

Restoring Harm: A Psychosocial Approach to Victims and Restorative Justice

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Restoring Harm: A Psychosocial Approach to Victims and Restorative Justice aims to define and expand on the current understanding of restorative justice by presenting new findings to integrate into the framework of existing research, theory, and practices more thoroughly. Restorative justice is a legal approach that has become increasingly prominent over the past few decades and seeks to repair the harm suffered by victims of crime. This book focuses on the practice of mediation involving communication between victim and offender, either direct or indirect, to discuss what harm was done to the victim and the best way to move forward and repair the harm. The book endeavors to break down the concept of restorative justice into its most basic elements, such as the nature of victimhood, harm, and restoration, and to expand on these topics as comprehensively as possible to gain a more complete understanding of the whole.

Dr. Daniela Bolívar, who is an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, holds degrees in Psychology, Community Psychology, and Criminological Sciences. She is also an editorial board member of the *International Journal of Restorative Justice* published by Eleven Netherlands. Dr. Bolívar has participated in a number of European research projects and written articles and contributions to books on the topic of restorative justice. In this book, she reviews prior evidence and theories on the subject and presents new research that aims to describe the process of mediation from the victim's perspective. She analyzes the effectiveness of restorative justice through studying both qualitative and quantitative variables. This mixed-method design attempts to overcome the small

sample size in the study and the limits of measures used in past research. The study was conducted by interviewing victims of violent crime in Spain and Belgium who were offered mediation. Study participants were interviewed before and after the mediation sessions or within a certain period if no mediation occurred. Some participants chose direct mediation, some chose indirect mediation, and others chose to not participate in mediation. Quantitative data about the study participants' experience was collected via surveys. The book offers keen insights into victims' perspectives as to why they had chosen to engage in mediation with their perpetrators and provides an understanding of how victims experience restorative justice.

This book, available in hardcopy and as a Kindle e-book, is divided into five chapters, each discussing a relevant aspect of the effectiveness of restorative justice as well as providing a psychosocial analysis of the victim's experience of the restoration process. Chapter 1 provides an overview of past literature and how the success of the restoration process has previously been measured. It also introduces the need for the new research presented in this book by discussing flaws and limitations of variables studied in prior research such as "satisfaction scores" and listing psychological symptoms of victims. Chapter 2 presents qualitative data collected from interviews before mediation had occurred but after it was offered. The victims reflected on their perspectives of the crime, the offender, their role in the offense, and their status as a victim. Chapter 3 examines why victims choose to participate or not participate in mediation. Both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the participants' motivations is presented. Chapter 4 presents findings from the interviews and surveys following the mediation process and discusses why some meetings appeared successful whereas others did not. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and conclusions from the study.

Although forensic psychiatry has historically been more concerned with the criminal offender rather than with the victim's perspective, the two appear to be linked, making restorative justice a topic of increasing importance to forensic psychiatry. One important consideration presented in this book is that some restorative justice practices in certain countries can influence sentencing of the offender. Some findings in the present study revealed that this was an important consideration to the victim as well. Some victims even indicated that their motivations to participate in mediation involved feelings of social

responsibility and, in a few cases, wanting to help the offender or settle a case more peacefully. Many victims wanted to know why the offense occurred from the offender's perspective and how the offender behaved after the mediation occurred. Although this book focuses on the victim's perspective, it would be interesting to also study the offender's experience of mediation. Through the mediation process, one of the hopes expressed by victims was to deter offenders from committing similar crimes in the future.

This book illustrates how abstract the concept of restorative justice is even when broken down into its simplest elements. Contributing research toward this topic presents an enormous challenge in terms of devising appropriate variables to measure and in securing participants. The book discusses several ethics concerns in the research, such as how withholding offers of restorative justice processes could adversely affect victims, thereby making it impossible to randomize research group assignments. Thus, the sample size was small even though participants were drawn from two different counties, Spain and Belgium, with similar practices. To compensate, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to complement each other. One example of this data collection method was that participants were asked to comment on their motivations for participating in mediation in qualitative interviews and then rank these motivations in a survey. This data showed that the most important motivation to the study participants was the desire to express the impact of the crime to the offender. This motivation was frequently identified in interviews through various lenses, such as a longing for recognition of victim status and hope of influencing the offender to reduce future criminal behavior. Even so, the author admits that the ability to generalize from these findings is limited and that the conclusions are mostly theoretical. The study provides valuable insight into the victim's perspective and seems to successfully expand on previous theoretical understandings of how restorative justice is experienced.

Overall, the book provides an excellent introduction to the subject by describing the development of the restorative justice concept over the past few decades and the history of various practices. The critique of prior theories and research appears balanced and fair. The new research presented is thorough despite its limitations and sets up an agenda for future research. Dr. Bolívar approaches a very complex subject by comprehensibly discussing and studying the inherent nuances rather than avoiding them or

oversimplifying them. The information presented in the book is relevant to all fields pertaining to legal processes, including forensic psychiatry.

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Infanticide and Filicide: Foundations in Maternal Mental Health Forensics

Edited by Gina Wong, PhD, and George Parnham, JD.
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Infanticide and Filicide: Foundations in Maternal Mental Health Forensics combines chapters written by social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and attorneys with experience at the intersection of maternal mental health and forensics. As the text states in its introduction, the killing of a child by the mother, maternal filicide, is not a new phenomenon nor specific to any culture. In 2001, Andrea Yates drowned her five children while experiencing postpartum psychosis. Her case serves as the crux of the text, and her defense attorney, George Parnham, JD, as one of the text's coeditors. A portion of this text is an autobiographical account from Mr. Parnham, as he expresses his shock in response to this crime and subsequently his compassion and willingness to learn about Mrs. Yates' state-of-mind. Co-editor Gina Wong, PhD, also brings her expertise as coeditor to this text. Throughout her career as a psychologist, she has diagnosed and treated women with perinatal mental health conditions prior to serving as a perinatal expert witness in Canada.

Infanticide and Filicide is divided into four sections labeled as "foundations." The first uses five chapters to examine the legal aspects of maternal infanticide and filicide, the second explores the impact of perinatal psychiatric complications in such cases, the third discusses the role of the expert witness, and the fourth contains sociocultural considerations and feminist approaches to prevention and