positively impacts learning. Instead, we got tired." Kisura continued to discuss her learning in that it may take time for movement to work up to creating more energy rather than creating exhaustion.

Sue's experience was in response to the role-plays in the conferencing course. She was surprised by the people playing the roles, that they exhibited so much emotion during the exercise. During a debriefing process, Sue heard that people were actually feeling emotions such

as shame. Sue wrote: "I was surprised to see the offender and the victim and their respective supporters actually feeling so much emotion."

Surprise of learning was not as prevalent as seen in the interview data. This might be due to the reflection papers were thought out and sent as an assignment while interviews were in the moment. Participants seem to be looking at learning with openness as a consistent theme.

Personal growth. Within the reflection papers, participants commented on their changes in thinking and ways that they grew as a person. Even though the reflection paper assignment does not ask for personal growth experiences, the narratives included personal growth themes. Some papers simply made mention of students' personal growth experiences, while others spent significant portions of their reflections discussing these issues.

Sunny and Lauren discussed the way that their personal growth experiences affected them, but also included their impact on others. Sunny wrote: "The more I can accept and meet others where they are, the more I can support them and provide a sense of hope."

Lauren ended her paper stating: "…I hope to improve my personal relationships and become a person students can come to when they need a nonjudgmental ear."

AJ and Chelsea framed their personal growth in terms of becoming assertive in order to provide feedback. AJ, an education administrator, described it as: "I am giving more feedback to people than ever before. It is like I have this freedom to express myself by letting others know how not to hurt my feelings. It is quite refreshing with my staff."

Chelsea discussed it in the context of the classroom stating: "On a personal level as a quiet voice, I felt empowered to express my thoughts in a circle and found that others were very much interested in hearing what I had to say."

Camden described learning about her needs when something hurtful happens to her from past experiences to current realizations. She stated in the beginning of a story that: "I am aware that my reaction is often outside of the norm due to my experiences of abuse and neglect; however, I was not aware of the normalcy of my behavior." Camden used her broken foot as a metaphor for meeting her emotional and physical needs, which led to broader understanding of how harm has played a role in her life. She wrote: "The broken foot served as a catalyst for sharing and trusting in others and having appropriate responses to my needs."

Patricia wrote in several areas about her personal growth throughout her reflection paper and she offered a summary of her perception stating:

> As I stated in previous reflection papers, I think the skills I have learned at IIRP make me so much better at facilitating restorative practices in my life. The courses I have experienced thus far incorporate so many elements that foster the building of relationships, seeking to develop collaborative approaches, seeking to reflect upon and gain greater insights into events and awareness of systems.

Jane was explicit in her writing about creating personal change. She wrote about how professional and personal learning cannot be separated and experienced growth as being more holistic. Jane wrote:

> When I change myself, I change both my personal life and my professional self. To think that the two could remain independent would be ludicrous. I carry my thinking and my behavior into every aspect of my life. These changes affect how I am in my personal environment and I in turn, affect the environment and people around me.

Again, personal growth in both the interviews and reflection papers are vivid and emotionally charged. Participants describe transformations from one perspective to another

relating directly to restorative practices. The theme of reflection with the further sub-theme of personal growth is evident in this data.

Other. Within the reflection papers, the other category covers a vast amount of information. The reflection papers included theory and summaries of concepts learned in class. Information was cited regarding readings and discussions that did not pertain to the individual student. Summaries of the Restorative Practices Theory and constructs were included in the papers, but did not pertain to the participants' experiences. These sections were not included in the analysis.

Survey Results

Introduction. Participants from this study filled out a total of 185 surveys. These surveys were completed at the end of each class as part of the IIRP institutional course improvement data collection. All surveys used in this study were completed prior to starting this research and were archived in a database. The following provides frequency statistics of the main questions and the sub-questions to each of the three questions chosen for analysis.

The three questions chosen for data collection and analysis from the Course Improvement Survey included: attitude of professor towards student, level of discussion during class, and in-class activities.

Survey results. Responses to number one main question (attitude of professor towards student) were significantly positive (92%). Participant responses checked "commendable" totaled 170 of 185 possible choices. Of the remaining 15 responses, 10 were "adequate" and one was "needs improvement" (see Table 1). Four responses were not completed. Similar results supported positive experiences of students in relation to the professors' attitude towards students

in the sub-responses. Tables 2 and 3 provide the supplementary information as to how

participants responded.

Table 1: Q1 – main question responses

		Q1 Attitude towards student -adequate	Q1 Attitude towards student - commendable	Q1 Attitude towards student - needs improvement
N	Valid	10	170	1
	Missing	175	15	184

Table 2: Q1 – sub-responses part 1

		personable and approachable	genuine interest in individual students	welcomes student involvement	attentive to diversity of student	other strengths?
N	Valid	168	159	160	139	25
	Missing	17	26	25	46	160

Table 3: Q1 – sub-responses part 2

		unwilling to provide indiv attention	little encouragement provided	unresponsive to student requests	other concerns?
N	Valid	0	0	2	1
	Missing	185	185	183	184

Question two main question (level of discussion during class) results reflected a

significant positive response that totaled 90% of the responses. Out of 185 possible responses to

this question, 167 responses commendable. For the remaining responses, 12 were adequate and

one response was needs improvement (see Table 4). Five responses were not completed for this

main question. As to the sub-responses, similar results supported positive experiences of

students in relation to class discussion. Tables 5 and 6 provide the supplementary information as

to how participants responded.

Table 4: Q2 – main question responses

		Q2 Discussion - adequate	Q2 Discussion - commendable	Q2 Discussion - needs improvement
N	Valid	12	167	1
	Missing	173	18	184

Table 5: Q2 – sub-responses part 1

		well managed	clearly stated goals	ample opportunities to ask questions	thorough follow up to student questions	good summaries by instructor	other strengths?
N	Valid	161	131	150	146	136	22
	Missing	24	54	35	39	49	163

Table 6: Q2 – sub-responses part 2

		too controlled	not controlled enough	unclear goals	unequal distribution of participation	too few opportunities to interact	contributions no always acknowledged	other concerns?
N	Valid	2	0	2	3	2	1	3
	Missing	183	185	183	182	183	184	182

Question three main question (in-class activities) results reflected a significant positive

response that totaled 89% of the responses. Out of 185 possible responses to this question, 164

responses were commendable. For the remaining

Table 7: Q3 – main question responses

		Q3 In-class activities - adequate	Q3 In-class activities - commendable	Q3 In-class activities - needs improvement
N	Valid	17	164	1
	Missing	168	21	184

responses, 17 were adequate and one response was needs improvement (see Table 7). Three

responses were not completed for this main question. Similar results in the sub-responses

supported positive experiences of students in relation to class discussion. Tables 8 and 9 provide

the supplementary information as to how participants responded.

Table 8: Q3 – sub-responses part 1

		well designed	engaging	good variety	clearly related to course goals	other strengths?
N	Valid	144	152	121	144	13
	Missing	41	33	64	41	172

Table 9: Q3 – sub-responses part 2

		too few	too many	some where a waste of time	unclear instructions	other concerns?
N	Valid	1	0	1	1	2
	Missing	184	185	184	184	183

Framing the responses from a combined perspective by categorizing the responses as positive, neutral and needs improvement creates a view of all the responses together. By combining the responses, including the main questions and sub-questions, the total number of responses equals 2,535. Of the 2,535 responses, 2,472 are considered to be positive,
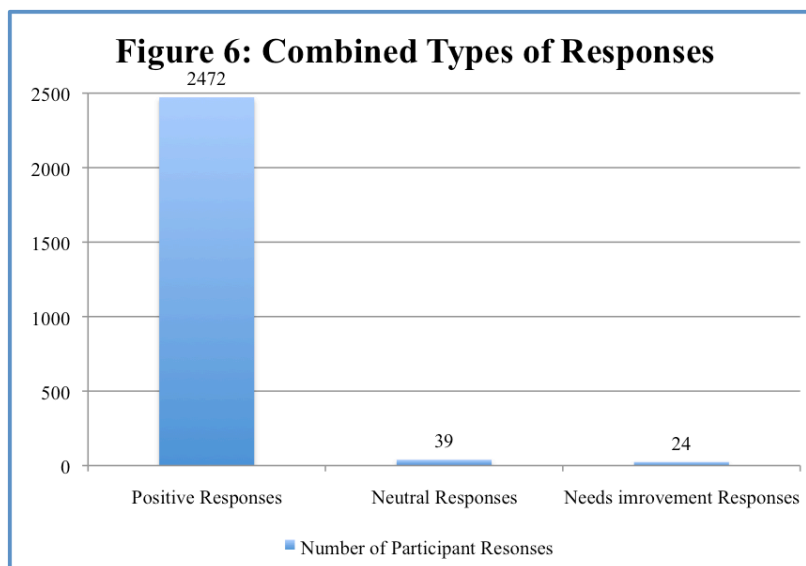

Figure 6: Combined Types of Responses

which is 97.5% of the overall responses (see Figure 6). It is also noteworthy to state that non-response is not calculated in this formula. The total possible opportunity for response to each question and sub-question equals 6,475.

