

Predicting Participation in a Victim–Offender Conference

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Keywords

justice, third-party intervention, interpersonal conflict, communication.

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Abstract

According to restorative justice practitioners, participating in a victim–offender conference (VOC) can lead to a number of positive consequences for the parties. For victims in particular, participating in a VOC ostensibly provides a way to talk directly with the offender about the harm done, hold the person accountable, and achieve restoration. Lacking, however, is an understanding of what motivates victim participation. This study investigates how the desire to obtain offender-related outcome goals, victim-related outcome goals, process goals, and information goals influence individuals' willingness to participate in a VOC. The study tested a hypothesized model of VOC participation to understand how goals influenced each other and willingness to participate in a VOC. Several factors, reflecting a helping motivation overall, shaped willingness to participate in a VOC. The manuscript concludes with a discussion of implications for restorative justice researchers and practitioners.

Cast as an alternative to the traditional approach in the West to obtaining justice following an offense (Daly, 2002), restorative justice is “a theory of justice that emphasizes the restoration of individuals, relationships, and communities following behavior perceived as harmful, offensive, or problematic” (Borton, 2009; Braithwaite, 1999, 2002; Johnstone, 2002; Paul, in press; Paul & Borton, 2013; Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Pavlich, 2005; Wenzel, Okimoto, & Cameron, 2012; Zehr, 2002a). Rooted in the theory of restorative justice, victim–offender conferences (VOCs) are unique mechanisms for managing conflict resulting from an offensive event. In VOCs, victims, offenders, and their supporters, with the help of a facilitator, communicate directly with one another several months after the trial about their experience of the offensive event, desired reparation, and ways to move forward (Paul & Borton, 2013; Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Raye & Roberts, 2007; Umbreit, 2001; Zehr, 2002a).

As VOCs have increased in number and visibility, researchers have begun to investigate questions about the effectiveness of VOCs (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005), characteristics of dialogic communication during VOCs (Dignan et al., 2007; Umbreit, 2001), and characteristics of VOC participants (Borton, 2009). Lacking, however, is an understanding of what motivates parties, particularly victims, to participate in VOCs. Reported participation rates following nonviolent crimes, typically involving property damage, have varied between 40% and 74% (Niemeyer & Shichor, 1996; Umbreit, 1994; Umbreit, Coates, & Vos, 2004). That rate drops in cases of violent crime, with Borton (2009) reporting a 25%

The study was funded by a Faculty Enhancement Award from Kansas State University. A prior version of this manuscript was presented at the 2014 National Communication Association conference in Chicago, IL. The author would like to thank Nathaniel Coney, Bill Schenck-Hamlin, Deborah Cai, and two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions on this manuscript.

participation rate. The variability suggests that VOC participation is likely a function of situational factors, personal factors, and relational factors.

The purpose of this study was to examine how such factors influence individuals' willingness to participate in a VOC. Using a goal attainment perspective and Paul and Dunlop's (2014) model of VOC justice, the study attempted to arrive at a model of VOC participation as a function of offender-related outcome goals, victim-related outcome goals, process goals, and information goals, while controlling for situational features. This study makes three contributions. First, it provides an analysis of how justice-related goals influence VOC participation willingness and how those goals are interrelated. Second, it provides a more nuanced understanding of how victims' perceptions of the offense and the offender influence their willingness to engage with the offender. Third, it evaluates the relationships among traditional and restorative goals as they pertain to VOC participation willingness. Although research suggests that the frameworks are oppositional (Zehr, 2002a), research on mixed conflict motives suggests that victims likely pursue punitive and restorative goals (Daly, 2002; Paul & Dunlop, 2014). This article first reviews restorative justice before outlining the hypothesized model of VOC participation, the testing of the model, and the implications of the model for practitioners and researchers.

Restoring Justice

Justice generally refers to "the perception that one is treated fairly or equitably within a given system of rights, responsibilities, and moral values" (Waldron & Kelley, 2008, p. 17). Justice beliefs help individuals ascertain whether a person's actions are fair or unfair, appropriate or inappropriate, and moral or immoral. When a person feels offended or unjustly treated, that person can feel a range of negativity, which is typically expressed in anger, avoidance of the offender, and desire for the offender to be *brought to justice* (Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2009; Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2007; Waldron & Kelley, 2008; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010).

Paul and Dunlop's (2014) model of justice, developed in the context of VOCs, identifies three layers justice orientations following a hurtful event: justice-as-punishment, justice-as-personal-repair, and justice-as-relational-rebalance. Justice-as-punishment is rooted in a *just world* orientation that holds that people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980). The punishment orientation is apparent in calls for offenders to suffer punishment for causing others to suffer. Reflecting principles of restorative justice, justice-as-personal-repair is rooted in the belief that offenders should be held accountable not with punishment but with being asked to repair the material and emotional harm done to the victim through practices such as restitution and apology (Armour & Umbreit, 2006; Morris, 2002; Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Umbreit & Ritter, 2006). Justice-as-relational-rebalance, which also is rooted in restorative justice principles, involves attending to the relationship damage between the victim and the offender and desiring a good and trusting relationship with each other. Although some practitioners hold it up as an ideal goal of restorative justice (Armour & Umbreit, 2006; Morris, 2002; Paul & Dunlop, 2014), not everyone desires relational rebalance (Braithwaite, 1999). Cutting across these three layers, justice-as-human-growth pertains to parties' learning and growing as a result of the offense. Restorative justice emphasizes the importance of learning from mistakes in order to grow, mature, and be restored (Umbreit, 2001; Wachtel & McCold, 2001).

Traditionally, justice-as-punishment is achieved informally and personally as revenge (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Platow, 2008) or formally and institutionally through the traditional legal system (Braithwaite, 1999; Johnstone, 2002; Zehr, 2002a). Victims tend to play a limited role in formal justice processes, having little, if any, interaction with the alleged offender, while officials make arguments to jurors about why the alleged offender should be found innocent or guilty (Pavlich, 2005; Tyler, 2006; Umbreit, 2001; Zehr, 2002a). Critics of this traditional justice approach have argued that it marginalizes victims, fails to address the parties' personal needs, and fails to

help the parties grow and recover (Armour & Umbreit, 2006; Johnstone, 2002; Pavlich, 2005; Zehr, 2002a).

