

**Does the Scope of Restorative Justice Influence Victim Satisfaction and Contribute to its
Overall Success?**

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Land Acknowledgement

Mount Royal University acknowledges its location, residing on the lands of the Siksika, Piikani, Kainai, Îethka Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, and Métis Nations, situated where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. We recognize the historical and ongoing relationships of Indigenous peoples to this land, which was once exclusively occupied by them. Mount Royal University is committed to supporting Indigenous learners and honoring their cultural identities while addressing the impacts of colonialism, broken Treaty promises, and systemic injustice. We strive to rebuild relationships with Indigenous peoples, following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Abstract

For many reasons, restorative justice serves as an effective means to the traditional retributive system, providing effective practices to meet the needs of victims and measure satisfaction. By prioritizing victims and ensuring offender accountability, the scope of restorative justice can be met and improve how cases are handled in a court of law or within the Canadian criminal justice system. The study in this research paper compares three scopes of restorative justice perceived as partly restorative, mostly restorative, and fully restorative, which examine how each level affects the experience and satisfaction of victims. Through government data and reports, key case studies, and stories, the research depicts that fully restorative and comprehensive practices include victim-offender dialogue, community involvement, and accountability from the offender to determine the success of restorative justice. This thesis addresses the advantages of restorative practices for youth and adults involved in crimes. Research provides insight into participation in these community programs, showing the low likelihood of recidivism and reintegration into the community for individuals who get treatment and take responsibility for the events. In addition to addressing victim satisfaction in restorative practices, these programs offer support services that enhance the scope of resolution and well-being, resulting in lower recidivism rates.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

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Does the Scope of Restorative Justice Influence Victim Satisfaction and Contribute to its Overall Success?

The concept of restorative justice has been a topic up for debate for some time within the Canadian criminal justice system. The one question that any researcher may have is: how successful is it? How do the practices shared in restorative justice programs contribute to victim satisfaction overall? The main takeaway of the model is the prioritization of victims and the community. Its purpose is to serve as a mechanism during all parts of the justice process to reconcile and ensure victims are satisfied during the restorative justice process. The scope of restorative justice and whether it is fully restorative, mostly restorative, or partly restorative influences the levels of victim satisfaction and success of the justice programs. In fully restorative programs, victims are engaged and receive the highest levels of satisfaction. Through active communication, sharing their healing process, and offender accountability, victims feel heard and validated, implementing justice and closure between the parties involved. With the process of active involvement, recidivism rates remain low, resulting in improved outcomes. By prioritizing the changes in restorative justice, victims, communities, and offenders can come together to move away from the event and consider reconciliation. Several data sources provided by the Government of Canada list different cases of restorative justice and its use of practices in measuring satisfaction. Victims, offenders, and mediators join to create a safe space circle and communicate about moving forward. As a result, victims can share their experiences and the impact of harm while the offender acknowledges the extent of their actions. These dialogues can be tremendously powerful, changing the lives of everyone involved, allowing victims to move on and influencing offenders to change. For support, justice facilitators inhibit the skills and training to guide the mediation process, making the role of the justice practitioner essential. The potential

of restorative justice is immense, but it is just as important to assess and evaluate how it is evolving while implementing new ideas to help it grow. Understanding what works for restorative justice is necessary to ensure updated assessments, enhanced training, and improved restorative justice programs to prevent diminishing. As a result, this thesis paper informs readers of the range of success contributed by restorative justice practices in victim satisfaction and recidivism by analyzing various literature and case reports submitted to Canada's criminal justice system.

Methodology

This study will use an explanatory and descriptive approach to analyze victim experiences, restorative justice effectiveness, and theoretical foundations to establish victim satisfaction. The methodology will convey detailed experiences and studies of how criminal justice programs have influenced victims and provided healing within the community. Many restorative justice programs, such as circles and victim-offender mediation (VOM), will be examined using statistics and victim data to provide outcomes of victim satisfaction. This approach allows for understanding how different restorative justice models are used in practice and how they impact the criminal justice setting, with victims being a priority. The methodology will also provide a thorough foundation of literature reviews from scholarly peer-reviewed articles, statistics, and texts that pertain to restorative justice, recidivism, and studies among control groups. These methods allow comprehensive insights into victim satisfaction and justice systems in Canada.

Theme Analysis

Peer-reviewed articles help to identify important themes and trends that relate to the effectiveness of restorative justice programs, allowing descriptive insights into data and studies, particularly those with trials or control groups. Data analysis will be completed to gather specific research information using thematic analysis. Identifying outcomes, case studies, statistics, measures of victim satisfaction, and offender regret would be most effective in determining how restorative justice is used in Canada. Critical themes found in the research will enable a comparison to existing literature and identify gaps or similarities. For instance, statistics or government reports provide an accurate and specific rate of effectiveness and satisfaction, allowing us to identify the critical differences within restorative justice programs and policies. Data collection methods will be conducted through studies done on individual programs that measure success. Through subjective exploration, the research will understand victim healing through various case reports and victim narratives that allow the study to explore individual experiences while analyzing the positive impact of restorative justice programs. For instance, qualitative research provides flexibility in data collection and shows different approaches to how victims feel about the restorative justice process.

Secondary data collection will also be accessed through databases such as the Criminal Code of Canada, Statistics Canada, Government of Canada reports, the Mount Royal University Library database, Google Scholar, and various social science journals. Additionally, published sources from reference pages will be analyzed for further information, and the data collected in these articles will be empirical and theoretical. Systematic searches are performed with specific keywords, such as “restorative justice victims,” “restorative justice effectiveness,” “restorative justice data,” “restorative justice reports,” or “restorative justice victims and

satisfaction.” Additional official reports from the Correctional Services of Canada, academic publications from credible criminology journals, and relevant government policy documents available through Google Scholar and library databases will be analyzed. Using extensive sources will help to seek a study that offers comprehensive information on victims' experiences and restorative justice satisfaction in the Canadian justice system.

Limitations

Although this study provides detailed analysis and valuable data on restorative justice and its effectiveness on victim experiences, there are also limitations, resulting in changes to the scope and findings of the study. For example, access to victims and cases may be limited. Many court cases involving victims and offenders prefer to maintain confidentiality and privacy due to their sensitive nature. For the right reasons, some victims may want to refrain from sharing their experiences, especially if they are still processing the criminal event. In restorative justice, a fundamental principle is to avoid further pain or suffering for the victim. Victims in these cases are prioritized and remain important throughout the process. Often, victims may feel uncomfortable recalling harmful events or want to avoid memories of the offender. Thus, it is important that victims remain a priority, and the justice system must work to always provide support.

Also, a few restorative justice programs have started to develop practitioner manuals and training for mediators, victims, and offenders. This is essential because mediators are present at restorative justice meetings, but limited data is provided on how mediators are trained and how they properly assess victim satisfaction. Due to the nature of restorative practices, some information may not be provided accurately. Therefore, relying on secondary data may lead to a

lack of quality sources or consistency. A proactive approach will be taken to involve an evaluation of current data sources for accurate information to mitigate these limitations. Thus, extensive research may be limited due to the vast number of programs and the need for qualitative studies on each range. For these reasons, data may be generalized, missing, or limited in information.