Cross Analysis

When these results are looked at across the three data sources, including interview results, reflection paper results and survey results, are there any relationships that emerge? When focused on the qualitative data, patterns, themes and commonalities were found. The same themes used for interview analysis were useful for reflection paper analysis. Themes of reflection, past experience, practice/implementation, participatory learning, challenges and conflicts, unexpected learning, and personal growth were found in both qualitative data sources.

Narratives from both qualitative data sources (interviews and reflection papers) were similar in nature in each category. For example, just as these students indicated circles as an important aspect of their learning in the interview, this was also supported by their reflection papers including Lauren's use of circles in a high school setting expressed in the interview and Edie's reflection paper noting the use of circles in her special needs classroom.

Reflection as a positive way of learning was mirrored in both data sources. Participants described in the interview how thinking reflectively created opportunities for new learning. Reflection papers, by the very nature of the assignment, created a perspective on what has been learned and is conducive to reflective thinking regarding restorative processes.

The category "personal growth" had similar language and experiences between the interviews and reflection papers that discussed participants becoming better listeners, changing how they view the world, and having learned new skills. Many of these statements were reflective in nature as well, but had specific personal change language associated with the statement. Many of the narratives included themes of becoming a better person, creating more meaningful relationships, and implementing new thinking into family situations.

Similar language and experiences were also apparent in the "challenges and conflict" category. Participants described content challenges as well as interpersonal conflict. An

example of the similarities between the two data sources included disagreement between classmates or co-workers about certain perspectives or worldviews. Conflict was mostly identified as something that was internal but as resolved through a growth experience or an empowering motivator to express concern. Both interviews and reflection papers showed the importance of opportunities to discuss issues and describe how participants were thinking and feeling in the IIRP classrooms.

Within the categories of "participatory learning" and "unexpected learning," participants shared how they enjoyed making connections through discussion. Apparent in both qualitative data sources, participants described talking in circles and role-plays. Participants expressed in interviews and wrote in reflection papers that these opportunities supported learning and at times surprised students in the ways in which they learned new things about themselves.

The "other" category was of no consequence. There were no connecting themes within or between the two data sources. Aberrant statements both written and stated were noted, but they did not become or develop a completely new category. However, it was helpful that some statements were placed in this category until further analysis was completed to ensure proper coding.

For this analysis, quantitative data was used as a supplementary or secondary source of data to the qualitative sources. Survey data provided mostly supportive results of participants' experiences in IIRP classes. The significant amount of commendable responses indicates a relationship to the qualitative sources as to the positive learning experiences expressed in the interviews and reflection papers. Sub-questions on the surveys provided additional insight into what participants thought of the classes and areas they felt needed improvement. Survey results showed that there was a theme of engagement, opportunities for discussion, individual needs

accounted for and a variety of learning opportunities. These responses also supported similar language found in the narratives of students from the interviews and reflection papers.

Although rarely stated in the collected data, negative feelings or thoughts of needing significant course improvement were expressed. Connecting the Course Improvement Form data to the qualitative areas might be linked to certain leadership or interpersonal conflict. Within the interview data and some of the reflection papers expressed concern in relation to other students and struggles with professors. Edie discussed her feeling of discomfort with a certain past professor that could be linked the course needing significant improvement. Other interpersonal challenges between students not being fully engaged or taking over the discussion could have a direct correlation to the survey data report. From the interview data, participants felt comfortable sharing their concerns and challenges and the relationship the other two data sources confirm the participants' voices as to their experiences.

Summary

This study's findings were described in this section and each of the three data source's results provides a different perspective of participant experiences attending IIRP graduate courses. This chapter's results sections included: sample, interview category results, reflection paper category results, survey results, and three data sources combined for cross analysis.

The initial section provided an overview of the sample and the students who chose to participate in this study. The qualitative analysis section included results from the interviews and reflection papers that provided rich participant voice. The quantitative survey data provided supplemental information that counted the number of responses for each of the three chosen questions. Together, in a cross analysis, the data provides similar themes within the qualitative data and quantitative data offers insight into the qualitative data. This data has been presented in

a way that provides a format for interpretation that can start to link the presentation of the data to

what it all means in order to inform the research question.

Chapter 5

Interpretation of Findings

Introduction

This study explored how graduate students described their learning experiences in

relation to Restorative Practices Theory. It was important to provide an opportunity for students

studying restorative practices to express their perspectives directly in their own voices. The

learner's experience was captured in three different ways, which included interviews, document

review of their self-selected reflective papers and their course surveys. This study was intended

to inform the development of Restorative Practices Theory and to improve the teaching of the

theory so students will be able to understand and implement these processes.

The data collected in this study revealed the participants' perceptions of their individual

learning at the IIRP. Participants expressed what was important to them as learners, how they

processed the information, what stood out and described how their learning was implemented.

Sample Population

The sample population was an eclectic group that provided insight from multiple

viewpoints. It was interesting to have four participants over the age of 61 who are engaged in

graduate studies towards the end of their careers. These participants expressed their eagerness to

be life-long learners and their dedication to restorative practices as something that can really

make a difference in today's society, making this an important addition to adult learning

research. All participants expressed a sense of longing for our society to embrace restorative

practices in order to help the younger generations that so desperately need our support and

guidance. AJ, Dino and Juanita Rose, three participants, each with over 30 years of experience,

expressed their perspective from the educational trenches, working with urban youth. They

provided an insightful combination of passion and wisdom. All participants enthusiastically

supported restorative practices as a needed addition to the fabric of their communities in schools

and in their neighborhoods. This passion and commitment to create change could have been the

motivating factor for many of the participants to volunteer for this study so they could have their

voices heard, hoping that others would listen.

The diversity of the group both as individuals and as professionals was noteworthy.

Though a majority were educators (n=6), the additional non-educator group of nine people came

from varied professional backgrounds including law, counseling, nursing, occupational therapy

and social work. Thirteen of the fifteen participants worked with children in one capacity or

another. Even Camden, the one attorney, represents children in court cases who are potentially

abused or who are in the midst of custody decisions.

The sample of this study similarly represented the larger population of the Institute's

students with regards to gender and race. IIRP has a majority of women students, with a

population of 80.5% and 19.5% male, whereas the sample population represented 93% female,

7% male (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2010). IIRP's 2010 student population

included 37% African Americans and 41% Caucasians, with a notable high response category of

unspecified race at 19%. The sample population reflected a slightly lower number of African

American participants (27%) and an increased sample population of Caucasian participants

(73%). What was not typical of this sample is the number of people who were not from

Pennsylvania, where the institute is located. The IIRP 2010 statistics reflect 85.2% of students

have their primary residence in Pennsylvania, while 53% of the sample population are

Pennsylvania residents (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2010). This provided a

wide geographical area of student participants within this study including those living in Washington D.C., Virginia, Maine, New Jersey and Maryland.

Though not reflected in the demographic survey data, the diversity of the populations served by the participants was made clear in the interview and reflection paper analysis. Some participants worked in more urban areas dealing with struggling educational systems and other participants worked in higher socio-economic areas working with more privileged children. As Christine expressed in the interview, her group of children were not at-risk or defiant, but she was still motivated to find ways to create community through the use of restorative circles. Juanita Rose discussed extremely difficult situations in prior educational work settings and within her community. Issues of poverty, homelessness and drug abuse are all significant challenges to her implementation of restorative practices. What stood out in the responses was the perceived flexibility and practicality of restorative practices, and how they can be implemented in multiple sites, from a classroom to a soup kitchen.

Different reasons attracted the participants to IIRP and there was no consistent theme throughout the sample. Through the interview process, participants were asked about how they came to IIRP. Some, like Edie and AJ, had experienced prior professional development in the area of restorative practices and wanted to learn more through attending graduate classes. Edie even spoke of attending the first class with her daughter who decided not to continue, but she thought it was a great fit for her. Edie stated that her daughter was looking for a more traditional graduate program, which infers that they both considered the IIRP to be a non-traditional setting. At the time of entering the program, most of the participants received scholarships that greatly reduced the costs of the program. Some participants mentioned that the scholarship was an

initial motivator to come take the first courses, but the restorative practices philosophy and their feelings of connection to classmates is what kept them coming.

