Special Victim Topics

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* **In your own words, define restorative justice, and provide an example of a restorative justice theory (or theories) in use by identifying a public or private program utilizing principles of restorative justice. Provide the Web site address (URL) for the program.**

Restorative justice sees crime not just as disregarding the law rather it focuses on the harm it has caused to an individual and the whole community (Daly, 2016). Therefore, the proper approach in restorative justice is to address the harms along with the wrongdoing. If the parties that are concerned with a certain crime are willing to sit and discuss the harms, it helps them to come up with ideas and solutions to address those harms. From a theoretical perspective, restorative justice theory intends to address the harms and sufferings inflicted by criminal behavior (Daly, 2016). Restorative justice theory suggests that it is in the best interest of all the stakeholders to sit together and reach upon a solution that addresses the harm caused by criminal behavior. An important program based on the principles of restorative justice is the Insight Prison Project. Insight Prison Project is an evidence-based program aimed at cultivating newer behavior propelled by insight, accountability, empathy, and care. Inside Prison Project started in 1997 following an increase in the prison population across the country. The most significant program offered under the Inside Prison Project umbrella is the Victim/Offender Education Group (VOEG). VOEG is based on a curriculum that has been designed by inputs coming from both the victims and the offenders of a violent crime.

Website: <http://www.insightprisonproject.org/>

* **Restorative justice as a way of thinking places a different value on the individual victim(s) of a crime. Historically, the jurisdiction (the people, the state, or the commonwealth) is the party represented by the prosecution, and society as a whole is the victim. How do restorative justice concepts treat the individual victim(s)?**

Victimsof a crime need special attention which why most of the restorative justice programs exercise greater caution when dealing with the victim of a crime (Gavrielides, 2017). Restorative justice treats the victim to help them recover from the trauma of the crime and move ahead with their lives. One important aspect that needs to be taken care of is revictimization of the victims due to the neglect of the system. Therefore, restorative justice system offers legal representation to the victims (Gavrielides, 2017). Moreover, victims of crime have suffered physically and psychologically. Therefore, restorative justice provides victims with an opportunity to meet their physical and psychological needs (Gavrielides, 2017). Lastly, victims have suffered significantly at the hands of offenders and might have a difficult time moving back into society normally. Therefore, restorative justice helps victims to swiftly integrate back into society.

* **What significant challenges do you think exist with regard to implementing restorative justice theories effectively in state and local criminal justice systems in general? Explain. How do you think these challenges can be overcome?**

Although there are numerous challenges faced in implementing restorative justice theories, the problem of institutionalization remains the biggest impediment in the implementation of restorative justice theories (Wood & Suzuki, 2016). Restorative justice theories came forward in opposition to the conventional criminal justice system. The opposition of the conventional criminal justice focused on the fact that conventional justice practices were not meaningful in addressing the damage done to the victims. However, the programs that are drawn upon the concepts of restorative justice theories are institutionalized within the traditional criminal justice system (Wood & Suzuki, 2016). The challenge of institutionalization can be addressed by undertaking structural reforms. These reforms must be based on comprehensive research that allows the newer justice system to be more victim-centered, unlike the conventional criminal justice system which is retributive in nature and criminal centered (Wood & Suzuki, 2016).

**References**

Daly, K. (2016). What is restorative justice? Fresh answers to a vexed question. *Victims & Offenders*, *11*(1), 9-29.

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