Dissatisfied with traditional justice mechanisms and justice-as-punishment, advocates of restorative justice have urged government officials and justice officials to refer offenders, particularly juveniles, to restorative justice processes following the conclusion of a trial. Resting on values such as healing and growth (Braithwaite, 2002; Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Zehr, 2002a), restorative justice focuses on promoting justice as personal repair, relational rebalance, and human growth through two key practices: dialogic communication between the offender and victim, and restoration of the parties. Dialogic communication, typically facilitated by a third party, is characterized by asking questions of one another about the offense, sharing stories and experiences stemming from that offense, listening empathically, negotiating reparation, and working out their respective ways forward (Black, 2008; Borton, 2009; Braithwaite, 2002; Johnstone, 2002; Paul & Borton, 2013; Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Pavlich, 2005; Raye & Roberts, 2007; Schiff, 2007; Umbreit, 2001; Umbreit, Coates, & Vos, 2007; Zehr, 2002a). Restoration refers to the process of helping all the parties feel whole personally, materially, and possibly relationally (Zehr, 2002b). For victims, restoration is typically accomplished through sharing their stories and having their material, emotional, and relational needs met by the offender. For offenders, restoration is typically experienced through affirmation of themselves as people, the ability to correct a wrongdoing, and possibly forgiveness by the victim.

Victim-offender conferences attempt to foster both dialogic communication and restoration (Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Umbreit, 2001). VOCs typically involve the victim, the offender, and their respective supporters (e.g., family members) coming together in a neutral space to talk through the situation, negotiate reparation, and sort out next steps with the help of a facilitator. VOCs typically occur anywhere from a few months to a year after the trial concludes, meaning that victims and offenders have had a lengthy period of time to evaluate the situation and their justice goals related to that situation. For victims in particular, VOCs are designed to accomplish goals such as empowerment (Braithwaite, 2002; Umbreit, 2001), reparation in the form of restitution and an apology (Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Presser & Hamilton, 2006), a renewed sense of safety and security (Braithwaite, 2002; Morris, 2002), and answers about the offense from the offender (Braithwaite, 2002; Latimer et al., 2005; McCold & Wachtel, 2002; Umbreit et al., 2007; Zehr, 2002b).

Although VOCs appear desirable to some, not all victims want to participate in them, preferring instead to avoid the offender and any engagement with that person. Given that VOCs are designed to help victims achieve particular tangible and intangible goals, examining victims' justice-related goals may help to explain VOC participation willingness.

A Goal Attainment Model of Victim-Offender Conference Participation

In restorative justice, offensive behavior is framed as a conflict-sparking event that should be managed directly by the parties with the help of a facilitator (Johnstone, 2002; Okimoto et al., 2009; Umbreit, 2001). How the parties manage the conflict, for example, by engaging or avoiding, can be traced to goals held by the parties (Canary & Lakey, 2006; Fukushima & Ohbuchi, 1996; Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997; Wang, Fink, & Cai, 2012). Conflict goals shape not only parties' satisfaction with conflict outcomes and processes but also their approach to conflict management (Canary & Lakey, 2006; Wang et al., 2012). Types of goals include instrumental goals pertaining to solving a problem, identity management goals pertaining to self-presentation, and relational goals pertaining to characteristics of the relationship with the other party (Canary & Lakey, 2006).

A goal attainment perspective can be informative when examining victims' willingness to participate in VOCs. Previous research has identified a handful of reasons for victim participation, including instrumental goals such as recouping losses incurred because of the offense (Coates & Gehm, 1989; Peachey, 1989; Umbreit et al., 2004), helping the offender to move forward and get on a better life path (Borton,

2009; Coates & Gehm, 1989; Umbreit et al., 2004), helping the offender learn about accountability (Coates & Gehm, 1989), and finding out the offender's reasons for his or her actions (Borton, 2009; Reeves, 1989; Ruggie & Cormier, 2013; Umbreit et al., 2004). However, if victims do not feel that they are likely to accomplish their goals through a VOC, that the promises of VOCs are not important, or that talking with the offender would be unsafe or not worth their time, they may be more likely to avoid meeting with the offender (Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2013; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). In short, VOC participation is likely rooted in interrelated offender-, victim-, process-, and information-related goals, which in turn are rooted in affect toward the offender (Okimoto et al., 2009; Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010; Wyrick & Costanzo, 1999).

Toward a Hypothesized Model of VOC Participation Willingness

Offender-related outcome goals, which refer to those outcomes desired by the victim for the offender, are rooted in justice orientations of punishment, personal growth of the offender, and relationship rebalance with the offender (Paul & Dunlop, 2014). Punishment involves traditional understandings of *getting justice* in wanting the victim to experience negative, unpleasant consequences in return for hurting them. Punishment goals stand in contrast to goals rooted in the justice-as-human-growth orientation, which promotes offender restoration, in the form of learning from the event and getting on a better life path (Paul & Dunlop, 2014), and goals rooted in the justice-as-relational-rebalance orientation, which involves the desire to rebuild a trusting relationship with the offender. Maintaining the goal of punishment, which is likely the first goal held by victims (Okimoto et al., 2009; Tripp et al., 2007), is likely to lessen the desire for restorative goals such as offender restoration (H_{1a}) and relational rebalance (H_{1b}), given that punishment is associated with little desire for a continued relationship (Braithwaite, 1999) and low individual support (McCold & Wachtel, 2002).

In terms of the relationships between goals rooted in offender restoration as human growth and relational rebalance, the desire for relational rebalance is likely to promote a desire for offender restoration, partly because both desires involve a helping motivation that results in wanting to see the offenders find a better path in life. However, as noted by scholars who distinguish between forgiveness and reconciliation (Waldron & Kelley, 2008; Worthington, 2003), the desire for offender restoration may not predict whether a victim desires a relationship because one can hope a person learns without necessarily desiring a future relationship with that person (Paul & Dunlop, 2014; Umbreit, 2001). Thus, the desire for relational rebalance likely increases the desire for offender restoration (H_2).