This participant group could be biased towards positive experiences at IIRP and not be fully representative of the greater population as the above percentages represent. However, their willingness to share both experiences related to strengths and challenges provided a realistic perspective of participants' experiences. They discussed both positive and negative reactions with emotion and passion and provided a vivid depiction of their experiences.

Interpretation of the Three Data Sources

Introduction. Participants discussed in interviews, wrote reflection papers and filled out surveys pertaining to their learning experiences of restorative practices. Data were described, analyzed and, in this chapter, will be interpreted as it relates to the research question: How do students describe their learning experiences in a graduate degree-granting program focused on restorative practices? These data will be synthesized to gain a better understanding of what the data means. The interpretation will be discussed within the seven themes that emerged to describe the qualitative data (reflection, past experience, implementation/practice, participatory learning, challenges and conflicts, unexpected learning, personal growth) bringing in research and theory from the literature review.

Analysis of data began when the interviews started. Data from the interviews revealed how the participants experienced learning at the IIRP and began to provide insight into how Adult Learning Theory was at work. What stands out most in interpreting this data was the level of personal sharing that participants provided in the qualitative portions of this study. In both the interviews and the course reflection papers, participants provided insightful perspectives about their learning as individuals and their application of skills within their professions. The

conversations and writings oscillated between cognitive learning and emotional learning, and how both were meaningful to their personal growth. Participants described their learning experiences beyond class assignments and projects and included their implementation of restorative practices in family meetings, parenting styles and overall relational interactions.

   Importance of reflection. The reflective thinking data represented in this study were correlated to the concepts discussed in the literature review. In this study, are these data just reflections or did they meet the criteria of the transformative learning theorists' (Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Cranton 2006; Mezirow, Taylor and Associates, 2009) critical reflection definition as discussed in the literature review? Critical reflection becomes part of a process where participants' thinking was challenged by new information creating a disorienting dilemma, current thinking was changed and then practice was altered to incorporate the new learning (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). As a prime example, Chelsea's reflection paper described critical reflection, stating that she was "rethinking harsh, unsatisfying penalties" as they relate to the criminal justice system and a disorienting dilemma emerged in the form of, "does our system currently meet the needs of victims?" Critical reflection becomes more involved than thinking alone and creates a dynamic of changing behavior based on new knowledge (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). Several participants (13) stated that during the process of reflection, prior knowledge and perceptions were challenged and they began to experiment with their new learning. Through the above example, Chelsea described reframing how she works with students in her own professional practices when an incident happens by actively engaging those that were affected by the misbehavior through the use of restorative questions (see appendix A for a list of the questions). Participants described concepts such as shame, affect,

social discipline, and methods such as circles, as well as alternative ways to deal with misbehavior. They began to rethink their prior perspectives and created a new frame of reference. Mezirow (2000) and Cranton (2006) describe challenging habits of mind as this process. Lauren described gaining a better understanding of the Social Discipline Window (see page 17 in literature review) (Wachtel & McCold, 2001), that her view and actions of responding to students misbehaving changed, stating: "I began to understand doing things 'with' the students rather than my natural tendency to do things 'to' them." This describes how Lauren found ways to engage students through restorative processes such as restorative questions or affective statements (with) rather than being punitive (to) towards them (Costello et al., 2009).

Creating physical environments that differ from traditional classroom settings, such as sitting in circles, was an area that was discussed as part of reflective thinking, as well as other themed categories such as implementation, participatory learning and personal growth. From a cognitive perspective, participants described their thinking and understanding of circles (sequential, non-sequential, fishbowl) as a way to create dialog with students, as a means to facilitate positive learning environments, or as a response to an incident. According to Costello et al. (2010), circles can be facilitated as a proactive means to create healthy interactive learning environments, or as a way to respond to misbehavior in education or justice settings. Both Juanita Rose and Dino wrote in their refection papers about how the idea of circles within the classroom impacted their thinking and challenged how they were conducting certain classroom exercises. They both shared how they would run regular sequential and non-sequential circles "to build community" and when there was misbehavior in the classroom the students were familiar with the circle format and it provided a forum to discuss the problem. Dino stated that

"this was a welcomed change" and provided a "shift in how I was thinking" about engaging his classroom of special needs students.

Affect and shame (see appendix A for definition) were described as concepts that challenged participants to think of people's responses from a different perspective. According to Nathanson (1992), shame defined as a psychological affect can have a profound impact on a person's behavior. This is different from feeling ashamed or the use of shame as a way to make people feel bad for what they have done. Shame is a natural response to an interruption of positive affect that all humans experience (Nathanson, 1992). Participants shared that gaining a better understanding of shame helped them understand why humans respond in certain ways when they are experiencing the affect of shame. For the educators, they described that one student may respond to a teacher's direction with "attack other" and become nasty towards the teacher whereas another student would show "withdrawal" and isolate themselves from everyone (Nathanson, 1992). Nathanson describes the affect of shame as different than the emotion of feeling ashamed. The affect is the biological response to the situation and the emotion is the biographical response. Bonnie and Sunny discussed how this learning provided a framework to view their own behavior as well as that of others who could be potentially experiencing shame. Once a greater understanding of the concepts was achieved, a deeper level of self-assessment ensued that created a shift in thinking and behavior. Sunny stated that: "I began to understand the concept of shame and how I was acting towards others…as I learned more, I changed how I responded and gained a better understanding of their situation." Within the interview, Sunny discussed how she was in the Compass of Shame (see appendix A and pp. 24-25) specifically experiencing the "withdrawal" pole during a class and how the learning of the compass triggered self-reflection of her thinking and behavior. Habits of mind were challenged and new learning

emerged as reported by participants exemplified by Chelsea, Bonnie and Sunny. Once they gained a better understanding of how Affect Theory impacts human behavior, they began to understand how they experience shame and project that reaction onto others. It also provided insight on why other people were behaving a certain way (attacking other, withdrawn, avoiding or attacking self) and how one might respond to someone experiencing shame. For example, a student could be acting out and the teacher perceives it as a disrespectful act towards him or her, but the student could have experienced a bullying issue before class and their "attack other" affect response is acted out towards the teacher. For a teacher, knowing that the behavior is a result of a shame response could change the nature of the intervention.

   Comparing past experience to learning. Educators within this study reflected on their former learning experiences and how restorative concepts changed their perspectives on classroom behavioral management. Knowles' (1998) original description of adult learning included a learner's life experience as a critical aspect for comparison as new information comes in. Transformative Learning Theory emphasizes critical reflection upon past experience as a way new learning is filtered. This notion was evident in the participants' narratives coded in the past experience category. Participants discussed and wrote about how their former training, or their prior learning experiences compared to what they experienced at IIRP. Camden noted how her prior experiences and learning as an attorney did not match what she was learning at IIRP. Some of her training as an attorney was to "detach" and to always "know the answer to a question before you ask it." Camden described how learning about restorative practices offered more opportunities to "listen to her clients" and become more aware of the social interactions that were happening between her and her clients as well as the associated family members.

This example of Camden's learning experiences provides support for Cranton's (2006) description of how an adult learner comes to interpret new learning and change behavior based on gaining a new perspective not formally held. For Lauren and Edie, their past educational experiences made use of more technical methods, such as point sheets, but did not help them in the classroom when engaging with their students. There was still a gap in classroom management in regards to behavior. Point sheets, level systems and punishment policies were not working and did not create the desired environment they were hoping for. Creating opportunities to discuss issues as a class in proactive ways led to the students' increased ability to deal with difficult situations. For example, Edie was able to run a circle after a gun was found in a classmate's bag that allowed students to express their feelings of concern, fear and anger. Edie stated that, if she did not deal with the emotions directly and only relied on the schools response to instill safety, the class would have had many behavioral problems. Edie described that she felt more confident in her abilities as a teacher to respond to difficult situations as well as actively creating positive learning environments for her students.

Sue and Becky described prior learning experiences as rigid and being "talked at." They discussed in their interviews how these past learning experiences were strictly related to the delivery of information and, since experiencing IIRP courses, they have a greater understanding of becoming more connected socially and emotionally to learning. According to Bandura (1978) and Vygotsky (1978), social interaction, observation of others and experiencing environmental factors all heavily influence learning, but until Sue and Becky experienced this different type of learning environment, they did not understand the possible influential impact it had on them as adult learners. Jane discussed her previous experience in Papua New Guinea as a tourist when local justice was seen as a responsibility of the community. She witnessed an event where a

person was stealing and needed to make amends directly to the victim. Jane said that she did not understand the depth and significance of that event until learning about restorative practices and how her experience is in direct contrast to today's western justice systems.