What is Restorative Justice?

Victim-Focused Approach

It is safe to say that restorative justice can be challenging to define, but it could be viewed from a justice mechanism perspective. As Daly (2015) states, individuals may choose to describe the model as they wish, mainly because it continues to be a complex and evolving concept. Over the past few decades, the criminal justice system and several researchers have increasingly focused on understanding and refining restorative justice, exploring its potential to transform how we approach crime, punishment, and healing for effectiveness. Within this time, many ideas have been introduced to give society the steps it needs to understand restorative justice and its range of effectiveness. Restorative justice is mainly practice-driven rather than theory-driven, and it is difficult to define or understand it (Tompsonski, 2011).

Restorative justice focuses on the victim, prioritizing their needs and healing while considering the offender's role as secondary in the process (Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice, 2018). Described as an “authentic inquiry into the needs of victims and survivors; not as an instrument for offender rehabilitation or treatment, but as individual needs that stand on their own,” the victim-focused approach prioritizes victims as the primary target for repair (Bargen et al., 2019, para. 20). Instead of assuming the role of the community within a geographic space, it

can include close friends and family of the victim. Introducing the concept of community involvement emphasized the collective nature of the restorative justice process. It indicates that a victim includes a community to work together towards healing after being impacted.

Moreover, in a manuscript, Doug (2024) mentions that restorative justice is not limited to the criminal justice system as it can be used in conflict resolution within a family, workplace, school, or community. For instance, some axes focus on types of processes (typically face-to-face meetings). In contrast, others center on outcomes (any action that “repairs the harm caused by crime” (Bazemore & Walgrave, 1999, as cited in Daly, 2015); others combine process and outcome (Van Ness & Strong, 2006, as cited in Daly, 2015). The offender bears the responsibility of taking proactive steps towards accountability, with the aim of making reparations that contribute to healing the situation. Known for its emphasis on procedural fairness and victim satisfaction, restorative justice focuses on effectiveness as the key measure that leads to safety, support, and long-term healing (Wong et al., 2016). This study focuses on the efficacy of restorative justice in relation to victim healing in its range of practices.

Evolution

Before discussing the modern forms of restorative justice, it is essential to acknowledge its roots, leading to its success. Through the years, Canadian societies have dedicated significant attention to restorative justice practices to measure progressive effectiveness. For instance, the earliest expressions of restorative justice have Indigenous roots in North America and Australia. The practice has developed in different regions and initially contributed to Indigenous cultures while seeing significant improvements in the 1970s (Hass-Wisecupp & Saxon, 2021). As noted by Nolt (2006), moving into the 1980s and 1990s, there was further recognition of the movement

through works from John Braithwaite and his work in *Crime, Shame, and Reintegration*.

Additionally, Howard Zehr, titled the “father of restorative justice,” is attributed to be one of the most influential advocates of restorative justice. His groundbreaking work, particularly in his book *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (1990), is known to have developed restorative justice as an alternative approach to the traditional criminal justice system through his focus on repairing harm, fostering, accountability, and changing practices globally (Nolt, 2006). Howard Zehr describes restorative justice as a method to make amends for harm caused, and this harm must be fully addressed to the victim by the person who caused the harm (Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice, 2018).

According to Zehr (2002), restorative justice retains many forms but primarily focuses on facilitated meetings between the victim, the offender, and a mediator. The article also confirms that these meetings are an essential approach to justice as they enforce repairing harm done to the individuals and community. Meetings can take from one month to 2 years for preparation. During this time, participants consent to meet at an arranged time and setting to discuss the offence and the effects of the harm on the primary and secondary victims (Umbreit & Armour, 2010). Appointed mediators are trained criminal justice practitioners who ensure a safe space for each participant and analyze the victim’s emotional, physical, and psychological readiness while considering all risks and levels of remorse from the offender (Peleg-Koriat & Weimann-Saks, 2024). The same article claims that during these restorative justice conferences, the victim and offender have the chance to talk about the events of what happened, and each individual has the option to discuss their side of the criminal event. Thus, it provides an opportunity for the offender to acknowledge the harm they have done and make amends with the victim.

Critiques of Restorative Justice

While it is essential to address what authors and literature are saying about restorative justice, it is also just as important to examine its critiques. In one article, the author notes that while restorative justice practices are upheld in various contexts, these practices must also be considered through a critical lens that questions the regimes of power (Bierdz, 2019). The same author goes on to say that the term *justice* in relation to schools and its corresponding policies is self-contradictory. The model should be critiqued while looking at it through the lenses of regimes of power since practices are systemically operated and instituted through capitalism, hegemonic whiteness, processes of alienation, and patriarchal ways of knowing...that can all find themselves instituted and reinstated. For instance, restorative practices, when placed in the context of schools, already operate within our co-constructed cultures of capitalism, meritocracy, schooling, and individualism (Foucault, 1990, as cited in Bierdz, 2019). Bierdz (2019) argues that, fundamentally, implementing a restorative model through these frames is impractical because our logic of understanding power, change, and reality is already trapped by these regimes of power structures that continue to be reproduced. Thus, looking at restorative justice as a missing source, researchers and practitioners failed to acknowledge the systemic issues that surround the idea of justice, as we were unable to take note of the regime of power within such limitations of our reality (Bierdz, 2019). Although restorative justice aims to be effective, some researchers critique the practice by highlighting how it still operates through existing systems of domination and power. Despite several claims of humanization and development, the practice seems to perpetuate control through capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. They argue that even though these practices may appear progressive, they still maintain the subtle reinforcement of hierarchical power dynamics. The critique emphasizes that restorative justice objectifies

individuals, placing them as subjects, similar to traditional disciplinary systems. There are very few reviews that examine whether restorative justice produces psychological benefits for victims compared to any other justice procedure (Lloyd & Borrill, 2019). Previous reviews show that victims are usually satisfied with their experience within the restorative justice system. Still, there have been varying results among self-reported victim satisfaction and emotional states post-victimization (Lloyd & Barrill, 2019, as cited in Kunst et al., 2014). This leads to the idea that even though victims may express greater satisfaction, it can't be inferred that it leads to improved psychological outcomes (Lloyd & Barrill, 2019).

Restorative vs Retributive Justice

Many researchers tend to compare restorative and retributive justice while critiquing each of its qualities. Restorative justice has gained attention over the years as an alternative to the traditional retributive system, which focuses on punishment and incarceration without acknowledging one's crimes and changing behaviour. In the Canadian context, restorative justice focuses on sentencing, diversion programs, extrajudicial measures, and mediation to support all stakeholders. The legal standing of restorative justice refers to the system's position in a legal framework or process. The legal standing of restorative justice addresses the processes within the system as it addresses its application in Canada's legal system. On the other hand, retributive justice goes through an adversarial process and focuses on punishment between the state and the offender to reduce crime. As discussed above, Zehr's (1990) opinions on restorative justice and retributive justice depict that:

Crime is a violation of people and relationships. It creates obligations to make things right. Justice involves the victim, defender, and the community in a search for a solution

which promotes repair, reconciliation, and reassurance instead of immediate punishment (as cited in Maxwell & Morris, 2001, p.3).

