

The Impact of Victim-Offender Mediation: Two Decades of Research

Mark S. Umbreit, Ph.D. Robert B. Coates, Ph.D., Betty Vos, Ph.D.

Center for Restorative Justice & Peacemaking

INNOVATION IS OFTEN used in criminal justice as a code word for reform. From a jail to a penitentiary (theoretically inspiring penance), to a reformatory, to a corrections center, to a halfway house, to a therapeutic community, to community corrections, to boot camps, to restorative justice, to whatever the next catchphrase might be, reform has too often meant changing the name without radically changing program content or underlying values. It has also often been the case that the latest justice innovation captures the imagination and zeal of a vocal following without the slightest scrutiny. Thus policies and supporting dollars outdistance the needed empirical research to determine impact and to help shape programming. Frequently, the result of enthusiasm without a critical eye is flash-in-the-pan programming, frustrated policy-makers, disheartened workers, and ill-treated victims and offenders.

As the oldest and most widely used expression of restorative justice throughout the world, with more than 1,300 programs in 18 countries (Umbreit, 2001), victim-offender mediation, too, has, at times, attracted more zeal than substance. Some see VOM as the solution for an entire juvenile court jurisdiction, or the means to handle efficiently all restitution cases, or to mollify victims while staff get on with what really needs to be done. Some have said, "This is what we have been waiting for. We will assign one probation officer to manage the 1,000 cases that we expect will involve restitution and that can be handled through the VOM process." Other justice system officials ask, "How do we fold VOM into what we already do without costing more or changing how we handle youth?"

Fortunately, many have tried to keep the expectations of VOM reasonable while assuring officials and policy-makers that it is not a single-program panacea. And there have been numerous efforts to empirically evaluate and assess the working of the programs in a variety of settings during the last 20 years or so. In fact, more studies have examined the impact of victim offender mediation than numerous other mainstream correctional interventions that our nation spends millions of dollars on each year.

While modest in proportion to many larger scale reforms, victim offender mediation is one of the more empirically grounded justice interventions to emerge. This overview of empirical studies designed to assess the growth, implementation, and impact of victim-offender mediation programs is based on a review of thirty-eight (38) evaluation reports. No doubt there are more. These studies have taken place in 14 states and the District of Columbia, four Canadian provinces as well as in England, Scotland, and New Zealand. Included are simple but informative post facto studies along with 12 that incorporate comparison groups. Five of the studies consist of in-depth secondary analysis, which often is a mark of a field of inquiry moving beyond immediate programmatic and policy questions to longer-range questions of causality. Most of the studies are quasi-experimental designs. Several studies offer more rigorous experimental designs with random assignment of subjects and higher-level statistical analysis.

While specific studies focus on particular sets of questions germane to local interest, overall, they address questions of consumer satisfaction with the program and the crimi-

nal justice system, victim-offender mediation as a means for determining and obtaining restitution, victim-offender mediation as diversion from further penetration into the system, and the relationship of victim-offender mediation to further delinquency or criminality.

The remainder of this article considers the consequences of victim-offender mediation over the past 20 years. Those consequences are divided into the following topics: 1) client satisfaction, 2) client perception of fairness, 3) restitution, 4) diversion, 5) recidivism, 6) costs, and 7) VOM and crimes of violence.

Some topics such as client satisfaction, client perception of fairness, and restitution are considered in most of the studies under review and we are only able to provide a sense for the overall findings while offering an illustrative flavor of a few specific studies. Other topics, such as recidivism and costs, are addressed by only a handful of studies and we will provide a bit more detailed information regarding these.

As one might expect, victim-offender mediation programs are called by many names and share an array of acronyms reflecting philosophical, regional, and cultural characteristics. Whether referred to as "victim-offender mediation," "victim-offender dialogue," "victim-offender conferencing," or "victim-offender meetings," nearly all of these programs provide an opportunity for crime victims and offenders to meet face-to-face to talk about the impact of the crime on their lives and to develop a plan for repairing the harm. Most programs work with juvenile offenders, a growing number with adult offenders, and some with both. The vast majority of victim-offender mediation programs are "dia-

logue driven" rather than "settlement driven" (Umbreit, 1997). To reduce confusion in the following discussion of a large number of studies, programs will simply be referred to as victim-offender mediation, or VOM.

Client Satisfaction

Victim offender mediation proponents often speak of humanizing the justice system.

Traditionally, victims have been left out of the justice process. Neither victim nor offender have had opportunities to tell their stories and to be heard. The state has somehow stood in for the victim, and the offender has seldom noticed how his or her actions have affected real, live people. Victims, too, have been left with stereotypes to fill their thoughts about offenders. Reformers believed VOM offered opportunities for both parties to come together in a controlled setting to share the pain of being victimized and to answer questions of why and how. Personalizing the consequences of crime, it was thought, would enhance satisfaction levels with the entire justice process.

The vast majority of studies reviewed reported in some way on satisfaction of victims and offenders with victim-offender mediation and its outcomes. Researchers found high levels of participant satisfaction across program sites, types of offenders, types of victims, and cultures.