Implementing learning. According to many theorists within the transformative learning literature, experiential learning combined with reflective thinking enhances the learning process (Cranton, 2006; Kolb, 1984; Freire, 2002; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Knowles, 1998; Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, 2000; Dewey, 1997). Experiential learning was important to participants in this study as they discussed their restorative projects and the process of receiving feedback through Professional learning Groups (see appendix A for definition). Participants discussed their projects as part of class assignments and implemented them in their places of work. The learning groups offered opportunities of reflection and feedback from other students to support the projects as they progressed. According to Dewey (1997), Taylor, Marienau and Fiddler (2000) and Cranton (2006), combining experiential learning with reflective processes creates opportunities for transformative learning to occur. As in the Green and Ballard (2010-2011) study, creating ways for students to implement their learning, creates more meaningful learning experiences as compared to traditional lecture models of learning. This category represents the move from thinking to doing. Participants described implementing what they learn in class to their daily routines at work.

Restorative circles were often cited as different from prior learning experiences. Participants described experiencing circles (sequential, non-sequential, fishbowl) both as participants in IIRP class and as facilitators in their own work. Christine specifically reflected upon new connecting skills she gained for finding ways to build relationships with others through the facilitation of restorative circles. Juanita Rose wrote about how facilitating

sequential and non-sequential circles in her classroom from the beginning of the year helped "establish both behavioral and academic expectations" for her students.

Included in the literature review was Kolb's (1984) learning construct that provides an example of how experience can be influential in adult learning. The process that Edie went through to feel confident facilitating a circle at a critical time is a good example of Kolb's experiential learning construct. Edie went through a learning process in order to get to this high level of circle facilitation skills. She stated that she was a participant in circles in just about every class where the professor would model circle skills and students would then have opportunities of facilitating them. Through these experiences in circles, Edie was able to reflect about this learning in class activities and in course assignments. From the reflection and through her coursework, she was able to understand how to facilitate circles, when to use certain circles at certain times, and how to implement them to empower her students. Edie then decided to implement and experiment with circles in her classroom as a way to better understand how to facilitate circles. Edie thought that circles were a process that enhanced the relationship within her special needs classroom. Kolb's (1984) cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation is seen in this example and the process starts all over again as the student gains confidence in learning how to facilitate circles. The cycle repeats itself, which builds towards deeper understanding and more confidence in dealing with classroom behavior. Edie was able to cycle through this process multiple times to the point that she was comfortable facilitating the emotional circle at a pivotal time when the student brought the gun to school.

Did reflection and experiential learning activities lead to any change in practice? As reported in Holsinger and Ayers (2004) and Rodgers' et al. (2007) studies, experiential learning

in higher educational settings offers students the ability to apply what they have learned and begin to learn through implementation. Participants in this study described in the implementation/practice data themes that the processes were practical enough and worth practicing within their personal and professional settings. Classroom learning translated into practice in the form of restorative circles, restorative questions, restorative conferencing and relational interactions with clients and students. Jane's example of running a restorative conference as a result of a sexual assault was compelling (please refer to a description of restorative conference process in appendix A and pp. 76-77 for a description of this process). She described in the interview feeling stuck since the legal system was not moving forward, but she and the family still had the need for the offender to be held accountable while meeting the victim's needs. Jane learned how to facilitate a restorative conference and implemented one in this situation, with considerable support. She learned how to prepare all the participants (victim, offender and family members), facilitate the conference, negotiate the plan and ensure safety of all involved. The offender spoke first and took responsibility for his actions, the victim other in the conference shared how they were affected and they entire group created a plan to ensure safety. She was able to directly implement this process that would not have been available to her prior to learning about restorative practices. This example describes the direct application that restorative processes can have within the community, even in serious situations and how experiential learning through the courses supported her ability to carry out the conference with fidelity.

Experiential learning themes included how participants implemented and experimented with restorative practices. It was evident from the data that all participants were active in practicing restorative processes as per course expectations such as the Professional Learning

Groups or when motivated by finding better ways to create better learning environments. The literature is clear that practicing what you are learning, combined with reflection, enhances the opportunities for adult learners to experience transformative learning.

Learning with others. Participants felt engaged and active in their learning processes as evidenced by the interview, reflection paper and survey data. Kisura remarked how small group exercises created opportunities of self-assessment and personal insight stating that: "I learned so much from others and the group activities created an atmosphere of learning from each other that made me look at my own learning." Group activities were given as examples of participatory learning along with role-plays as meaningful ways to learn about restorative processes. Sunny stated that the "opportunity to be in small groups and large groups created powerful discussions" which supports Transformative Learning Theory and research that state that collaborative groups offer the potential for more learning opportunities (Shank, 2005; Taylor, Marineau & Fiddler, 2000). Other interactive activities described by participants included Professional Learning Groups (PLG) and compassionate witnessing exercises that gave them feedback from other students, which offered varied points of view and insights that were not previously known. Kisura shared how the PLG circle process provided her with specific feedback on how to engage people with in her community specific to her class project. According to Taylor, Marineau & Fiddler (2000), students can be rich resources for each other and provide varied perspectives that offer deeper examples as compared to just the information provided by the instructor.

Participants discussed these collaborative learning experiences as they related to their own learning experiences in circles and how they worked through interpersonal issues with other classmates in their circles. Bonnie and Jane commented in their reflection papers that circle processes in the IIRP classroom afforded them opportunities to see things differently by hearing

and understanding how other people feel and think about issues that arose in class.   They

discussed how classes were conducted in sequential go-around circles that afforded each student

an opportunity (if they did not pass) to add their perspective on whatever content they were

learning. This happened in large classroom groups with the professor or in smaller student only

groups. Becky provided her view as "having multiple opportunities to discuss issues" and how

"finding ways for me to take risks in the group afforded me a greater sense of input and get-back

from the group process." Specifically, Becky described a group project where she was skeptical

at first, but found that the process and other students were "respectful of each other and nobody

was dismissive of another's ideas."

Much of the participatory nature of these courses was discussed in the context of the

IIRP's philosophical beliefs, and its translation to faculty who embrace these processes and

implement them within the courses. Chelsea discussed in her reflection paper how experiencing

circle processes "helped us take responsibility for our learning environment." This supports

Imel's (1998) claim that teachers have the responsibility to empower students to create

transformative learning environments as a collective whole. Within the quantitative data, survey

questions explored students' perceptions of participatory learning and professors' ability to

create a positive learning environment. The participants completed 185 total surveys. The data

suggests that participants thought that professors' attitudes towards students were positive;

professors were personable towards students and class activities promoted engaging activities.

Sub-questions to the main questions of the survey data that received the most attention included:

professors welcome student involvement (160), discussions were well managed (161), ample

opportunities to ask questions (150), in-class activities were engaging (152), well designed (144)

and had clearly stated goals (144). The combination of all possible responses analysis showed an

overwhelming positive response to the courses taken and highlights the participatory nature of their experiences (2472).

There were areas that needed improvement, but these responses represented less than two percent of the total responses. This could have been due to the difficulty in one course or one professor, as Edie expressed her displeasure with a professor who is no longer at the IIRP. However, the themes of participants' positive pedagogical experiences in the classroom were also evident in the interview discussions, as well as in their reflective writings.

From Yalom's (1995) psychological perspective, positive or negative group dynamics can increase the interpersonal learning and create opportunities for dialogue between group participants. From this study's data, engagement in learning was a critical factor that including building relationships with each other and creating an environment of group collaboration and support, even in times of conflict.

Challenges to learning. From a Critical Theory perspective, have participants described challenging current dominant power structures and authority models? For some participants, facilitating processes that are alternatives to current punishment policies challenged traditional authority structures. Dino discussed facilitating circles as a means of getting students more connected to school and found that the students' tardiness began to decline. Instead of just handing out demerits or detentions, Dino chose to engage the class and find creative alternatives to the problem. Dino stated that: "I found that students wanted to come to my circle during the first period and student tardiness declined." Four of the educators that participated in this study believed that the educational institutions they work for have been bogged down in creating punitive policies instead of creating better learning environments. Just the mere change in physical classroom layout from traditional rows for instruction to circles for discussion

challenges conventional pedagogy. Dominant authority dynamics when teaching in a "stand and deliver" manner to the unknowing pupils starts to change in a circle format. Learning becomes a partnership through facilitation and exploration rather than an authoritarian delivery of information. In addition, this may mean moving away from former training and challenging the information and practice that becomes inherent in everyday work. Dewey (1997), Glasser (1988) and Vygotsky (1978) all made significant contributions to a student-centered learning perspective as a move away from viewing the teacher as the focus and giving the student a voice in learning. Restorative circle processes continue this student-centered model and provides students opportunities to gain input into their learning experiences and places the instructor in a facilitation role.