Offender-related outcome goals are likely rooted in the victim's feelings toward the offender. Affective empathy (Batson et al., 1988; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998; Paul & Dunlop, 2014) is one such emotion that facilitators may hope to stimulate while encouraging victims to participate in VOCs, particularly when framing VOCs as an opportunity to help the offender (Paul & Borton, 2013). Affective empathy is "an other-oriented emotional response congruent with the perceived welfare of another person" (Batson et al., 1988, p. 52). Affective empathy typically involves feeling compassion and sympathy for a harmdoer instead of anger and negativity (McCullough, 2001; McCullough et al., 1998). Affective empathy is positively associated with feelings of concern for others and positively influences the practice of forgiveness (Batson et al., 1988; McCullough et al., 1997, 1998; Paul & Dunlop, 2014), which involves at least the elimination of anger and negativity toward the harmdoer (McCullough, 2001; Waldron & Kelley, 2008) that likely results from an offensive situation (Anderson & Guerrero, 1998; Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005; McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006). Additionally, the empathy-altruism hypothesis (Batson et al., 1988) argues that feelings of empathy promote the motivation to help others. In the case of injustice, this means that affective empathy likely positively influences the desires for relationship repair (H_{3a}) and offender restoration (H_{3b}) and negatively influences the desire to see the offender punished (H_{3c}) (Braithwaite, 1999; McCullough et al., 1998; Okimoto et al., 2009; Zehr, 2002a).

Together, affective empathy and offender-related justice orientations are likely to influence what victims want *from* the offender (i.e., victim-related outcome goals). Research on reasons for victim participation point to the desire for offenders to make things right materially, emotionally, and relationally (Borton, 2009; Coates & Gehm, 1989; Peachey, 1989; Presser & Hamilton, 2006; Reeves, 1989; Ruge & Cormier, 2013; Schiff, 2007; Umbreit et al., 2004; Zehr, 2002a). Material restoration is accomplished through tangible restitution by the offender, such as financial reimbursement, material replacement, or task completion to pay back the losses. Restitution communicates to the victim that the offender is taking responsibility for the results of the hurtful activity (McCold & Wachtel, 2002; Schiff, 2007; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Forster, & Montada, 2004). Relational and emotional restoration in VOCs is typically accomplished through an apology. Apologies convey remorse and guilt for an offense, thereby communicating the acceptance of blame and the desire to no longer be seen in light of the event (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1997; Takaku, 2001).

Affective empathy and offender-focused justice orientations, in turn, likely influence the desires for restitution and apologies. However, the nature of this influence is complex given contrasting definitions of accountability (Newbury, 2008). On the one hand, the desire for offender punishment may heighten the desire for restitution and the desire for offender apology because both practices have a punitive element to them in that they are ways to exert power over the offender (Presser & Hamilton, 2006). Restitution, for example, can be a way to make sure the offender feels the pain of having to pay for damages, while apology can be a way to make an offender experience shame (Okimoto et al., 2009; Zechmeister, Garcia, Romero, & Vas, 2004; Zernova, 2007). On the other hand, the desires for offender restoration and relationship repair also may shape victims' desires for reparation and apology in that victims may want their concern for the offender to be reciprocated by that offender. They may also see restitution and apology as educational tools that help to reintegrate the offender symbolically back into the moral community (Zernova, 2007). Additionally, affective empathy may lessen the victim's desire for reparation by motivating them to take pity on the offender by reducing their desire for material restitution (H_{4a}). In short, the victim-oriented desires for restitution and apology are likely to be positively influenced by desires for offender punishment (H_{4b}), offender restoration (H_{4c}), and relational rebalance (H_{4d}). Additionally, if both restitution and apology have a punitive dimension, the desire for restitution is likely also to increase victims' desire for an apology as a way to make offenders make things right (H_{4e}). However, the converse may not be true, in that victims may simply want an apology without wanting to be reimbursed, particularly if they have a high degree of empathy for the offender.

These outcome goals likely motivate information- and process-related goals of obtaining answers from the offender and becoming involved in a justice process like a VOC. One reason that offensive situations arouse fear in victims is that victims lack an explanation or information about the event, particularly regarding the offender's motivation (why) and the offender's reasons for hurting them (why me) (Paul & Borton, 2013). Obtaining answers from the offender can help victims make sense of the situation and move forward (Paul & Borton, 2013; Paul & Dunlop, 2014). Additionally, having offenders answer questions may be a way for victims to evaluate whether the offender holds a similar desire to grow or engage in relational rebalance. Finally, victims may have a desire to interrogate offenders in order to make them feel shame in answering difficult questions about their answers. Thus, not only is the desire to obtain answers likely influenced positively by victims' desires for apology and reparation (H_{5a}), it is also likely influenced positively by desires for relationship repair (H_{5b}), offender restoration (H_{5c}), and punishment (H_{5d}) in the same way as apology and reparation.

Together, these offender- and victim-related outcome goals influence victims' desire to become involved in a justice process. Desired involvement is utilitarian—a means for accomplishing offender- and victim-related outcome goals. For example, victims adopting a justice-as-punishment orientation may be motivated to become involved in order to satisfy their punitive desire to make the offender experience negativity and shame by telling the offender personally about their negative experiences. Victims also may want to involve themselves in this justice process in order to have their questions answered,

ensure that they receive reparation, and seek out an apology from the offender (Paul & Borton, 2013; Paul & Dunlop, 2014). Thus, involvement is likely positively influenced by a desire for offender punishment (H_{6a}), a desire for answers (H_{6b}), and a desire for restitution and apology (H_{6c}).

Based on the relationships hypothesized thus far and existing findings regarding victims' reasons for participating, willingness to participate in a VOC likely is rooted in offender-related and victim-related outcome goals, process goals, and information goals. The desire to meet may be rooted in both punitive (H_{7a}) and restorative orientations (H_{7b}) toward the offender (Zernova, 2007). Additionally, victims wanting to accomplish relational rebalance may be more willing to engage with the other person by meeting together (H_{7c}) (Folger et al., 2013). In terms of self-related outcome goals, victims may see a VOC as an effective opportunity to obtain apology in person and tell the offender directly about their desire for restitution, thereby becoming more willing to participate (H_{7d}). Finally, if victims are wanting answers and are wanting to be involved in a justice process, they are likely more willing to participate, particularly given that VOCs are typically explicitly framed as a way to involve the victim (H_{7e}) (Braithwaite, 1999, 2002; Umbreit, 2001; Umbreit et al., 2004; Zehr, 2002a). Essentially, the existing literature leads to a rather saturated hypothesized structural model (see Figure 1).