Restorative justice has become a widely practiced process within the Canadian criminal justice system. Its foundations and principles are built on contrasting the traditional retributive system, where offenders are often punished for their crime, no accountability is taken, the victim is treated as a secondary source, and the community remains harmed. Therefore, the growth of restorative justice is essential as it has brought drastic changes to victim healing, treatment of offenders, and acknowledgement to the community. It has led to growth in research regarding its effectiveness and impact as it focuses on existing research on offender outcomes, recidivism rates, and case studies. Restorative justice is a distinct criminological theory that “emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behaviour and is best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders” (Hass-Wisecupp & Saxon, 2021, p. 3). An article by Weatherburn and Macadam (2014) highlights the idea of restorative justice as an alternative approach to the traditional punitive model. It is a process where all parties involved in an offence come together to resolve how to deal with the aftermath on the victim, the community, and the offender. In another article, Lloyd and Borrill (2020) define repairing harm as a process where offenders and victims meet and open a conversation about the incident alongside a mediator. It is important to note that this process takes place with all stakeholders' consent and desire. The principal evaluation of the evidence relating to restorative justice is its broad range of programs offered. For instance, some programs are available at certain times with different measures, while others are available as alternatives to court (Weatherburn & Macadam, 2014). Most studies on restorative justice provide insight into the effect of restorative justice on reoffending. These rates find that re-offending has decreased since 2007 among offenders

(Weatherburn & Macadam, 2014). In addition, 32 tests were completed to determine the effectiveness of restorative justice in reducing re-offending, and 72% of the tests showed a positive effect in favour of restorative justice over retributive justice (Weatherburn & Macadam, 2014). A table adapted by Zehr (1990) from Bazemore & Umbreit's (1997) review compares detailed assumptions of restorative and retributive justice:

	RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE	RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
Definition of Crime	Violation of Law	Violation of One Person by Another
Concept of Harm	Harm to Society's Norms and Values	Physical and/or Psychological and/or Interpersonal
Primary Purpose	Protect Society and Deter Future Offences	Victim Support and Healing
Key Players	State and Offender	Victim, Offender, and community
Means	Punishment	Safe Dialogue and Accountability
Main Process	Adversarial	Restitution, Reconciliation and Restoration
Desired Outcome	Safer Society and Reduced Crime	Repair the Harm Done to Victims and Hold Offenders Accountable

Note. Adapted from *Balanced and restorative justice for juveniles: A framework for juvenile justice in the 21st century*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. [Table 1], by Bazemore & Umbreit 1997. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/framwork.pdf>

Restorative Justice Practices

The notion of restorative justice is solely based on programs that offer different approaches to recognizing and addressing the harm caused by a crime. Restorative opportunities are funded by Correctional Service Canada (CSC), with a focus on reintegrating offenders into the community safely as they acknowledge the consequences of their crime, harm, and impact (Correctional Service Canada, 2016a). John Howard (2012) states that victims are overwhelmed by the court system process and may feel that their views are not prioritized during court proceedings. While the retributive justice system fails to provide victims closure and offenders to acknowledge the harm they caused, restorative justice inhibits various programs that put the victim as the primary focus of healing. Thus, Correctional Service Canada (2016b) notes that mediation VOM services strive to protect community members by ensuring crime rates are reduced, and “the preliminary examination indicated that the program shows promise in reducing recidivism” (p. 2). The mediation includes the victim and offender meeting in a facilitated setting to discuss the effects of the crime and talk about ways to repair the damage that has been done (Howard, 2012). The meeting is ensured to be consensual and safe, allowing feelings to be expressed and answering questions (Howard, 2012).

Victim-Offender Mediation

Victim-offender mediation is a process that allows both the victim and the offender to engage in an assisted dialogue facilitated by a mediator (The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, 2022). The mediator is an impartial third party, not an arbitrator; they only support the victim and the offender throughout this constructive dialogue process and do not decide upon a solution themselves (CRCVC, 2022). Basic requirements must be met before the

mediation can proceed, such as preparing both the victim and offender separately and ensuring both parties participate voluntarily (CRCVC, 2022). This preparation prevents further harm from being inflicted upon the victim and allows the offender to acknowledge responsibility for their actions. VOM practices ways for direct communication in a consensual and facilitated environment between the victim and offender, allowing both stakeholders to share their emotions, express their regret, and discuss the impact of the crime. This process is an alternative to the traditional punitive system, which results in immediate punishment while paying no attention to the victim and community. Therefore, VOM is an accountability tool and promotes healing through understanding and reconciliation to ensure all parties receive justice. This form of voluntary mediation ensures a structured meeting between a victim and offender, facilitated by a trained mediator. Also, section 26.1(1) of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) requires all victims of offenders within the jurisdiction of CSC to be informed of the availability of restorative justice programs. However, offenders and victims are not obligated to participate. Therefore, the CSC must inform victims about restorative justice programs to ensure fair access to restorative justice opportunities, allowing them to be equally involved in their case processes. The Correctional Service of Canada (2021) mentions that VOM contributes to CSC's mandate to integrate offenders safely into their community by ensuring that they understand the implications of their crimes, are given a chance to acknowledge these harms and take responsibility for their actions. On the other hand, the process allows victims to be heard, have their voices heard, ask questions, and have their needs met directly. Most importantly, VOM ensures that these services are carefully accessed and that participants are ready to proceed after receiving their consent (Correctional Service of Canada, 2021).

Additionally, other practices such as sentencing circles are based on Indigenous traditions and bring together the victim, offender, and community to discuss the impact of the crime and come up with solutions. Many people trace peacemaking circles to Indigenous cultures in Canada, and circles were used to bring together community members to discuss important issues, mediate conflicts, and make decisions that impact all community members. Peacemaking circles incorporate ceremony and rituals in many ways throughout the circle's process, often signaling the beginning of a new phase in people's lives. Ceremonies are symbols reminding participants of how vital and unique the event is. The Government of Canada (2021) highlights that sentencing circles are more likely to succeed because they consider the victim's perspective instead of a simple victim impact statement. In a circle process, the victim is a full participant, and the case law that deals with the process of circle sentencing identifies strong values in having the victim present. The table below summarizes detailed attributes of restorative justice programs:

Some Key Attributes of Restorative Justice Programs

<i>Position of Program in Relation to the Criminal Justice System</i>				
Outside of the CRJS as an alternative response		Part of a formal diversion program		Integrated into the formal justice system response
<i>Formality of Program Process</i>				
Very informal		Somewhat informal		Very formal
<i>Position of Program in Relation to Use of Punishment</i>				
Program outcome is a substitute to punishment		Punishment is one of the outcomes of the program		Program outcome is in addition to punishment
<i>Involvement of Legal Counsel</i>				
No legal counsel is involved		Role of legal counsel is limited – to ensure informed consent		Legal counsel must be involved
<i>Involvement of Criminal Justice Officials</i>				
No involvement		Limited involvement – primarily to referrals		Program is operated by criminal justice officials
<i>Involvement of Victim</i>				
Central participant	One of many participants	Indirect involvement	A surrogate victim is used	Little or no victim involvement
<i>Community Involvement</i>				
Full community participation	Representative of community participate	Only family and small circle of friends	Little or no community participation	
<i>Program Delivery Mechanism</i>				
Independent NGOs and voluntary sector		Community organization with funding and direction from government		Government agency and employees
<i>Focus on Victim Reparation</i>				
Central and essential focus		Reparation measures are secondary		Little focus on reparation for victim
<i>Focus on Offender Recidivism</i>				
Almost none		One of several aspects of program		Main focus on rehabilitation and offender recidivism

Note. From *Lecture 8* [Lecture Handout], by D. King, 2023. Mount Royal University D2L.