Participants experienced frustration when challenged by content that they did not understand. They expressed that the areas of content challenges seemed appropriate for graduate level study and wanted the process to be vigorous, but they expressed the turmoil that was associated with these times of confusion and lack of understanding. Chelsea specifically described her frustration as it related to a research course and understanding statistics within the articles that were assigned coursework. Participants responded with a range of resolutions to these situations from "just getting through it" to engaging other classmates who were more knowledgeable in the content area. Asking for help and support during these times also became a learning experience for some participants regarding the issue of conflict as experienced by Bonnie. She described how other classmates supported her in time of confusion and conflict and provided a connection that helped her through a difficult course.

Within the adult learning literature, Johnson and Johnson (2009) state that conflict within the classroom for post secondary students is healthy and creates skills to help them to critically

evaluate information. They found that conflict provides the opportunity to evaluate and possibly change what is causing the conflict within the learner. Challenges motivated students to gain a better understanding of self and how the conflict impacted those around them, if at all. A link can also be made to Vygotsky's (1978) Social Learning Theory along with Glasser's (1988) view of relational learning as to the need for participants to experience challenges and have choice in creating solutions. An interesting dynamic developed for Christine wanting to connect with her classmates in regards to using restorative practices with her population, but felt that her students' problems did not rise to the level of other student populations that were being discussed in class. Christine described the benefits of circles and other restorative practices that she introduced at a private school setting, but this dilemma raises the issue: is restorative practices geared towards more at-risk populations? Christine shared that, at first, she questioned how restorative practices originated and was it for all educational settings. When asked, Christine stated that this brief inner conflict passed, but she raises a valid question. From the data, the participants' backgrounds varied significantly and restorative practices were implemented with diverse socio-economic populations ranging from impoverished urban schools to affluent private schools. It seems as though this could have been a particular issue specific to Christine and her class and was not found after further investigation within this data.

Issues of power and authority dynamics in the context of conflict specifically related to grades and disagreements about professor's handling of class discussions were discussed in the interviews. Bonnie felt that a particular professor was not listening to her and that she was not being heard in one course, while Edie believed that she received a lower grade than what she deserved. Student to student power and authority issues specifically pertaining to circle dynamics, were mentioned such as classmates dominating discussions or to the other extreme, a

disengagement from the group. These issues were not hidden, but rather discussed in ways that students had a say in the resolution. Bonnie and Edie both described their disagreement with the outcome, but respected the opportunity to be empowered and to deal with the situation directly without fear of retribution. These experiences relate to Christie's (1977) position that people should own their conflict and find ways to deal with it themselves, allowing for direct resolution. For Bonnie, this learning experience was more significant to her than the actual content of that course because she reflected in her paper about previous experiences when she would back away from conflict or not assert herself. She thought that feeling empowered to deal with conflict allowed her to "rewrite" her story of being a woman who now can be assertive and confront issues directly with more confidence. Through this conflict, Bonnie was able to transform the way she views conflict and stated that she is now empowered to deal with situations she was not able to deal with in the past.

Contrary to Ettling's (2006) and Owenby's (2002) concerns that educators push students to transform without understanding the consequences or hidden power and authority issues, such issues did not emerge in the data. Issues of power and authority were cited in the above examples, but what is different in this data as compared to Owenby's finding were that there was no mention of "hidden" power and authority issues. The data suggests that conflict was dealt with in a transparent way between students in circles and directly between professors and students. Cranton (2006) stated that transparency and the authenticity of the educator is influential in creating transformative learning environments. Participants described this type of transparent environment, which was modeled by the professors and was largely adopted by the students. Throughout the three data sources, participants provided examples of trustworthy and open learning environments in order to explore and learn about restorative concepts. As both

Cameron (2002) and Yalom (1995) have noted, learning and group process include conflict and challenges, which can be meaningful for the learner.

      Surprised learning. This category theme seemed to drift away slightly from the transformative learning literature and was not as prominent as the other themes. Much of the transformative learning literature discusses the opposite of "ah-ha" moments and portrays learning as a deeper understanding of concepts that happen over time. However, the data suggests that learning occurred and people become surprised by what they experienced. One of the interview questions prompted participants to describe what they were surprised by in their learning experiences at IIRP and they described moments of learning as though they happened spontaneously. Just because participants expressed learning experiences as a "surprise" does not take away from the possible time and effort found in thinking; it seemed that it was the moment of understanding that caused the surprise. Sue described how surprised she was by how much she learned in a role-play exercise when she acted out scripted parts of a restorative conference that provoked emotions and thoughts with her as though she had really been part of the incident. Dino stated: "…my biggest surprise was discovering that I possessed emotional intelligence." He expressed that, through the readings and the class circle exercises, he became aware of how he was emotionally connected to others and his students and he had never identified that as a form of intelligence.

      Surprising learning or unexpected perspectives could happen over time or when one is faced with definitive information that changes a prior fact. For these participants, unexpected learning came in different forms that were specific to each participant. Kisura stated: "I was surprised by how much others impacted my thinking and changed the way I viewed collaborative learning." Sunny discussed how, in her previous role as a nurse, she was surprised by people

struggling with addictions could make such poor decisions until she began to learn about motivational interviewing techniques and how logic is rarely part of the recovery process. Sunny stated that motivational interviewing discusses techniques that ask questions that create quandaries and choices for clients that they begin to take responsibility for their responses, thus internalizing the motivation to change their behavior. For example, a counselor utilizing these techniques would ask open ended questions, make affirming statements supporting strengths, reflectively listen through asking clarifying questions and provide summaries of the client's statements paying particular attention to "change statements" (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). These change statements are opportunities of change such as "I drink too much" or "sometimes I go overboard". The intent is to empower the client to create conclusions based on their own story and how behavior has affected their life in a negative way that has them seeking treatment.

Restorative practices challenged some prior perspectives and created unexpected learning for participants. The above examples provide insight into how participants describe this surprise and how they began to interpret this information. When incorporated in the larger context of critical reflection, Cranton (2006) would describe these events as ongoing reflection that become new learning when smaller parts of knowledge are pulled together to form a new perspective. She states that this can happen over a lifetime and different perspectives can dominate a person's worldview at different times.

Cognitive and emotional growth. Goleman's (2006) Emotional Intelligence Theory describes how a person's emotions are messy and not logical, but play a significant role in learning. When a person experiences confusion or excitement in a situation, the emotional part of the brain is triggered before the cognitive portion of the brain. Nathanson (1992) would add that an affect is the initial physiological response to a stimulant while emotion is the

interpretation of that affect. For participants in this study, affect and emotion were a part of their learning and were expressed often.

Participants described the emotional side of learning that provided a more personal perspective of the data. Areas of personal growth, reflections and contradictions to prior experiences led to thoughts and feelings of deeper learning. Christine told a story of when her mother-in-law was dying that she was able to implement her learning about compassionate witnessing (see appendix A for definition or p. 54). She described how, when her mother-in-law was very ill, she was able to listen to her and understand what she wanted to express, even when other family members were in denial of the possibility of her dying. She used the compassionate witnessing techniques learned in class and expressed gratitude that she was able to help her family gain understanding in such an emotional situation stating: "I was able to implement what I learned at a significant time when my family needed me by witnessing my mother-in-laws needs through listening to her wishes." This was a powerful and moving story that Christine told during the interview that was filled with gratitude and understanding. Juanita also spoke of utilizing restorative practices personally, describing a difficult conversation with her extended family about creating a plan for her death. Lauren spoke of becoming perceived as nicer and finding the ability to provide limits and structure without being mean. In Goleman's (2006) terms, participants were learning how to become more emotionally intelligent.

The course, Foundations for Responding to Harm, which included compassionate witnessing exercises, was a pivotal experience not just for Christine, but for other participants as well. Learning a way to listen without interrupting or casting judgment was influential to participants. AJ spoke about this experience in both her interview and reflection paper as a way to "truly listen" to others. The learning from this course showed up in multiple themes,

including personal growth, past experience, implementation/practice and reflection. From the point of view of the participants, the process of engaging with other classmates around issues of harm and trauma created a space for personal sharing, personal growth and greater understanding of past childhood issues. Participants alluded to how they had been abused in some way during childhood or in their past and through the exploration of compassionate witnessing gained a greater perspective on how to respond to these issues both internally and for others (see appendix A or p. 54 for a description of compassionate witnessing process). Several participants spoke about how important it was for them to experience deep emotional learning. Within Restorative Practices Theory, issues of harm and victimization are common. Wachtel (1997) describes processes that empower victims to have a direct dialog with the offender in order to express how they have been affected and to state how the harm can be repaired. For many victims, this process resulted in higher satisfaction of victims when compared to other processes or court proceedings (McCold, 1999). The restorative practices literature states that when issues of abuse, neglect or victimization are present, allowing those who are affected to gain a voice and become empowered to express their feelings openly while being supported are essential (Wachtel, 1997; Zehr, 1990; Zehr, 2002; Weingarten, 2003; Burford, Pennell & MacLeod, 1995).