In testing the hypothesized model, the study controls for situational variables that likely influence whether victims engage or avoid a VOC: pre-offense closeness with the offender, the perceived degree of responsibility taken by the offender for the behavior, and the severity of the offense as perceived by the victim. For example, pre-offense closeness may influence motivation to participate, not only because of its correlation with affective empathy (McCullough et al., 1998), but also because it may motivate victims to desire reciprocated concern from the offender in the form of a sincere apology (McCullough et al., 1998). Responsibility-taking by the offender during the trial may shape the victim's perception of the offender and the offense, with apologies having a more mitigating effect than rejections of responsibility (Gonzales, Manning, & Haugen, 1992; Gonzales, Pederson, Manning, & Wetter, 1990; Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996; Takaku, 2001). Finally, severity is likely to influence the degree of affective empathy felt for the offender and the extent to which victims desire restitution and an apology from the

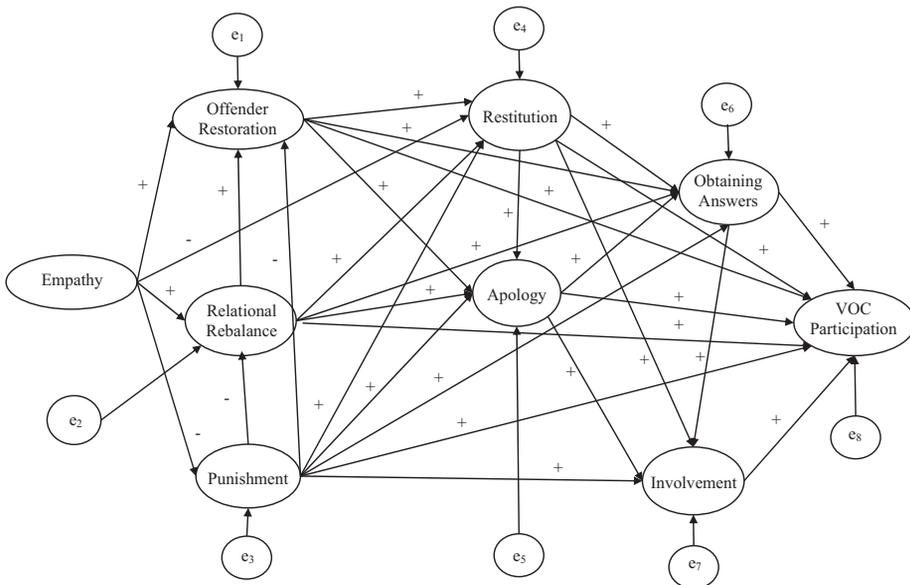


Figure 1. Hypothesized structural model. Hypothesized relationships, as identified above, are depicted as either positive (+) or negative (-).

offender (Kelley & Waldron, 2005, 2006). Given the timing of VOCs, victims typically have several months to process these situational features. Consequently, when victims are asked by facilitators to consider VOC participation, these perceptions likely have been interwoven with their justice orientations, desired outcomes, information goals, and process goals. Thus, in testing the hypothesized model, this study controlled for the effects of relationship history, acceptance of responsibility by the offender, and perceived severity of the offense on VOC participation willingness.

Methods

Because specific behavior is better predicted by specific attitudes rather than general attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), to test the model, participants were asked to indicate how they would react if they were the victim of a specific offense. The design was similar to that used by Witvliet et al. (2008) to study the link between forgiveness and justice, in which participants imagined being the victim of a crime. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four offense conditions created by manipulating the situational variables of relationship history with the offender and acceptance of responsibility by the offender: known offender who apologizes [KA], known offender who denies responsibility [KD], unknown offender who apologizes [UA], and unknown offender who denies responsibility [UD]. After reading the vignette of the offense, participants answered a series of items that assessed their perception of the offense, desired offender-related outcome goals, self-related outcome goals, information-related goals, process-related goals, and VOC participation willingness.

Sampling and Participants

Individuals were identified through a two-step network sampling process intended to arrive at a diverse sample. The first step in the sampling process involved recruiting students in general education classes at a large Midwestern university to ask them for contact information of other students at the university and of people they knew who were 25 years of age or older. After obtaining this information, the researcher sent an email to each recruit, on which the student who identified that recruit was copied. The email indicated that the recruit had been identified as a potential participant by the student, provided the person with information about the study, requested the person's participation in the study, and provided the link to the online questionnaire hosted by Qualtrics. In cases when the recruit did not complete the questionnaire after the first email, a follow-up reminder email was sent. Emails were sent to 224 people, with 140 people beginning the questionnaire and 131 completing it, generating a 58.4% completion rate. There were relatively equal numbers of completions (KA = 33; KD = 31; UA = 33; UD = 34) and non-completions in each of the four groups (KA = 2, KD = 3, UA = 1, UD = 3).

The sampling method achieved desired diversity with regard to sex (63 men, 68 women) and age ($M = 29.21$, $SD = 12.62$). The vast majority ($n = 107$) identified as Caucasian, with two identifying as Black, six identifying as Asian, four identifying as Latino(a), and 12 identifying as *other* (e.g., Native American, biracial). Participants reported being relatively unfamiliar with restorative justice ($M = 2.11/5$, $SD = 1.09$). Approximately 29% of the sample ($n = 39$) indicated that they had been a victim of a property crime, and four had participated previously in a VOC. In comparing previous victims and non-victims, a slightly higher number of men ($n = 24$) than women ($n = 15$) reported being victims, $\chi^2(1) = 4.02$, $p = .045$. However, there was no difference between victims and nonvictims in terms of age, $t(129) = 1.36$, $p = .176$, nor did they differ significantly with regard to which vignette they were given, $\chi^2(3) = 1.17$, $p = .759$. Additionally, familiarity with restorative justice was statistically equivalent between victims ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.23$) and nonvictims ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.04$), $t(129) = 0.492$, $p = .624$; between men ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.12$) and women ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.06$), $t(129) = 1.484$, $p = .140$; and by age, $r(131) = -.098$, $p = .264$.

Procedures

After agreeing to participate, participants read a short vignette asking them to imagine that they were the victim of a property offense:

After a long day at work, you come home and find your front door kicked in. When you walk in, you see your place trashed, with your computer, television, and other valuables gone. The police eventually find the person who did this, but not your belongings.

The vignette was based on a property crime offense because that constitutes the majority of offenses addressed in victim-offender dialogue (Peachey, 1989; Umbreit et al., 2004; Wyrick & Costanzo, 1999). The specific crime also was selected because it could pertain to both students and nonstudents. The end of the vignette was then manipulated based on relationship history with the offender and acceptance of responsibility by the offender in court. For example, the group with a known offender who apologized read, "Apparently, the offender is a teenager who lives next door. You've had several nice conversations with him actually. In court, the teenager accepts responsibility and pleads guilty to breaking in and stealing your computer." The group with the unknown offender who denies responsibility read, "Apparently, the offender is a teenager you've never met and who lives on the other side of town. In court, the teenager denies responsibility but is found guilty of breaking in and stealing your computer."

