Restorative Justice:
Introduction to Contemporary Approaches and Research on Effectiveness

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Overview

What is Restorative Justice?

Common Restorative Justice Applications

Research on the Effectiveness of Restorative Justice
What is Restorative Justice?
Crime is a violation of people and interpersonal relationships.
14 state laws codifying the term restorative justice
González, 2019

34 states with legislation promoting the use of restorative justice practices
Sliva & Lambert, 2015 and Justia US Law

45 states codifying restorative justice into statutory or regulatory law
González, 2019
Restorative Justice Today

- Increasingly being used in the adult criminal justice system
  - Diversion from prosecution
  - Alternative to incarceration
- Hold offenders accountable while reducing reliance on incarceration
- Used as a complement to conventional offender processing
- ALWAYS victim-initiated
Common Restorative Justice Applications
Victim-Offender Mediation

- Property crimes
- Structured setting/mediated discussion
- Develop a restitution plan
- Offenders learn impact/develop plan for making amends
- Material restitution as opposed to emotional restoration or reconciliation
Victim-Offender Dialogue

- Corrections-based victim services
- Overseen by experienced facilitators
- Restore victim’s sense of choice and control
- Can be appropriate for serious crimes
- Agreement/reconciliation not the focus
Restorative Justice Conferencing

- Includes family/friends/key supporters of victim and offender
- Trained facilitator
- Offender describes incident; each participant describes impact
- Victim has opportunity to ask questions about the offense
- All participants contribute to plan for how offender can repair harm
Reparative Boards

- Small group of citizens with intensive training
- Public/face-to-face meetings with offenders ordered by the court to participate
- Nonviolent/minor offenses
- Proposed sanctions discussed and approved by offender
- Reports to court on offender progress on sanctions
Victim Impact Panels

- Victims and group of offenders
- Victims tell their story and the impact of the crime on their lives
- Dialogue is not the focus
- Offender attendance often court-ordered
- Victim service organizations facilitate
Peacemaking Circles

- Wide array of uses
- Victim/offender and their supporters; justice personnel and community members
- Develop plan to address concerns of those affected by a crime
- Designed locally to fit community needs/culture
Apology Banks

- Victims voluntarily receive apology letters from convicted defendant
- Offenders express regret for impact of their actions
- No direct contact between victims and offenders/no facilitated dialogue
- May be used in conjunction with other practices
Research on the Effectiveness of Restorative Justice
Conclusions about what works must be based on highly trustworthy and credible evidence

- Systematic review
  - Synthesize findings from numerous single studies

- Meta-analysis
  - Larger sample size
  - Magnitude of effects across studies
Nugent, et al. (1999)

Bradshaw & Roseborough (2005)

Latimer, et al. (2005)

Bonta, et al. (2006)

Strang, et al. (2013)

Livingstone, et al. (2013)

Early Synthesis
Research on
Restorative
Justice
Nugent, et al. (1999)

Bradshaw & Roseborough (2005)

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Victim-offender mediation
Juveniles
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- Victim-offender mediation
- Restorative Justice Conferencing
- Reparative Boards
- Adults and Juveniles
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Restorative Justice Conferencing Adults and Juveniles
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Restorative Justice Conferencing Young Offenders (7-21)
Recent Meta-Analyses
Wong, et al. (2016)

- 21 independent evaluations of restorative justice diversion programs
  - RCTs and Quasi-experiments
- 5,209 treatment group participants and 13,049 comparison group
  - 12 to 18 years old
- Restorative justice diversion programs produced a statistically significant reduction in recidivism
Wilson, et al. (2017)

- 60 studies involving 84 distinct evaluations
  - RCTs and Quasi-experiments
  - 56% examined an explicitly restorative justice program
- Youth aged 18 and under
- Restorative justice principles led to a moderate, but statistically significant reduction in recidivism
Conclusion and Next Steps

- Restorative justice programs for juveniles a “promising practice”
  - CrimeSolutions.Gov
  - OJJDP’s Model Programs Guide
- Investment in future research is key
  - WHY effective
  - Implementation
Questions?
Thank you!

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References


JUST Alternatives website - [https://justalternatives.org/](https://justalternatives.org/)

Justia US Law website - [https://law.justia.com/](https://law.justia.com/)