Other accounts of personal growth varied between participants. Sunny, Lauren, AJ and Chelsea discussed their growth as becoming more insightful about their personal experiences and how they affect those around them. Lauren described how she has become a teacher that students "can come to when they need a nonjudgmental ear" and AJ described how she is able to give "helpful feedback to her staff." Jane and Patricia wrote in their reflection papers about the skills they have gained, specifically around building relationships both professionally and

personally. Patricia added in her interview that the personal growth she experienced is what motivated her to continue in the master's program.

Personal growth seen in the context of creating meaningful change in thinking correlates directly to Transformative Learning Theory. Mezirow (2009) and Cranton (2006) describe how the process of experiencing disorienting dilemmas and changing habits of mind allows a learner to grow and learn cognitively in new ways that they did not think were possible. The data from this study shows how emotional situations that trigger affective responses can inform learning as well. Cognitive and emotional learning are not separate rather they work in conjunction together. Emotional influence on cognitive learning was evident from participants' narratives that created meaningful learning experiences.

Summary. Participant narratives provided rich and specific details of their experiences at IIRP. This study was structured in a way to allow participant voices to be stated in an unaltered manner in order to provide a transparent depiction of participants' learning experiences. The participants' cognitive learning of Restorative Practices Theory was the primary content focus, but the emotional and relational learning experiences provided a powerful demonstration of transformative learning opportunities. This section reviewed that data and described a blend of findings supported by theory, which provided a comprehensive description of participant experiences.

Strengths of the Study

This study was able to capture participant voices. These voices were expressed in three ways including interview, document and survey data. Patton (2002) states that triangulation of data sources adds to the understanding and believability of the results. The mixed methods approach implemented also adds to the credibility of this study by including both qualitative and

quantitative data to describe students' experiences. The participant sample in this study included a varied mix of backgrounds and added diversity and richness to the participant narratives. Participants were open about sharing their learning experiences at IIRP, which added depth to the narratives. The quantitative data included 185 surveys, which is an adequate total to add to the credibility of this data source. The surveys provided support to the qualitative data, specifically in the area of participatory learning. Surveys described participants' experiences over all courses taken and indicated trends of what were most meaningful to them within each course. Timing of the survey also is seen as a strength since they were completed at the end of each course dating back to 2007.

As an inside researcher, I was able to gain access to databases without much difficulty and sort out unneeded information. Additionally as an inside researcher, I have experienced much of the curriculum and was able to understand terminology, situations, classroom exercises and specific nuances related to the program and Restorative Practices Theory. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) support insider research or "native" research and found that this perspective can add value to studies when researchers are knowledgeable about their organizational structures and the intricacies associated with navigating complex systems.

Study Limitations

Within this study there are several limitations. In regards to the sample population, there was only one male student who volunteered to participate and the sample was not randomized. Having more than one male perspective could have changed the nature of the results and should be considered in future studies. Within quantitative methods, randomization increases the external validity of a study, which was not performed in this study (Salkind, 2008). This study lacks the ability to be more generalizable to the greater IIRP population and to graduate schools

in general. The participants who did volunteer for this study could have a certain predisposition or bias towards restorative practices and the IIRP since they asserted themselves to contribute to this study. The quantitative analysis was frequency only and had no statistical comparison calculations, which would have improved the statistical confidence of the results. The surveys were not anonymous and a student admitted to not being honest on a Course Improvement Survey, which questions the authenticity and validity of a portion of the results.

The qualitative data, though rich with personal learning stories, cannot be compared to another institution. Since Restorative Practices Theory is so new, other higher educational institutions have not dedicated themselves to this curriculum as of yet. Curriculum aside, pedagogical styles, such as student-centered learning, could be similar at other institutions which could support these learning themes, but comparison was not part of this study. Additionally, even though there is support for insider research, the limitation to this study is my commitment, immersion and bias towards restorative practices and the IIRP.

Summary

Both strengths and limitations of this study are transparently communicated to provide a better understanding from this researcher's point of view. The strengths represent the authenticity of the participants' voices, while the limitations point out issues surrounding bias, comparison and generilizability. Taking into account the limitations, this study provides a detailed, credible account of participants' experiences in a graduate degree-granting program focused on restorative practices.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Introduction. This study explored graduate students' learning experiences as they relate to Restorative Practices Theory in order to inform development and thinking about this emerging social science. The conclusions for this study are generated from the analysis and interpretation of the rich participant narratives along with the supporting survey data. This study concludes that: participants' process of learning in the graduate program reflected concepts of Transformative Learning Theory as they described being engaged in the content, reflected on new information, challenged thinking, experimented with new ideas, and adjusted their behavior to incorporate restorative processes.

There were four key findings that emerged out of this study that include: 1. restorative processes cultivated emotional and relational learning, 2. participants learned and implemented restorative concepts, 3. classroom environment mattered to participants, 4. and evidence of transformative learning was present in the students reported experiences. As an additional note, seven learning themes were identified for analysis of participants' educational experiences (reflection, past experience, implementation/practice, participatory learning, challenges and conflict, unexpected learning, and personal growth) that can also be considered a finding in that they inform how students learn about restorative practices and what students found as important to their learning environment and pedagogical experiences.

Emotional and relational learning. Learning is just as much an emotional process as it is a cognitive process (Glasser, 1988; Goleman, 2006). Restorative processes offer opportunities for emotional learning to occur, as suggested by the data. Participants described emotional

experiences within their classroom circles that led to self-reflection and changes in thinking. Content and discussion circles provided a forum for participants to discuss their learning of restorative elements and then practiced them with other students. Participants reported feeling connected with other students and professors and building bonds through the restorative exercises that were facilitated during class.

Emotional learning was also expressed when participants described their role-play experiences learning about the restorative conferencing process. Two participants stated that they were surprised by the emotion they felt even though they were scenarios being acted out. Participants expressed emotion as they described implementing restorative practices and the personal growth they experienced. Participants described implementing restorative practices with their families and these experiences were emotionally charged statements embedded in the data. These were examples of times when they utilized restorative processes such as when a family member was dying or a Family Group Decision Making Conference was implemented for planning.   The cognitive connection to restorative practices was highlighted as influential, but participants described the emotional connection as life changing. Significant emphasis has been placed on the cognitive and rational perspectives of learning, but the participants provided evidence that emotional learning is just as important.

The literature states and the data supports that Restorative Practices Theory offers an explicit way to allow for exchange of emotion and affect that students can experience, learn and implement through the use of processes described on the restorative practices continuum (see p. 2). These processes could inform the gaps in Transformative Learning Theory as it relates to Mezirow's (2009) concern of underemphasizing emotion as a key component of adult learning. Taylor (2008) argues the need for other perspectives to be incorporated into Transformative

Learning Theory specifically citing the areas of affect and emotion as lacking and needing further influence on theory development. Implementing restorative processes such as restorative circles in adult learning settings has the potential to enhance student experiences.

Learned and implemented restorative concepts. Restorative practices as a focused curriculum was viewed as a meaningful topic of study. Participants shared that the restorative approaches filled a gap in learning from previous higher educational experiences, especially in the areas of education and youth counseling professions as it relates to building positive learning environments and responding to wrongdoing. This gap mostly translated into learning how to become more relational in practice, a better listener and participate in processes that build connections rather than some of our current punitive policies that just ostracize people in both the justice and education systems (McCluskey et al., 2008; Costello et al., 2010).

It became apparent from the narratives that participants were motivated to learn about restorative practices evidenced by their discussions of experimenting and implementing restorative processes in their work environments. All of the participants in this study described how they learned about a restorative concept and found a way to implement it whether it was part of a class project or because they thought the concept had merit and was worth trying. Participants implemented various restorative practices including proactive circles in urban and suburban secondary school classrooms, responsive circles in a special needs classrooms after incidents of misbehavior, a restorative conference in response to a sexual assault, restorative questions used to understand possible abuse situations, restorative problem solving for staff meetings and compassionate witnessing techniques to actively listen others (see appendix A for definitions of processes).

Classroom environment mattered to participants. Participatory and engaging pedagogical styles within the participants learning environments were critical to the learners' experiences. The data suggested that their experiences were positive and surveys reflected their satisfaction with course material and exercises. They stated that the environment mattered and it is what kept them coming back and connected to the information they were learning. Professors modeled and created environments where learners were challenged by perspectives that conflict with today's punitive education and justice systems practices. Within this environment, participants explored learning new processes that supported them both professionally and personally, as seen in the data.