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Types of Programs

Indigenous Offenders

Given the history of Indigenous people in Canada, Indigenous communities face adverse challenges within the criminal justice system. Most importantly, the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in incarceration is a significant issue that must be addressed and resolved, demanding careful consideration of how their needs must be met. Restorative practices align closely with Indigenous traditions and worldviews, making the restorative process more accessible for Indigenous offenders. Restorative practices, such as VOM, healing circles, talking circles, or peacemaking circles, offer a solid alternative to the traditional justice system by emphasizing healing, reconciliation, and community integration. However, specific considerations are set in place, which the law requires. Further, s. 79 to s. 84 of the CCRA outline particular factors that the CSC must consider in dealing with offenders of Indigenous backgrounds (Corrections and Conditional Release Act (S.C. 1992, c. 20). Specifically, s. 79 mandates CSC to consider systemic factors impacting Indigenous peoples. 80 requires CSC to offer programs to the community. 81 mandates Indigenous governing bodies to enter into agreements with the Government of Canada and s. 84 states that Indigenous offenders can be released on statutory release or parole into an Indigenous community for reintegration (Corrections and Conditional Release Act (S.C. 1992, c. 20). The has prioritized the reconciliation of Indigenous offenders and is making efforts to effectively meet the needs of Indigenous offenders to avoid discrimination, prejudice, and more harm through their restorative programs.

Range of Programs

The range of restorative justice programs is also essential to consider, and they can be categorized based on the level of involvement of victims, offenders, and community members. Fully restorative programs engage with all three groups to foster direct interaction and conversation, which includes peacemaking circles, family group conferencing or community conferencing. Mostly restorative programs involve two of the three core groups: victim and offender, victim and community, or offender and community. Programs that are mostly restorative include VOM, positive discipline, or victimless conferences. Partly restorative programs focus on just one of the core groups—either the victim, the offender, or the community. When criminal justice practices involve one group of primary stakeholders, such as governmental financial compensation for victims or meaningful community service work for offenders, the process can be referred to as partly restorative (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2020). These programs may also include reparative boards, youth aid panels, or crime compensation.

Continuum

Restorative practices engage in a broad spectrum, ranging from informal to formal processes, and are not limited to restorative conferences or family group conferences (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2020). The same author claims that informal practices involve emotional statements that highlight people's feelings, as well as affective questions that prompt individuals to reflect on how their actions have affected others. Restorative conferences, groups, and circles are more structured than informal practices but still do not require the extensive preparation that is required for formal conferences (International Institute

for Restorative Practices, 2020). As practices become more formal, they need adequate planning and time for a more structured and complete process. McCold & Wachtel (2001) state that even though formal practices have a dramatic impact, they have a more cumulative impact because they are part of everyday life. In determining effectiveness, an article from the International Institute for Restorative Practices (2020) comments that restorative programs aim to manage conflict and tension by repairing harm through building relationships by using proactive and reactive approaches. Organizations or practices that only use the reactive approach without creating social capital are less successful than those that also employ the proactive approach (Davey, 2007).

Measure of Victim Satisfaction

Victim satisfaction has changed over time, and Weatherburn and Macadam (2014) conclude that victims who participate in restorative justice programs seem to be satisfied with the process. Victims are given a primary role in the process where they receive supporting information about their victimization and receive emotional restoration, which is achieved through victim-offender conferences, healing circles, or talking circles (Lloyd & Borrill, 2020). Moreover, evidence shows that victims participating in restorative justice are more satisfied than those with cases that are dealt with in court only (Weatherburn & Macadam, 2014). Ruge and Scott (2018) state that 90% of victims who participated in the restorative justice system were satisfied with the process and outcome. Reports and studies on victims also showed that victims were less upset about the crime and less fearful after the victim-offender meeting (Ruge & Scott, 2018). An article claims that the public supports the foundations and principles behind restorative justice, and the process helps reject the demand for more punitive and harmful sanctions (Weatherburn & Macadam, 2014). Additionally, the Government of Canada (2018)

states that offenders also have high levels of satisfaction with programs and believe the process to be fair. The same article highlights that most programs have a high level of success in restitution and indicates that most offenders are more likely to follow through on their agreements than with court-ordered restitution. Thus, past research highlights the importance of recognizing changes within the restorative justice system and what factors contribute to these changes.

In a qualitative study from CSC in 1995, victims reported high levels of satisfaction. Victims reported having greater control over their safety and their lives, and that the process offered them a measure of closure (Correctional Service of Canada, 2022). Another evaluation examined the effects on participants' physical and psychological health, where victims exhibited positive changes throughout the program in relation to the pre-post Physical Health Checklist and the pre-post Psychological Health Checklist (Correctional Service of Canada, 2022). There was a significant positive difference between participants who experienced a victim-offender meeting and those who did not. The Correctional Service of Canada (2022) also found that participants of the program provided positive feedback on their experiences, showing extensive levels of satisfaction where they found strong support from restorative justice mediators regarding their honesty, professionalism, and dedication.

Sources of Support

An essential element of restorative justice is the system of support that is present among its practices. A qualitative study on youth offenders showed that systems of support through family, peers, and other social influences resulted in positive outcomes of prosocial behaviour (Chapman & Murray, 2015). As discussed, family group conferencing is fully restorative and

involves all stakeholders. Walker et al. (2015) highlight family group conferencing and the importance of parental involvement in the justice system. The author emphasizes the significant role of parental guidance, familial attachments, and active participation in the justice system among offenders. The more support someone receives throughout the criminal justice process, the more likely that the person will refrain from deviant behaviour. Additionally, trained facilitators and mediators can form a bond with offenders and victims, which helps the stakeholders feel more comfortable. Similar to a close relative, a strong connection with a mediator has lasting effects on younger offenders and allows a greater sense of procedural fairness. As youth develop into adults, building these relationships with their family or even with a trained mediator can provide levels of support and acceptance (Suzuki & Yuan, 2021).

Program Effectiveness

The evaluation of VOM services through CSC incorporated reliable data illustrating its effectiveness. According to CSC (2016), victims who participated in this program claimed they had “greater control over their safety and their lives and that the process offered them a measure of closure” (p. 1). Furthermore, CSC (2016) also stated that the offenders who engaged in VOM experienced abundant personal growth and reported “having a greater commitment to addressing their criminogenic needs” (p. 1). CSC (2016) also noted that “both victims and offenders exhibited positive changes throughout the program in relation to the pre-post Physical Health Checklist and to the pre-post Psychological Health Checklist” (p. 1). In an article analysis, the authors state that restorative justice has benefits for victims of crime and are given a central role in the process, with the aim that they should receive information about their victimization ending with emotional restoration and apology (Lloyd & Barrill, 2019, as cited in Sherman et al., 2003).