After reading the vignette, participants were asked five manipulation check questions pertaining to the severity of the offense (three items), relationship history with the offender (one item), and acceptance of responsibility by the offender (one item). Participants were then asked about how they would respond in the situation in terms of affective empathy for the offender; their offender-related outcome goals of punishment, restoration, and relational rebalance; their victim-related outcome goals of apology and restitution; and their process- and information-related goals of obtaining answers and process involvement. They were then asked to indicate their willingness to participate in a VOC based on this situation.

Measures

To assess the model constructs, two existing measures were used: McCullough et al.'s (1998) measure of affective empathy and the justice beliefs questionnaire (Paul, in press). The empathy measure, which was based on work by Batson, reviewed above, has been used to assess affective empathy for an offender following a transgression (McCullough et al., 1998). The measure is made up of four items that evaluate the extent to which people feel empathic, moved, concerned, and softhearted for an offender. The justice beliefs questionnaire, based on Paul and Dunlop's (2014) theory of VOC justice, is made up of several subscales that evaluate justice beliefs pertaining to outcomes, process, and interaction during justice proceedings. The measure has been successful in appropriately distinguishing and assessing justice beliefs of VOC facilitators and members of the general public evaluated in the study. For this study, items were adapted from the justice beliefs measure to assess desires for offender punishment, offender restoration, relational rebalance, obtaining answers, involvement, reparation as restitution, and reparation as apology. Similar to other studies assessing behavioral willingness (e.g., Morgan & Miller, 2002), willingness to participate in a VOC was measured with three items that assessed the extent to which participants were agreeable, open, and willing to meet with the offender.

Confirmatory factor analysis, using the Amos extension of SPSS (IBM Corp., 2013) was conducted to develop a measurement model for the above-identified variables and to confirm the expected item loadings. Individual items were loaded into the program as observed variables explained by their intended latent variables to create the measurement model. To evaluate the fit of the measurement model to the data, multiple statistical indices were used (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006), including the χ^2 statistic, for which a nonsignificant statistic reflects appropriate fit to the data (Barrett, 2007; Mulaik et al., 1989); the relative χ^2 , for which a ratio of $\chi^2/df < 3:1$ indicates appropriate fit for sample

sizes with 100 participants or more (Kenny & McCoach, 2003; Wang et al., 2012); the incremental fit index (IFI), which is appropriate in samples under 200 (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988; Mulaik et al., 1989) and for which a value greater than or equal 0.95 indicates acceptable fit; the comparative fit index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990), which is evaluated similarly to the IFI; and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Browne & Cudeck, 1993), for which values $\leq .06$ reflect acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The initial analysis revealed a marginally well-fitting measurement model, $\chi^2(369) = 581.59, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.576, IFI = 0.929, CFI = 0.927, RMSEA = .064$ (see Table 1). Two items—one pertaining to relational rebalance and one pertaining to obtaining answers—appeared to have significantly lower R^2 values than other items loading onto the same latent variables. After trimming these items, the trimmed measurement model had a better fit with the data, $\chi^2(314) = 464.48, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.479, IFI = 0.946, CFI = 0.944, RMSEA = .059$. Although the chi-square calculation was significant, this result may have occurred due to factors other than model misspecification, making the other indices important statistics to consider (Mulaik, 1987; Mulaik et al., 1989). In this case, the relative χ^2/df ratio and RMSEA indicated acceptable fit. Additionally, although the IFI and CFI values were slightly below the conservative 0.95 threshold, the values were well above the 0.90 threshold for marginal fit, falling closer to the 0.95 threshold.

To ascertain whether Model 1 or Model 2 was a better fitting model, a χ^2 difference test (χ^2_{diff}) was run (Bollen, 1989). This test involves calculating a χ^2_{diff} statistic by subtracting the χ^2 statistic of the initial, smaller model (Model 2) from that of the larger model (Model 1), calculating the difference in degrees of freedom (df_{diff}) by subtracting the degrees of freedom of the smaller model from the larger model and then comparing the χ^2_{diff} statistic with the critical χ^2 value ($\chi^2_{critical}$) at df_{diff} degrees of freedom at the $p = .05$ level. Based on this test, the smaller model is retained if the χ^2_{diff} value is greater than or equal to the $\chi^2_{critical}$ value at df_{diff} degrees of freedom. The test resulted in a χ^2_{diff} value of 117.11 (581.59–464.48), which was greater than the $\chi^2_{critical}$ value (73.31, $df = 55, p < .001$). The test indicated that the trimmed model (Model 2) provided a better fit to the data than the larger initial model. In all, the measurement model had a reasonable and acceptable fit to the data. Additionally, all measures were reliable, with reliability values ranging from 0.85 to 0.94 (see Table 2).

Results

Data analysis first involved evaluating the effectiveness of the vignette manipulation. The hypothesized model was then evaluated for its goodness of fit with the data while also evaluating the influence of situational variables added as exogenous control variables.

Manipulation Check

Intergroup differences were evaluated along three dimensions: perceived severity of the offense, perceived acceptance of responsibility, and perceived relationship history. Three 2 (responsibility) \times 2 (history) factorial ANOVAs were run on the variables. The results showed no significant differences in perceived

Table 1
Goodness-of-Fit Indicators for Measurement Models

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	IFI	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2_{diff}
Model 1	581.59***	369	1.576	0.929	0.927	.064	–
Model 2	464.48***	314	1.479	0.946	0.944	.059	117.11***

Note. CFI, comparative fit index; IFI, incremental fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 2
Beta Weights and Squared Multiple Correlations of Measurement Model