Transformative learning experiences. Participants discussed in interviews and wrote in reflection papers about experiencing concepts highlighted in the transformative learning literature such as critical reflection, disorienting dilemmas, meaning making schemas, experiential learning and changes in behavior (Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). Participants described experiencing disorienting dilemmas and critical reflection as they learned about restorative practices that challenged their current ways of thinking and replaced prior thinking and practice with more restorative approaches e.g. circles in classrooms. Although the participants did not use this exact vocabulary, their descriptions match theorists' definitions within transformative learning literature (Mezirow and Associates, 2000; Cranton, 2006; Taylor, Marineau & Fiddler, 2000; Mezirow, Taylor & Associate, 2009). Critical reflection as defined by these theorists was also present in the participants' reflection papers and discussed during the interviews. Simply, participants described a challenge to their current points of view causing a disorienting dilemma and then through a learning process made a shift in their conceptual frameworks. Participants

experimented with new processes and created projects within their places at work such as restorative circles or restorative conferences. These learning processes incorporated experiential learning, experiencing authentic learning environments, engagement, empowerment, collaborative groups, learning projects, self-assessment and personal growth together in order to foster transformative learning for these participants. Both emotional and cognitive learning were apparent and were supporting their experiences. After having an emotional experience, participants often described a cognitive reflection, followed by new knowledge that influenced learning such as the example provided by AJ in a compassionate witnessing exercise that evoked emotions about former abuse issues and later she reflected on how she can listen better to others. Likewise, some instances of learning new concepts instigated emotional responses such as participants' conversations regarding the Compass of Shame. Clearly, the data shows that emotional and cognitive learning were closely connected for these students and hard to distinguish at times.

Did the participants experience transformative learning through the learning process of restorative practices at the IIRP? It is difficult to state that whether or not a participant in this study has been "transformed" because of their learning experiences. Several factors outside of the scope of this study could have influenced the changes in participants' perspectives and students could have learned new concepts, but may not have transformed. What this study did find is that the participants provided information about the occurrences and opportunities for transformative learning experiences to occur while studying restorative practices concepts in an affirming environment. This study provides a foundation for the relationship between implementing restorative processes and providing the opportunity for students to experience transformative learning. This relationship is directly correlated to how the content is delivered

and that the pedagogical approaches match those of the theory, such as running the class in circles.

Seven learning themes. Within the restorative practices literature there is limited information on what supports student learning of restorative processes and curriculum. This study identified seven learning themes that were developed through participant voices in this study for analysis, but also offer a finding as to the categories that emerged as important to adults learning restorative practices. Through the participants' writings and interview transcripts these seven themes helped to analyze their educational experiences, which include: reflection, past experiences, implementation/practice, participatory learning, challenges and conflict, unexpected learning, and personal growth. These seven themes are important to learning about restorative practices because they embody the essence of creating an environment that supports individual thinking and expression along with providing an atmosphere to discuss difficult subject matter (abuse, victimization, harm) that allows for human affect, emotion and relational exchanges that promote learning. Each of the seven areas became its own unique category and helped to illuminate the learning that added significance to the learning process.

These seven themes are not original in their creation, but rather adaptations of a more general list of themes found within the adult learning literature (reflection, experience, challenges, experimentation, implementation) (Mezirow and Associates, 2000; Kolb, 1984; Cranton, 2006; Knowles, 1998). When these seven andragogical (learning strategies focused on adults) concepts are implemented in restorative practices learning environments, it provides opportunities for learners to have meaningful experiences. These seven themes provide a learner's perspective on what is important as to meaning making and understanding of restorative practices. These themes can be used for both understanding what students experience

in analysis as well as included in constructing learning environments for adults learning restorative practices.

Summary. Participants in this study learned about restorative practices concepts and experienced learning through the engaging pedagogical approaches implemented in the learning environments at the Institute. Participants provided vivid descriptions of their experiences and how that translates to their understanding of restorative practices and how they implement them. Transformative learning elements were apparent in the data and participants described how restorative processes offered them opportunities to grow personally, professionally, emotionally and relationally.

Recommendations

Since Restorative Practices Theory is in its early stages of development, more emphasis needs to be placed on researching restorative processes and providing clearer definitions in order to become more explicit about Restorative Practices Theory. Specifically, research in the area of restorative circles facilitated with diverse populations would have supported and strengthened this research study as to their benefits, drawbacks and differences with both youth and adults. Research could target comparing similar educational environments where classrooms are utilizing circle processes as compared to those that are not. Also, comparisons of circle benefits defined by age groups and culture from pre-elementary children to senior citizens worldwide would provide further insights into these processes and their effectiveness.

In addition to the research recommendations, the data suggests that the IIRP should utilize anonymous surveys in order to gain a purer student perspective in regards to course improvement and institutional experience. The participants expressed a need to network and stay connected as they move beyond the graduate school. This was more evident in the alumni

interviews and they would welcome a more integrated way of supporting restorative practitioners post graduation.

Throughout this research study many people assume that restorative practices are the same or another name for restorative justice practices. The critical difference is that Restorative Practices Theory broadens the definition to include ways to build social capital through relational processes, not just as a response to crime. The restorative practices academic literature should continue to express the distinction between the two fields and to further discuss how they compliment and differ from each other.

Pedagogical approaches are important in all learning environments, but creating participatory environments that allow for affect and emotion are essential to learning restorative practices. It would be hard to envision learning these practices through online instruction without experiencing these experiences in-person between students. Further inquiry into how students learning styles align with learning about restorative practices should be explored. Because restorative practices includes affective and emotional learning, is the IIRP only attracting those students that are naturally relational in their practice and learning? This could be explored through evaluating students who come to learn about restorative practices and for those who would not choose or discontinue taking courses. In order for Restorative Practices Theory to evolve and develop, multi-cultural perspectives should continue to be included in the learning, practice and development of this theory.

As adult learners of Restorative Practices Theory discuss and describe their learning experiences, more ideas begin to percolate for readers and others who are researching these approaches. I would hope that other learners of restorative practices become empowered to gain

a voice in the theory development and help mold the future of restorative practices in order to

change current models seen in education, justice, welfare and organizational institutions.

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Appendix A

Definitions of Key Terminology Used in this Study

Adult Learner: An adult learner is someone above the age of 18 who is engaged in an academic setting in order to learn.

Affective Questions or Restorative Questions (interchangeable): When a person is asking a person who caused harm or misbehaved:

What happened? What were you thinking of at the time? What have you thought about since? Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way have they been affected? What do you think you need to make things right?

When a person is asking a person who has been affected:

What did you think when you realized what had happened? What impact has this incident had on you and others? What has been the hardest thing for you? What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Affective Statements: Statements that include emotional vocabulary in response to an incident. For example: "when you keep calling out in class it makes me upset and sad since I know you typically are not like this."

Affect Theory: Affect theory states that human infants are born with a set of innate affects that provide the biological component of emotion. Affects are experienced throughout the body but they are most visible on the face. The actual experience of an affect state is quite brief, but affect states can be maintained by thoughts and memories which continue to stimulate the affect. This leads to the difference between affects and emotions. Emotions are composed of a combination of affect and cognition (Nathanson, 1992; Nathanson, 1997)

Community: Community is used broadly in this document to represent neighborhoods, school

settings, and places where people are interconnected by geography, relationships or through systems.

Community Service Foundation (CSF) – CSF is a non-profit agency that provides counseling, education, foster care, and addiction counseling to at-risk and delinquent youth in Eastern Pennsylvania.

Compass of Shame: Nathanson (1992) created this construct to help describe Affect Theory and how shame as an affect is strong factor in our human responses. This compass has four poles that a person can experience when the affect of shame is ignited in humans including: attack self, attack other, avoidance and withdrawal.

Compassionate Witnessing: is a listening and sharing technique created and used in IIRP classes to create space for true listening and understanding around the real life event. Compassionate witnessing is a structured process where students are separated into groups and each student takes a turn: sharing (sharer) about a time of adversity in their life, facilitating (interviewer) the conversation and observing (observer) the process while having a time to have a conversation about what they witnessed in the sharing with the other observers. The focus is on the sharer as they tell their story and the interviewer asks questions to help understand the situation. One student is the interviewer and asks questions, without judgment or advice, which helps the sharer describe their experience fully. At the end of the sharing, the observers repeat what they heard (without any judgment or advice) and then the interviewer can proceed with more questions after listening to the observers. There is a time at the end of the exercise to process how it was to experience compassionate witnessing in each of the different roles. This process is based on Weingarten's (2003) four witnessing positions that include: empowered and aware, not empowered and unaware, empowered and unaware and not empowered and aware. According to

Weingarten, being empowered and aware is the healthiest position to be as an observer of trauma.