In another study, Koss (2014) found that clinical rates of PTSD decreased significantly following

involvement in restorative conferences. Levels of arousal were lower after participants had completed the conference (Koss, 2014). Therefore, the model has qualities conducive to the reduction of PTSD or other conditions in victims of crime. Apologies and genuine accountability are significant because they act as a therapeutic process that supports victims (Petrucci, 2002). One of the desired outcomes is to invoke a genuine apology and accountability from the offender for the harm they inflicted, which helps me to restore the victim emotionally (Rossner, 2017). To determine whether this goal was achieved, empirical work found that apologies were often present at conferences and that victims were satisfied (Sherman et al., 2003). In an article from the restorative justice council in 2015, an offender who is identified as “Nick” expresses his time learning to live with the killing of his twin brother, Simon. He talked about how restorative justice healed him and allowed him to move on:

Looking back now, it was an amazing experience. I have seen a side of the man who murdered my brother that’s shown me he’s a recovering person, who is genuinely sorry. I consider myself lucky because there are a lot of very serious offences that never get to this point of reconciliation. To get the connection I had with Craig takes a lot of time and a willingness to have an open mind – for me the circumstances were right, and we synchronized. In fact, it could have possibly happened sooner if we’d known about restorative justice earlier. I don’t feel like a victim anymore. I am just a human being who has experienced, and now lives with, the impact of a serious crime on my family (para. 18).

The evaluations of VOM services through councils and CSC highlight the transformative

impacts of restorative justice on victims and offenders. Victims show increased control over their emotional closure and moving forward by seeing offenders show personal growth and commitment to change. Personal stories illustrate how restorative justice fosters healing and reconciliation, resulting in increased accountability and positive outcomes in real-world contexts.

Recidivism Rates

Research conducted by Smith et al. (2002) studied the “overall effects of incarceration on recidivism rates” and determined that incarceration sentences increase the recidivism rate by three percent. The authors stated that federal offenders who participated in face-to-face VOM displayed a decrease in reoffending. CSC (2016) emphasized that “of the 177 offenders who were either on release when they participated in a VOM face-to-face meeting or who were subsequently released, 98% had not re-offended within 1 year of their face-to-face meeting” (p. 9). Additionally, at the end of the 10-year evaluation period, 88% had not re-offended (CSC, 2016). Further, “of the 234 offenders involved in face-to-face meetings” since 1992, only nine percent committed a new offence (CSC, 2016, p. 9). These statistics illustrate low numbers, depicting evidence of real change and effectiveness of the programs. Other experiments reviewed by Sherman et al. (2015) found evidence of a reduction in repeat offending. One case study shows that restorative programming was more effective than retributive justice for processing young offenders, particularly males with no prior arrests (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2012). In their follow-up results, “youth referred to juvenile court evidenced greater recidivism; 49.8% experienced at least one new official contact compared to youth in the no/ minimal restorative justice (30.8%), indirect mediation (27.3%), restorative panel (24.2%), and direct mediation (33.5%) groups, and this difference was statistically significant” (Bouffard et al., 2016). Youth referred to juvenile court also reoffended more quickly than youth in the restorative justice direct

mediation (Bouffard et al., 2016). Therefore, the study found that those in the restorative system experienced lower recidivism than those referred to the juvenile court (Bouffard et al., 2016).

Correctional Service of Canada Case Studies

In 2015, CSC analyzed recidivism rates of offenders who participated in the facilitated face-to-face VOM program. The test analyzed two groups consisting of 81 offenders who participated in face-to-face meetings before their release from prison, and 41 offenders who participated in face-to-face meetings after their release from prison (on parole). The graph below illustrates the case study to show that recidivism rates decrease if effective mediation takes place:

Rate of Revocation (Recidivism) as a Percentage

	Face-to-Face VOM Before Release		Face-to-Face VOM After Release	
	VOM Participants N=81	Control Group #1 N=81	VOM Participants N=41	Control Group #2 N=41
Revocation				
Within 6 months	10%	10%	5%	20%
Within 12 months	19%	21%	10%	54%
Within 18 months	24%	28%	12%	54%
Within 24 months	26%	31%	12%	59%

Revocation rates are much lower if Victim-Offender Mediation took place after offender release from prison

Note. From *Lecture 9* [Lecture Handout], by D. King, 2023. Mount Royal University D2L.

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Another case study by CSC in 2022 determined the results of re-offending following face-to-face VOM. Of a total 248 offenders, 98% had not re-offended within 1 year of their face-

to-face meeting, 91% had not re-offended within 5 years of their face-to-face meeting, and 90% had not re-offended by year 10 (Correctional Service of Canada, 2022). The offenders who had participated in the face-to-face meetings were less likely to re-offend than other offenders who also finished their sentence between 2021 and 2022. Additionally, when comparing re-offending rates after five years, 84% of offenders who had not participated in a face-to-face meeting had not re-offended (Correctional Service of Canada, 2022). Therefore, despite these small numbers of offenders, rates show that those who participate in face-to-face processes do well after release.

The Future of Restorative Justice

Does restorative justice have a future? In a review, Daly (2015) claims that if restorative justice is to be defined as a *justice mechanism*, it must be defined concretely because its practices and outcomes must be subject to empirical inquiry. The same review clarifies that its values and principles are significant. However, restorative justice must be tailored to an understanding of justice as a mechanism, not an alternative to retributive justice or a simple aspiration for social change. The justice system could not embrace transitional and restorative justice for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Little to no progress has been made in implementing the calls to action, and an overrepresentation of Indigenous people in Canada's justice system continues to rise. Change can't be formed if our system continues to operate on principles established in the 19th century, when we are well into the 21st century. Police, courts and corrections need to recognize their role in addressing the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples because we must realize that these organizations are rooted in a history that facilitated colonization.

Legal Standing of Restorative Justice in Canada

What happens if the Canadian criminal justice system relied solely on punishing an offender after being convicted of a crime without adequately acknowledging the victim? Can one argue that both the victim and offender would heal, and it would reduce recidivism in the community? Restorative justice (RJ) is integrated within the criminal justice system through criminological thinking from authors such as John Braithwaite or Howard Zehr as early as the 1970s (Government of Canada, 2001). Restorative justice is a criminal justice approach that focuses on repairing the harm to victims caused by criminal behaviour through establishing relationships and improving outcomes for the victim and offender. The goal of restorative justice is built on principles of understanding, dialogue, active involvement, and accountability. The system has since expanded into a model that provides a different approach to justice and punishment while challenging traditional notions of deterrence. Restorative justice has gained attention over the years as an alternative to the traditional retributive system, which focuses on punishment and incarceration without the chance to acknowledge one's crimes and heal from them. In the Canadian context, restorative justice focuses on sentencing, diversion programs, extrajudicial measures, and mediation to support all stakeholders. RJ's legal standing also refers to the system's position in a legal framework or process. The legal standing of restorative justice addresses the processes within the system as it addresses its application in Canada's legal system. Many programs, alternative measures, and principles are incorporated into the system to meet victim, offender, and community needs.