Item	β	R^2
Affective empathy ($\alpha = .88$)		
I would feel softhearted toward the offender	.857	.735
I would feel concerned for the offender	.717	.515
I would feel moved for the offender	.894	.799
I would feel empathic toward the offender	.811	.657
Victim involvement ($\alpha = .85$)		
I would want to have an influential role in determining consequences for the offender	.828	.686
I would want to have a voice in the justice process	.767	.589
I would want to be able to influence the justice process	.838	.702
Offender restoration ($\alpha = .87$)		
I would want the offender to feel like he can learn from this situation	.918	.843
I would want the offender to grow from this	.910	.828
I would care that the offender got on a better path in life	.709	.502
Apology ($\alpha = .86$)		
I would want the offender to apologize to me	.952	.907
I would want a formal apology from the offender	.837	.701
I would want to hear the offender sincerely tell me that he's sorry	.721	.520
Restitution ($\alpha = .91$)		
I would want to try to get reimbursed for what the repairs cost me	.873	.761
I would want the offender to pay me back for the damage he caused	.879	.772
I would want the offender to pay for the repairs to the damage he caused	.903	.816
Get questions answered ($\alpha = .91$)		
I would want to ask the offender questions about what he did	.929	.864
I would want to get my questions answered by the offender	.943	.889
I would want to hear the offender tell me his reasons for doing this to me	.772	.596
Relational rebalance ($\alpha = .90$)		
I would want a good relationship with the offender going forward	.945	.893
I would want the offender and me to trust one another after this	.871	.758
Punishment ($\alpha = .82$)		
I would want the offender to be punished at least as severely as his offense	.786	.618
I would want the offender to suffer in some way for what he did	.838	.702
I would want the offender to be punished	.669	.448
I would want the offender to feel negative consequences for hurting me	.694	.482
VOC participation ($\alpha = .94$)		
I would agree to talk with the offender in a dialogue	.916	.839
I would be open to meeting with the offender in a dialogue	.930	.865
I would be willing to have a dialogue with him about the situation	.933	.870

Note. VOC, victim-offender conference.

offense severity among the groups, $F(3, 132) = 0.324, p = .808$, but did show significant differences for both acceptance of responsibility, $F(3, 131) = 43.247, p < .001, \eta^2 = .498$, and relationship history, $F(3, 131) = 72.940, p < .001, \eta^2 = .626$ (see Table 3 for descriptives). Post hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that the manipulations of relationship history and responsibility acceptance were effective.

Justice Beliefs and Demographics

Analysis of differences in model variables based on sex, age, and victim history revealed no significant differences based on gender and no significant correlations with age. With victim history, the only

Table 3
Manipulation Check on Severity, Relationship History, and Responsibility Acceptance

	Perceived severity		Acceptance of responsibility		Relationship history	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Known offender, apology	4.41	0.619	3.85	0.989	3.09	0.712
Known offender, denial	4.51	0.707	1.81	1.355	3.03	0.861
Unknown offender, apology	4.54	0.547	3.81	1.120	1.09	0.390
Unknown offender, denial	4.45	0.682	1.54	1.537	1.30	0.845

differences that emerged were with empathy and desired punishment, with victims reporting feeling less empathy for the offender than nonvictims, $t(129) = -2.61, p = .01, M_{\text{victim}} = 2.54, SD_{\text{victim}} = 0.80, M_{\text{non-victim}} = 2.94, SD_{\text{non-victim}} = 0.82$, and expressing a greater desire to see the offender punished than nonvictims, $t(129) = 2.11, p = .036, M_{\text{victim}} = 3.68, SD_{\text{victim}} = 0.88, M_{\text{non-victim}} = 3.36, SD_{\text{non-victim}} = 0.76$. No differences emerged between victims and nonvictims with regard to the other model variables, including willingness to participate in a VOC.

Predicting Willingness to Participate in Victim–Offender Conference

The hypothesized model presented in Figure 1 was tested against the data to check for goodness of fit using Amos (IBM Corp., 2013). As with the measurement model, the structural model comprising the latent variables was evaluated using the $\chi^2, \chi^2/df$ ratio, IFI, CFI, and RMSEA statistical indices. Examination of the hypothesized model revealed a good fit with the data, $\chi^2(6) = 4.138, p = .658, \chi^2/df = 0.690, IFI = 1.004, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000$ (see Table 4 for correlations, means, and standard deviations). Examination of the standardized regression weights revealed several nonsignificant paths. Given the goal of developing a parsimonious model with good fit to the data (Mulaik et al., 1989), the next step in the analysis involved eliminating all paths that were nonsignificant at the $p < .05$ level while still ensuring that the path trimming was consistent with existing theory and research.

Table 4
Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Model Variables

	AE	REB	OR	PUN	REST	APOL	ANS	INV	VOC
AE	–								
REB	.722***	–							
OR	.504***	.482***	–						
PUN	-.292**	-.144	-.163	–					
REST	-.283**	-.202*	.048	.409***	–				
APOL	.224*	.311***	.284**	.260**	.393***	–			
ANS	.133	.233**	.226**	.203*	.314***	.525***	–		
INV	-.160	-.084	-.057	.343***	.280**	.218*	.326***	–	
VOC	.332***	.395***	.500***	.000	.115	.388***	.610***	.013	–
<i>M</i>	2.82	2.77	4.01	3.45	4.24	3.83	3.82	3.63	3.64
<i>SD</i>	0.83	1.02	0.72	0.80	0.73	0.85	0.93	0.72	0.86

Note. AE, affective empathy; REB, relational rebalance; OR, offender restoration; PUN, offender punishment; REST, restitution; APOL, apology; ANS, obtaining answers; INV, involvement in justice process; VOC, willingness to participate in victim–offender conference.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The second model (Model 2) also demonstrated good fit to the data, $\chi^2(20) = 18.713$, $p = .541$, $\chi^2/df = 0.936$, IFI = 1.003, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000. Examination of the paths indicated that all paths except for one (from punishment to apology, $p = .058$) were significant at the $p < .05$ level. Although consideration was given to trimming this path, the addition of the control variables (discussed below) revealed that the path was significant. Thus, it was retained. As with the evaluation of the measurement models, a χ^2 difference test (χ^2_{diff}) was used to ascertain whether Model 2 or Model 1 provided a better fit to the data (see Table 5). This test resulted in a nonsignificant difference $\chi^2_{diff}(14) = 14.575$, $p = .407$, indicating that Model 2 was preferable to the larger hypothesized model.

Controlling for Severity, History, and Responsibility

The final stage in the analysis was to control for the influence of situational variables on willingness to participate in a VOC. The control variables of perceived severity of offense, perception of responsibility taken by the offender, and perception of relationship history were added to Model 2 as exogenous variables. After trimming paths that were nonsignificant in this initial analysis, a final examination of the trimmed model was conducted, revealing a good fit with the data, $\chi^2(35) = 31.577$, $p = .634$, $\chi^2/df = 0.902$, IFI = 1.008, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000, that were not significantly different from the larger controlled model, $\chi^2_{diff} = 10.771$, $p = .148$, and were, therefore, preferable.