Education System - This term is used to describe the United States education system that includes elementary and secondary schools (K-12). This could include a school district that consists of multiple schools to a statewide system that includes hundreds of schools.

Emotions - a conscious mental reaction (as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emotion).

Family Group Decision Making Conference (FGDM): a FGDM conference is a formal restorative meeting that is convened to create a family plan in a time of crisis such as abuse, parenting struggles, crime, homelessness or addictions. A FGDM conference includes extended family members that can help support the plan. What is unique to FGDM process is that professionals only facilitate the beginning phase of the FGDM and then all professionals leave the family in "family alone time" to come up with a plan themselves. The term family is defined loosely to include non-biological family support systems in order to empower support networks that move away from professional social welfare interventions. Resources are introduced at the beginning of the conference and the family group chooses how the person is supported such as counseling or services.

International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) – IIRP is an accredited graduate school that offers two masters degrees in, Restorative Practices and Education and Restorative Practices and Youth Counseling located in Bethlehem, PA.

Justice - Justice is used to describe the criminal justice system in the United States, including both juvenile and adult justice systems.

Professional Learning Group (PLG): According to Costello et al. (2010), this is a circle where a person shares their issue uninterrupted for a predetermined amount of time and then asks for feedback from the other circle participants. The key to the process is that the person presenting cannot respond to the feedback until the end of the process only stating a few things they will take action on based on the circle participants' feedback. Costello et al. state by providing this structure, participants cannot reply to feedback with "I've tried that" and allows participants to listen to suggestions without judgment.

Restorative Circle: There are many forms of circles found in the restorative justice and restorative practices literature that include processes such as sentencing circles, peace circles and native justice circles. This study follows Costello's et al. (2010) definition of a restorative circle (or circle) within an educational and organizational context, which includes three types: sequential, non-sequential and fishbowl circles. These types of circles can be implemented into three main categories of circle uses including proactive, responsive or as staff circles. Sequential circles go in order and typically are responding to a facilitator's question. The first person volunteers to start and chooses the way that they will go using a talking piece. The talking piece is used as a representation of only the person with this object is able to talk and everyone else is listening. The non-sequential circle is more of a discussion with no distinct order. This would be used for a more open-ended discussion about a response to an issue or possibly a planning agenda. A fishbowl circle is setup in two circles one inside the other. The inside circle is the focus (fish in the fishbowl) and have a discussion or brainstorming session as the outer circle observes the inner circle. Many times there is a empty chair left in the inside circle so that a person can join the inner circle just to provide their feedback and then go back to the outer circle to allow for multiple people to participate (Costello et al., 2010).

Restorative Conference: A restorative conference is a formal restorative practice that includes victims, offenders and their families in the wake of a wrongdoing (Wachtel, 1997). This study refers to a restorative conference as defined by Wachtel (1997) as a scripted process model that allows for offenders to take responsibility for what they have done while the victim(s) and those harmed get to state how they were affected and what should be done to make things right. A restorative conferencing process is convened and run by a trained facilitator. The process allows for both sides to describe and discuss the specific incident of harm with the goal of creating a plan for resolution, when that is appropriate (e.g. in cases of death and other major crimes, resolution may not be the goal). In times of significant crimes, conferencing has been implemented to have the victim, friends and family members have a say in what has been done and is able to tell the offender how the offender's behavior has impacted their life. There are 6 stages of this process that include: preparation work before the conference, preamble, offender takes responsibility, victims and others get to say how they have been affected, plan for resolution, reintegration (Wachtel, 1997).

Restorative Justice: " Restorative justice is a new movement in the fields of victimology and criminology. Acknowledging that crime causes injury to people and communities, it insists that justice repair those injuries and that the parties be permitted to participate in that process. Restorative justice programs, therefore, enable the victim, the offender and affected members of the community to be directly involved in responding to the crime" (Restorative Justice Online, 1996-2011, para. 2).

Restorative Practices: "The social science of restorative practices is an emerging field of study that enables people to restore and build community in an increasingly disconnected world. It offers a common thread to tie together theory, research and practice in seemingly disparate

fields, such as education, counseling, criminal justice, social work and organizational

management"(International Institute for Restorative Practices, n.d., para. 4).

Transformative Learning: "The process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or

revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action"

(Mezirow, 1996, p. 162).

Appendix B

Fm: cadamson@lesley.edu

Subject: Invitation to participate in a dissertation study

Dear IIRP Students and Alumni,

My name is Craig Adamson and I am currently conducting research in order to meet the PhD requirements at Lesley University, Cambridge, MA. This email acts as an invitation asking that you volunteer to be part of my dissertation research project.

My focus is how do students describe their learning experiences in a graduate degree-granting program focused on restorative practices?

Participants will include students who have completed a minimum of 12 credits, including alumni, at the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). Due to my role within IIRP as a Lecturer and the role in IIRP's sister organizations, I will be excluding any participants who are former students of mine or who currently work for Community Service Foundation or Buxmont Academy.

I will be collecting three forms of data for my dissertation. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview, at your convenience, that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The questions asked during this interview will focus on your learning, experiences and reflections regarding IIRP course learning.

In addition to the interview process, each participant will be asked to submit one of your reflection papers for review. The reflection paper will be self selected and should represent your learning within a course.

The third form of data collection will include information from your completed course improvement forms that are kept in the IIRP database.

All participants' names will be kept confidential through the use of chosen pseudonyms. Information will be shared publicly through dissertation publication, public workshop presentations and article publication.

Please see the attached Informed Consent Form for more details regarding the project, participant rights and information security.

Please email me at cadamson@lesley.edu if you are willing to participate in this project or if you have additional questions. You may also call me at 215.416.3723.

I appreciate your consideration in participating in this study.

Regards, Craig Adamson

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Craig Adamson, PhD student at Lesley University, Cambridge MA. I hope to learn about students' perceptions of learning who are current or former students of the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP). The learning from this project will help inform the growing body of research for restorative practices. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you attend the IIRP and have completed a minimum of 12 credits or are alumnae.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The questions asked during this interview will focus on your learning, experiences and reflections regarding IIRP course learning. This interview will be audiotaped and conducted at your convenience. This audiotape will be transcribed in order to complete an analysis, focusing on language used to answer the questions. Written transcripts will be kept in locked filing cabinets and/or password-protected files.

In addition to the interview process, each participant will be asked to submit one of their reflection papers for review. This reflection paper should be representative of a time you wrote about your learning. This can be submitted to the researcher via email or by hard copy at the interview. This reflection paper will be analyzed for themes and categories related to learning.

The final form of data collection will include each of your completed course improvement form responses that are kept in the IIRP database. All course improvement forms will be recorded to understand your thoughts towards each course completed and your responses to the survey.

All participants' names will be kept confidential by using participant chosen pseudonyms. The dissertation will be published and will be able to be accessed by the public. Confidentiality of names, as well as the original data collected, is ensured by securing information on a password-protected computer and locked filing cabinet for the transcripts and hard copies of reflection papers. Results from the dissertation will be used in a training or workshop format as well as possible future article publication.

You will be asked to recall educational experiences that may or may not bring up uncomfortable memories. It could also trigger past educational memories in relation to learning, experience or reflection. You may choose not to share experiences that you do not feel comfortable disclosing.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your past, present or future relations with the IIRP. Your grades or status within the IIRP will not be affected in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

There will be no cost or compensation for participation.

If you have any questions, please ask Craig Adamson or email him at cadamson@lesley.edu. If you would like to contact the faculty supervisor of record for Lesley University please contract Dr. Judith Cohen at jcohen@lesley.edu. If you have a concern regarding this project at any time you may also contact Lesley University's Institutional Review Board at irb@lesley.edu.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE, YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AND BE AUDIOTAPED.

Participant signature:_____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Dissertation Participant Survey

Pseudonym_____

Age range (please circle):   20-30,   31-40,   41-50,   51-60,   61+

Gender (please circle):   Male   Female

What is your race?_____
(African American, Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Latino, Multiracial, Pacific Islander, Other)

What state do you live in? _____

What is your current profession?_____

What is the highest level of education that you have completed? (Please choose one)

- High school diploma

- Bachelor's degree

- Bachelor's degree plus (fill in) _____ master's credits (including IIRP)

- Master's degree plus (fill in)_____ additional graduate credits (including IIRP)

- _____ Master's degrees plus_____additional graduate credits (including IIRP)

- PhD plus (fill in)_____additional graduate credits (including IIRP)

- Other combination: _____