Restorative Justice and Principles of Sentencing

The restorative justice system provides a different perspective on sentencing principles than the retributive justice system. Traditional sentencing, as outlined in s. 718 of the Criminal Code of Canada established its foundations by punishing the offender for committing a crime (Government of Canada, 2023a). Through this, the justice system convicts the offender of their crime and demands an appropriate sentence. These sentences often require the offender to stay incarcerated with reduced interaction and lack of accountability for their actions, further harming their state of mind or decision-making skills. If left incarcerated, the offender would be unable to reflect on their actions, why they did it, or how their consequences have affected their life. There would be a substantial need for more education and acknowledgement of the crimes committed. At the same time, the victim lacks a sense of validation, leading them to believe they are not as important as the offender.

Criminal Code Legislation

The Criminal Code of Canada and the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) allow restorative justice practices within the criminal justice system to be legal legislation. The Criminal Code, revised in 1995 to amend s. 718, refers to the purpose and principles of sentencing (Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c. C-46, s. 718). Specifically, s. 718.2(d) and s. 718.2(e) was added, which states:

(A)n offender should not be deprived of liberty if less restrictive sanctions may be appropriate in the circumstances; and (a)ll available sanctions, other than imprisonment, that are reasonable in the circumstances and consistent with the harm done to victims or

the community should be considered for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of Aboriginal offenders” (Criminal Code, 1985, s. 718.2 (d)).

Essentially, these legislations highlight that an appropriate amount of harm must be inflicted on an offender, and they must not be stripped of their liberty if lesser forms of sanctions are applicable. The Government of Canada (2000) describes the section as having sentencing objectives consistent with a restorative perspective, and an imposed sentence must result in reparations and accountability for the harm done to victims and the community. Section 717 of the Criminal Code describes alternative measures or diversion to promote responsibility and accountability within the offender, as they recognize the harm they have imposed through their wrongful actions (Government of Canada, 2000).

Alternative Measures

As discussed, under s. 717 of the Criminal Code, the legislation allows alternative measures for accused adults or convicted offenders (Government of Canada, 2023a). The Crown counsel can exercise discretion to divert adults facing criminal prosecution into non-judicial measures as an alternative to the traditional court process. From a criminal justice perspective, diversion refers to any program, strategy, or response used to hold someone accountable for their actions (Government of Canada, 2000). According to the same report, diversion occurs pre-charge or post-charge but before the plea is entered. Therefore, not everyone who has committed a criminal offence must be prosecuted. However, the public’s interest may be best served by resolution through alternative methods by allowing the criminal to accept personal responsibility and agree to make amends (Government of Canada, 2014). In addition, it allows the Crown counsel to consider both the circumstances of the offence and the accused individual’s

circumstances (Government of Canada, 2014). The Crown counsel has the priority to be diligent in all their decision-making activities and to recognize personal consciousness and stereotypes (Government of Canada, 2014). It is essential to acknowledge these stereotypes, take the required steps to set them aside and ensure that the final decision of the offender's case does not perpetuate any systemic discrimination (Government of Canada, 2014). However, several conditions under alternative measures must be used as a guideline. To meet alternative measure guidelines, the offence must proceed through a summary conviction, have no prescribed mandatory minimum sentence, the effect on victims must be recognized, and the view of law enforcement agencies must be considered (Government of Canada, 2014). Measures may not be used for specific offences such as drug trafficking, sexual offences, or violent allegations.

Restorative Justice within the Youth Criminal Justice Act

Replacing the Young Offenders Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) was officially enacted in 2002 and governs the treatment of young offenders aged 12-17 in Canada. Although the YCJA does not notably mandate restorative justice practices for all youth offences, it encourages restorative approaches throughout many sections of the Act. The establishment ignited significant changes between holding young offenders accountable for their crimes and allowing them to reintegrate into the community. Most importantly, the emphasizes restorative justice foundations because it offers an alternative to traditional punitive methods rather than punishing the offender. Restorative justice plays a vital role for young offenders within the YCJA because it is a safer mechanism to encourage young individuals to take accountability, help heal the victim and stay involved with their community. The process prioritizes teaching the young offender the importance of owning up to their mistakes, taking responsibility, and taking practical actions to prevent further harm in the future. On the other hand, punishing and

imposing harmful remedies against young offenders would prevent the desired change and continue to encourage a hostile environment as they grow older. As a result, this promotes more harm than good for the victim, offender, community, and justice system.

Extrajudicial Measures

Similar to alternative measures for convicted adults, extrajudicial measures are “best seen by the police” and exist to support young offenders entering the justice system (King, 2024, p. 5). Under the YCJA, police officers must consider extrajudicial measures for a young person who may have engaged in criminal activity before considering any other judicial process (King, 2024). Suppose a police officer believes that an offender has committed an offence. In that case, they can take extrajudicial measures ranging from taking no further action, issuing a warning, or having the youth participate in a program (John Howard Society of Alberta, 2011). However, in the case of an alleged violent offence, extrajudicial measures may not support an offender’s case. Essentially, these measures benefit from dealing with offenders promptly and appropriately. For example, court processes and trials are long and may lose meaning to an offender over time. Additionally, several guidelines must be met for the young offender to participate in these measures. For example, consent of the young individual to participate must be available, the young person must acknowledge responsibility for their offending behaviour, and the measures must be designed to involve the larger community and victims in seeking resolution. These immediate measures are essential to quickly respond to criminal behaviour, ensuring accountability and safe reintegration.

Extrajudicial Sanctions

Extrajudicial sanctions are best known as “diversion by the courts” and are considered after laying criminal charges but before the plea (King, 2024, p. 6). Additionally, the article by the John Howard Society of Alberta (2011) states that extrajudicial sanctions are more formal than extrajudicial measures because if there is enough evidence against the young person, they will be sent to the Crown counsel to receive sanctions. However, all offenders participating in these sanctions must accept responsibility for their actions and consent, such as counselling, a formal apology and restitution to the victim, and conferencing (John Howard Society of Alberta, 2011). However, specific guidelines have been set to ensure fairness and the application of RJ. For example, these guidelines include the consent of participation, taking responsibility for the behaviour, not having been referred to extrajudicial sanctions in the last two years, and completing extrajudicial sanctions within a prescribed period (three-four months). If these sanctions were completed after a post-charge diversion, charges would be stayed or withdrawn (Government of Canada 2016). However, if the sanction is incomplete, the Crown may proceed with charges, and the offender’s participation in alternative sanctions would not be considered. It is vital to recognize that these sanctions are in place to prevent further harm and deviant behaviour in the young offender. With conferencing, mediation, dialogue, and rehabilitation, there is a more substantial chance of change and restitution from the offender, allowing them to blend back into society as they acknowledge their past mistakes. Without these measures, offenders will go through a lengthy court process without realizing the harm they have created, resulting in a lack of awareness and regret.