The final model (see Figure 2 and Table 6) indicated that willingness to participate in a VOC was most directly affected by goals of obtaining answers from the offender ($\beta = .59$), offender restoration ($\beta = .37$), and process involvement ($\beta = -.15$). Other features were noteworthy as well. First, affective empathy influenced both positive offender-related outcomes ($\beta_{reconciliation} = .72$; $\beta_{restoration} = .32$) and negative offender-related outcomes ($\beta_{punishment} = -.29$). However, punishment did not exert a significant influence on restoration or relationship goals, suggesting that restoration and punishment desires can be held simultaneously by victims. Second, offender-related outcome goals influenced what victims wanted from them. The desire for an apology was largely a product of both relational rebalance goals ($\beta = .44$) and the desire for punishment ($\beta = .15$). Likewise, desired restitution was influenced positively by desires for offender growth ($\beta = .26$) and desired punishment ($\beta = .36$). Third, desired involvement emerged as rather punitive, shaped by punishment goals ($\beta = .29$) and the desire for answers ($\beta = .27$). Finally, of the situational variables, perceived severity had the most extensive influence, being negatively correlated with empathy ($r = -.194$, $p < .05$) and positively influencing the desire for an apology. The extent to which the offender took responsibility, while not significantly related to affective empathy ($r = .100$, $p = .255$), did have a significant negative correlation with severity perceptions ($r = -.181$, $p < .05$), which aligns with existing research on the mitigating consequences of apologies (Gonzales et al., 1990, 1992; Takaku, 2001). Overall, the model suggests that VOC participation is a mixed motive practice rooted in both punitive and restorative motivations.

Discussion

Victim-offender conferences provide an opportunity for victims, offenders, and their supporters to engage with each other directly to attempt to accomplish their personal and relational justice goals. For

Table 5
Goodness-of-Fit Indicators for Structural Models

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	IFI	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2_{diff} with Model 1
Model 1	4.138	6	0.690	1.004	1.000	.000	—
Model 2	18.713	20	0.936	1.003	1.000	.000	14.57

Note. CFI, comparative fit index; IFI, incremental fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

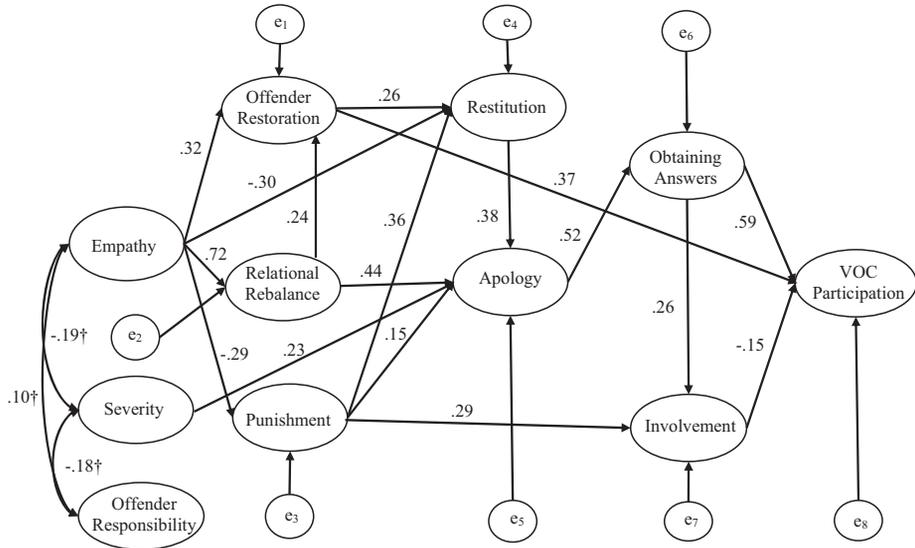


Figure 2. Final structural model with control variables. All coefficients shown are standardized. Correlations among exogenous variables are marked with a †. Model fit: $\chi^2(35) = 31.577, p = .634, \chi^2/df = 0.902, IFI = 1.008, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000$.

Table 6
Beta Weights Exogenous and Endogenous Variables

Criterion variable	Predictor variable	β
Relational rebalance	Affective empathy	.722***
	Offender restoration	.326**
Offender restoration	Relational rebalance	.247*
	Offender punishment	-.292***
Restitution	Offender restoration	.263**
	Offender punishment	.361***
Apology	Affective empathy	-.309***
	Relational rebalance	.444***
	Restitution	.386***
	Offender punishment	.152*
Obtaining answers	Offense severity	.232***
	Apology	.521***
Desired involvement	Offender punishment	.290***
	Obtaining answers	.269***
VOC participation	Desired involvement	-.157*
	Obtaining answers	.595***
	Offender restoration	.370***

Note. VOC, victim-offender conference.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

victims, faced with the prospect of talking to someone who caused them pain, stress, and difficulty, participation in VOCs can be problematic. The findings presented here suggest that willingness to participate in a VOC is a product of a motivation to help both the offender and oneself as the victim. This helping motivation was evident in offender-related outcome goals, victim-related outcome goals, and process and information goals.

In terms of offender-related outcomes, the helping motivation was evident in the direct influence of desired offender restoration and the indirect influence of desired relationship rebalance (Braithwaite, 2002; McCold & Wachtel, 2002). The desire for relational rebalance may be less influential because of the straining consequences of offensive events on relationships (Kelley & Waldron, 2005; Waldron & Kelley, 2008; Zechmeister et al., 2004) and because victims are likely cautious when it comes to reconciling with someone who has hurt them (Worthington, 2003). Together, these goals reflected personal concern for the offender, which is indicative of a humanistic paradigm that focuses attention on people and the consequences of the event on those people and the larger community (Umbreit, 2001). Seeing VOC participation through a helping lens also helps to explain the minimal impact of punishment. On the one hand, punishment goals negatively influenced VOC participation willingness by promoting a desired involvement in the justice process, which negatively influenced VOC participation. Such involvement appeared to be a product of a retributive desire to *get justice* directly. On the other hand, punishment goals promoted the desire for restitution and apology, *positively* shaping desired participation. In short, victims appeared to hold both restorative and punitive outcome goals, with restorative goals more strongly influencing VOC participation.