Restorative Justice and the Conditional Release Act

According to the Government of Canada (2015), the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, introduced in 2002, is the legislative framework that guides policies, operations, and training on conditional release. The CCRA provides the legal framework for Canada's correctional and conditional release system while providing a guideline for the treatment of offenders (Government of Canada, 2023b). The CCRA governs the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), including offenders serving a sentence of two years or more (Government of Canada, 2015). It determines whether offenders can be released from detention or given conditions for their supervision as they enter society (Corrections and Conditional Release Act (S.C. 1992, s. 133 (2)). Additionally, the CCRA governs the conditional release of offenders prior to their warrant expiry date through statutory release, temporary absences, day parole, or full parole (Corrections and Conditional Release Act (S.C. 1992, s. 128 (1)). It strives to balance public safety and rehabilitation of offenders and allow offenders to integrate into society safely.

Victim-Offender Mediation Data

A research study by the Government of Canada in 2021 reported the statistics and benefits of offenders who went through VOM. For instance, data shows that 248 offenders who were released when they participated in VOM show lower re-offending rates (Government of Canada, 2021). Specifically, 98% did not re-offend within 1 year of their mediation, 91% did not re-offend within 5 years, and 90% did not re-offend by year 10 (Government of Canada, 2021). Therefore, 248 offenders who participated in a face-to-face meeting were less likely to re-offend. Many reasons contribute to an offender's success after incarceration. Those who participate in face-to-face meetings see improvement upon release after being exposed to the consequences

and effects of their crimes. Additionally, the Government of Canada (2021) conducted a qualitative evaluation, which showed high satisfaction levels from victims and offenders. Victims noted that the restorative process offered them closure and greater control over their safety (Government of Canada, 2021). Similarly, offenders noticed personal growth, a greater commitment to addressing their criminal behaviour, and a desire to change their lives (Government of Canada, 2021).

Key Judicial Cases of Restorative Justice

R. v. Gladue (1999)

Various case laws have occurred since the start of restorative justice, setting the standard for restorative practices and guiding the process. For instance, the case of *R. v. Gladue* in 1999 was the Supreme Court of Canada's first application of s.718.2(e) of the Criminal Code of Canada (*R. v. Gladue*, 1999 SCC at para. 27). The Court considered the applicability of s.718.2(e) for all offenders but made specific requirements for Indigenous offenders, emphasizing the need to decrease incarceration (*R. v. Gladue*, 1999 SCC at para. 21). This section requires sentencing judges to consider sanctions other than incarceration, specifically those from Indigenous backgrounds. The section was formed to improve the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prisons and encourage judges to consider restorative options in sentencing (Government of Canada, 2001).

R. v. Proulx (2000)

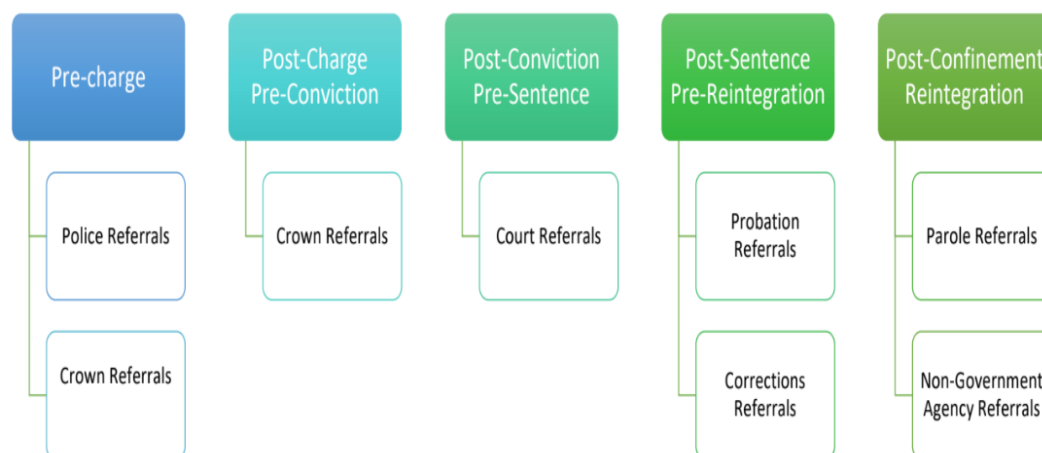
In another case, the decision of *R. v. Proulx*, the Supreme Court of Canada considered a case of an individual who was convicted of impaired driving. However, the sentencing judge provided a conditional sentence of house arrest, allowing a conditional sentence rather than

imprisonment if the offender was not a risk to the community (*R. v. Proulx*, 2000 SCC 5 at para. 2). Therefore, the Supreme Court acknowledged the purpose and importance of conditional sentences in fostering restorative justice including house arrest, electronic monitoring, employment, or treatment programs. (*R. v. Proulx*, 2000 SCC 5 at para. 21). The Court case comments that “a conditional sentence achieves both punitive and restorative objectives” (*R. v. Proulx*, 2000 SCC 5 at para. 100). To the extent that punitive and restorative objectives can be achieved in a given case, a conditional sentence is likely a better sanction than incarceration. Thus, “where the need for punishment is particularly pressing, and there is little opportunity to achieve any restorative objectives, incarceration will likely be the chosen sanction” (*R. v. Proulx*, 2000 SCC 5 at para. 100).

Restorative Justice within the Justice System

In the 1990s, a working group of senior officials of the Federal Government of Canada and all provincial and territorial governments formed a restorative justice working group (Correctional Service of Canada, 2016d). The group published a report called Restorative Justice in the Canadian Criminal Justice Sector, which included the results of a survey from ministries within the criminal justice system (Correctional Service of Canada, 2016d). Unlike traditional punitive measures, restorative justice is fundamental for recognizing crimes and repairing the harm to promote accountability and heal victims. These principles can be integrated during many restorative justice process phases to improve outcomes. Restorative justice processes occur in several areas within the justice system. These could include pre-charge, post-charge/pre-conviction, post-conviction/pre-sentence, post-sentence/pre-reintegration, and post-confinement/reintegration. Below is a diagram of where restorative justice can take place within the system:

I. Where Restorative Justice can Happen Within the Criminal Justice Process



Note. From *Lecture 3* [Lecture Handout], by D. King, 2023. Mount Royal University D2L.

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In all stages, referrals are given from the Crown, police, court, probation, corrections, or parole. For example, numerous cases were referred to restorative justice by point of referral, and data from the Correctional Service of Canada (2016c) show that most youth cases (2,447) dealt with pre-charge, totaling 21,504 points of referral. For adults, 3,792 cases were referred to restorative justice pre-charge, with 12,277 total cases being referrals (Government of Canada, 2016c).

Government Data

Government data from around 2009-2010 reveal that a significant number of restorative justice programs funded by government ministries across Canada show an approach to justice reform (Government of Canada, 2016c). A total of 411 programs were supported, and of these,

170 programs were allocated for Aboriginal Justice, which reflects a crucial move toward addressing justice issues among Indigenous communities (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Restorative Justice, 2016). The other half of the programs were funded by the Community and Youth Justice Committee groups, which depict government efforts for youth conventions. Restorative justice is largely implemented through conferencing, victim-offender mediation, and circles, which have become the most frequently funded services by the Canadian government (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Restorative Justice, 2016).

Peace on the Canadian Map

A map of Canada from a government article published in 2017 provides specific numbers of restorative justice practices occurring in each city and province. The map also shows a number of restorative justice practices in each region, emphasizing places with higher adaptation. Comparing these numbers among provinces in Canada shows differences in implementation.

According to Peace of the Circle (2015), in Vancouver, a peacemaking circle was established, *The Restorative Collective*, becoming the first city in Canada to commit to restorative justice. Peacemaking circles offer communities the opportunity to engage in conflict resolution and healing, utilizing a structured process to promote flexible communication for deeper understanding within the community (Peace of the Circle, 2025). The majority of programs resided in the Vancouver and Calgary areas, showing an increased effort towards the system, providing conflict management and training initiatives.

Potential of Evaluation and Training Among Justice Practices

While restorative justice holds great potential as an alternative to retributive justice, it continues to spark conversations surrounding its effectiveness and how its impact is assessed or measured. Inconsistency within the justice system creates a foundation of failure, undermining the success of restorative justice initiatives and affecting all stakeholders. As discussed, restorative justice is continuously evolving, and much of the research available today is limited. Particularly, the necessary data required to assess the effectiveness of restorative justice on both adults and youth remains outdated and increases the risk of mishandled practice, leaving a critical gap in understanding its influence. Additional research on restorative training for teachers, administrators, and facilitators to address the implementation and its effectiveness shows a gap in the literature and provides an opportunity for additional research (Foreman, 2015). Additionally, further investigation shows that although facilitators and teachers are fully trained in restorative justice practices, they are often not comfortable using the form of justice due to their lack of training (Hathaway, 2023).

Evaluations and Training within Justice Practitioners

A significant concern that must be addressed is the lack of comprehensive evaluations, reliance on outdated assessments, and the inadequacy of training for justice practitioners. It is important to recognize that justice practitioners play a significant role in victim satisfaction as they are the facilitators between victims, offenders, and the community. According to Dhing et al. (2024), implementing restorative justice training in schools demonstrates promising outcomes in enhancing communication, resolving conflict, and making community bonds stronger, creating an initiative that serves as a model for practices and higher education settings to create cohesive

environments. Thus, practitioners who do not receive proper training are set up to create an environment that would ultimately fail an approach to healing, dialogue, and restorative practices. The measure of satisfaction and effectiveness of restorative justice is founded on the skills and experiences of practitioners as they endure the responsibility of navigating emotions, power dynamics, and legal needs for healing. Without adequate training and practice, practitioners are not fully equipped with the consistency in applying restorative practices without grasping the extent and seriousness of individual cases, particularly when dealing with adults or youth. Without current evaluations, it becomes difficult to determine how restorative justice is most effective and how it can be applied across diverse populations or cases. A lack of evaluations and assessments does not allow practitioners and the justice system to acknowledge what works and what doesn't to implement long-lasting restorative practices. Data required to assess the effectiveness of restorative justice is limited, and no new data is being approached or addressed, increasing the risk of misunderstanding restorative practices and hindering the ability to refine these practices. Continuing to rely on minimal and outdated studies would fade the potential of restorative justice and lose its support over time. Without evidence of its effectiveness and proper training, it is difficult to advocate for restorative practices and their expansion within the criminal justice system. A lack of national evaluations and assessments makes it challenging to tailor restorative practices to specific populations and individuals.

Practitioner Training

Establishing a model within the criminal justice system requires constant evaluations, change, and improvements to ensure its sustainability. Without ongoing evaluations of how the model works, there is no clear way to determine whether the practices are achieving their intended outcomes or if alterations are needed to serve the needs of victims and offenders better.

Many efforts to push restorative justice have been made but lack follow-through. For instance, many publications attempt to discuss the importance of training and evaluations for practitioners. However, many of these have been left abandoned and unfinished for several years, highlighting the gradual pace of progress in finalizing a justice practitioner training program. These delays impact and influence the progressive nature and quality of restorative justice, suggesting that the necessary skills to support practitioners remain insufficient. A lack of training among justice practitioners hinders the ability to engage with offenders, heal victims, and measure satisfaction or recidivism.

Future of Justice

In developing a strong and sustainable approach to healing and rehabilitation, effective training must be implemented to encourage a comprehensive and standard understanding of restorative justice expectations. These changes must include effective and complete training, continuous evaluations, and support for professionals to encourage development. With these improvements, only then can restorative justice professionals have the adequate skills needed to facilitate meaningful discussions, circles, and resolutions to heal victims and reduce reoffending. Therefore, although restorative justice depicts a strong potential for rehabilitation in the justice system as an alternative to the traditional retributive system, its future relies on commitments to fully understand how it works through training and research. Most importantly, comprehensive evaluations are necessary to provide specific effectiveness across different areas of Canada and demographics over time. Investments in training and evaluations are crucial to ensure restorative justice thrives and succeeds within the justice system. Failure to do so would risk the future of restorative justice.

Conclusion

Restorative justice practices, which focus on victim healing, are becoming more prevalent in the Canadian criminal justice system. The scope of restorative justice plays a significant role in ensuring victim satisfaction, as it focuses on repairing harm and offering victims accountability. As this paper navigates through the legal basis in Canada, it prioritizes the importance of sanctions and measures taken during the justice process. Through various practices like victim-offender mediation, peacemaking circles, and conferencing, victims can express the impact of the crime, contrasting traditional punitive systems. Research in this paper depicts that victims involved in restorative processes report higher satisfaction levels, particularly because they feel heard and recognized. Victims in restorative practices can feel empowered and less alienated by the justice system and the community because they can experience healing and a better understanding of the offender's perspective. Further, the restorative justice system places emphasis and support on Indigenous victims and offenders, allowing an easier integration. Restorative practices are often built on Indigenous traditions, prioritizing the community in the justice system.

The scope of restorative justice measures success by ensuring that the victim's needs are central throughout the process. Focusing on the victim, offering emotional support, and holding offenders accountable, restorative justice programs form a fulfilling resolution to crime. Further, the flexibility of restorative practices through early programs or post-reintegration helps prioritize victim needs. The practices allow victims to be involved in all steps of the process with their complete consent, giving them a greater sense of control. With restorative justice practices being partly, mostly, and fully restorative, the level of victim satisfaction is evident in how victim needs are met and how engaged they are in the process. The higher the level of victim

satisfaction, the more the level of responsibility, accountability, and healing increases. Fully restorative practices have inclusive victim engagement and are the most effective in healing the victim and community. Data in the research shows evidence of victim satisfaction and success in the justice system when using restorative justice because the more restorative a practice is, the higher the satisfaction levels. However, to ensure that restorative justice initiatives exist, constant evaluations and improvements must be made. In the future, restorative practices will evolve, and efficient steps will be required to train facilitators effectively for complex situations to evaluate how restorative justice works. These methods allow researchers and practitioners to identify best practices and ensure re-offending rates remain low.

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