Offender-related outcome goals, in turn, influenced victim-related goals of restitution and apology. Desires for restitution and apology appeared to be products of punitive and restorative orientations. From a punitive perspective, restitution and apologies were ways to make the offender feel discomfort from having to pay for the damages personally and shame from apologizing (Baumeister et al., 1997). In other words, victims wanted to make the offenders pay both materially and symbolically. From a restorative perspective, restitution was a way to work with the offender to foster learning about the consequences of offensive behavior by addressing it personally (Wachtel & McCold, 2001). The desire for apology appeared to be rooted in desire for reciprocated relationship concern. Researchers have consistently observed the reparative consequences of apologies (Armour & Umbreit, 2006; Baumeister et al., 1997; Kelley & Waldron, 2005; McCullough, 2001; McCullough et al., 1998; Schneider, 2000; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Platow, 2010). The model suggests such consequences may be a product of victims being satisfied that their desire for an apology was met or that the offender reciprocated their relationship rebalance concern. Thus, from a punitive orientation, restitution and apology are ends unto themselves as ways of making the offender experience negative and shaming consequences; from a restorative orientation, restitution and apology are means to the end of helping offenders experience personal and relational growth.

In terms of the influence of restitution and apology on VOC participation willingness, the model suggests that desires for reparation spark in victims a desire to talk with offenders to obtain information about what happened and why, which in turn influences VOC participation willingness. Victim participation, then, results from an evaluation of the utility of a VOC to accomplish outcome goals. Victims with a low desire for reparation may want little to do with the offender, and therefore have little desire to hear from the offender or participate in a VOC. Thus, it is not the desires for reparation per se that motivate participation, but rather victims' need to talk to the offender directly to obtain information, restitution, and an apology.

Finally, when considering situational variables, two findings are noteworthy. The first is that perceived severity indirectly influenced VOC participation willingness by promoting the (punitive) desire for an apology and by lowering affective empathy for the offender. If VOC participation is indeed rooted in a helping motivation, victims who have suffered a severe offense are likely motivated not to *help* the person but to *get retribution* against the person (Kelley & Waldron, 2006; Tripp et al., 2007). This finding may help to explain the low participation rates in victim-sensitive victim-offender conferencing, when victims are likely to have little compassion and concern for the offender (Paul & Borton, 2013; Umbreit, 2001). Second, offender acceptance of responsibility by apologizing is associated with lower perceived offense severity. This may spring from the belief that the offender would not apologize unless he or she is mindful of and sensitive to the consequences of the harmful act (McCullough, 2001; Risen & Gilovich, 2007;

Takaku, 2001). This reassurance may lower the perceived severity of the offense (Kelley & Waldron, 2006) and the resulting emotional negativity (Kelley & Waldron, 2005; Schmitt et al., 2004), thereby indirectly increasing VOC participation willingness. VOCs, then, become sites where victims and offenders give and receive the help they need through dialogic communication to accomplish restoration.

Implications

In terms of theoretical implications, the findings lend initial support to Paul and Dunlop's (2014) layered model of VOC justice and the notion that justice-as-punishment is conceptually different from restorative definitions of justice. The findings also lend support for a tensional understanding of restorative justice that sees justice as a product of punitive and restorative orientations. Rather than arguing that punitive justice detracts from motivation to participate, whereas restorative thinking promotes participation, the model asserts that VOCs can fulfill both punitive and restorative motivations (Zernova, 2007). Restorative justice, then, becomes a negotiated product of multiple justice orientations and motivations (Paul & Borton, 2013).

In terms of practice, the results most concretely apply to how representatives of restorative justice organizations can talk about VOCs and address the goals and concerns of prospective participants (Paul & Borton, 2013). Representatives should evaluate victims' restorative and punitive orientations, assess emotions such as affective empathy, and identify concrete outcome goals held in the situation. Facilitators may be more effective in increasing participation by emphasizing the ability to help the offender grow and to help victims by obtaining answers. However, representatives should be mindful of how situational factors, personal factors, and environmental factors may shape participation motivation and willingness. The introduction of restorative justice to prospective participants is a crucial opportunity for framing the purposes of VOCs and matching that framing to participants' goals for the VOC. Additionally, facilitators should not discount or ignore potential punishment goals. After all, the model indicates that restorative and punitive outcome goals can, in fact, coexist. Instead, while acknowledging victims' desire to punish the offender, facilitators should focus more on talking with victims about how VOCs can be ways to help both the offender and themselves.

The ethical dimension of encouraging VOC participation should be noted before continuing. VOCs can help to break detrimental avoidance cycles such as avoid-avoid, in which offenders and victims avoid each other; avoid-escalate-avoid, in which a tit-for-tat game of personal revenge emerges; and avoid-criticize, in which the parties avoid each other while criticizing each other to their supporters (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). However, facilitators must be open to the idea that avoidance may be the more constructive path forward for victims. Talking victims into meeting with offenders—however well-intentioned—can put victims into an untenable position of trying to resist the overtures of someone who is ostensibly there to help them. Ultimately, this action could undermine the effectiveness of the VOC.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be noted. First, as with other studies based upon vignettes, this study necessarily relied on people *imagining* themselves in a particular situation. Although study participants appeared to perceive the event as severe and the manipulations functioned as intended, what people *think* they would feel and do may differ from what people *actually* feel and do in that situation. Given this first step in mapping motivations onto participation, future research can attempt to focus solely on people who have been the victim of crimes traditionally addressed by VOCs (typically property crimes) to evaluate their motivation, keeping in mind the ethical complications associated with dredging up such a problematic event. Second, the study evaluated people's prospective responses to a certain type of offense (property crime). Given the variety of crimes addressed by restorative justice organizations, VOC participation motivation may change when faced with more personal crimes (e.g., simple assault). Research should

evaluate participation motivation associated with type of offense while continuing to explore other situational variables (e.g., amount of damage, time lapse between crime and request to participate). Third, the use of network sampling, while successful in diversifying the sample in terms of age and experience, limited the external validity of the sample.

Conclusion

As restorative justice organizations call more loudly for inclusion of VOCs in the justice process, they would do well to understand why people choose to participate in conferences. Conference participation is a function of a variety of goals pertaining to oneself, the other party, and the process as a whole. Facilitators can be more effective at their conference responsibilities if they are able to unearth these goals and speak to them while preparing the participants for a possible meeting. While research to date suggests that these conferences are helpful for the parties involved, understanding the motivations of all participants can help facilitators and members of the justice system to more effectively help the participants negotiate a just outcome and grow from the situation.

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