Before exploring the nature of this satisfaction further, we should note that across these studies, from 40 to 60 percent of those offered the opportunity to participate in VOM refused, making it evident that participation is a highly self-selective process. Typically, these refusals came from victims who 1) believed the crime to be too trivial to merit the time required, 2) feared meeting the offender, or 3) wanted the offender to have a harsher punishment (Coates and Gehm, 1985; Umbreit, 1995). Gehm, in a study of 555 eligible cases, found 47 percent of the victims willing to participate (Gehm, 1990). In this study victims were more likely to participate if the offender was white, if the offense was a misdemeanor, and if the victim was representing an institution. The practical experience of VOM programs, however, is not consistent with this finding.

Offenders were sometimes advised by lawyers not to participate (Schneider, 1986). And some simply didn't want "to be bothered" (Coates and Gehm, 1985).

The voluntary nature of VOM is a self-selection factor overlaying these findings. The high levels of satisfaction may have something to do with the opportunity to choose. Perhaps those

who are able to choose among justice options are more satisfied with their experiences.

Several studies noted victims' willingness to participate was driven by a desire to receive restitution, to hold the offender accountable, to learn more about the why of the crime and to share their pain with the offender, to avoid court processing, to help the offender change behavior, or to see that the offender was adequately punished. Offenders choosing to participate often wanted to "do the right thing" and "to get the whole experience behind them" (Coates and Gehm, 1985; Perry, Lajeunesse, and Woods, 1987; Umbreit, 1989; Roberts, 1995; Umbreit, 1995; Niemeyer and Shichor, 1996).

Expressions of satisfaction with VOM are consistently high for both victims and offenders across sites, cultures, and seriousness of offenses. Typically, eight or nine out of ten participants report being satisfied with the process and with the resulting agreement (Davis, 1980; Coates and Gehm, 1985; Perry, Lajeunesse, and Woods, 1987; Marshall, 1990; Umbreit, 1991, 1994, 1995; Umbreit and Coates, 1993; Warner, 1992; Roberts, 1995; Carr, 1998; Roberts, 1998).

Participants in one British study (Umbreit and Roberts, 1996) yielded some of the lowest satisfaction scores among the studies reviewed. While 84 percent of those victims engaged in face-to-face mediation were satisfied with the mediation outcome, the bulk of the victims did not meet face to face with an offender. For those involved in indirect mediation, depending on shuttle mediation between parties without face-to-face meetings, 74 percent were satisfied with their experience. These findings were consistent with an earlier study based in Kettering, where a small sub-sample of participants were interviewed, indicating 62 percent of individual victims and seventy-one percent of corporate victims were satisfied (Dignan, 1990). About half of the offenders responding reported being satisfied. Participants involved in face-to-face mediation were more satisfied than those who worked with a go-between.

Victims often reported being satisfied with the opportunity to share their stories and their pain resulting from the crime event. A victim stated she had wanted to "let the kid know he hurt me personally, not just the money . . . I felt raped" (Umbreit, 1989). Some expressed satisfaction with their role in the process. One victim said: "we were both allowed to speak...he (mediator) didn't put words into anybody's mouth" (Umbreit, 1988).

Another female victim indicated, "I felt a little better that I've stake in punishment"

(Coates and Gehm, 1985). Another indicated that "it was important to find out what happened, to hear his story, and why he did it and how" (Umbreit and Coates, 1992). Numerous victims were consumed with the need for closure. A victim of violent crime indicated that prior to mediation, "I was consumed with hate and rage and was worried what I would do when he got out" (Flaten, 1996).

Of course not all victims were so enamored of the process. A distinctly small but vocal minority of victims were not pleased with the program. A male victim complained: "It's like being hit by a car and having to get out and help the other driver when all you were doing was minding your own business" (Coates and Gehm, 1985). A Canadian stated: "The mediation process was not satisfactory, especially the outcome. I was not repaid for damages or given compensation one year later. The offender has not been adequately dealt with. I don't feel I was properly compensated" (Umbreit, 1995).

Offenders generally report surprise about having positive experiences. As one youth said, "He understood the mistake I made, and I really did appreciate him for it" (Umbreit, 1991). Some reported changes: "After meeting the victim I now realize that I hurt them a lot...to understand how the victim feels makes me different" (Umbreit and Coates, 1992). One Canadian offender stated his pleasure quite succinctly: "Without mediation I would have been convicted" (Umbreit, 1995).

The following comment reflects the feelings of a relatively small number of offenders who felt that victims at least occasionally abused the process: "We didn't take half the stuff she said we did; she either didn't have the stuff or someone else broke in too" (Coates and Gehm, 1995). An offender in Albuquerque (Umbreit and Coates, 1992) also believed that the process allowed the victim too much power: "the guy was trying to cheat me...he was coming up with all these lists of items he claimed I took." Some offenders felt powerless to refute the accusations of victims.

Secondary analysis of satisfaction data from a U.S. study and a Canadian study yielded remarkably similar results (Bradshaw and Umbreit, 1998; Umbreit and Bradshaw, 1999). Using step-wise multiple regression procedures to determine those variables most associated with victim satisfaction, three variables emerged to explain over 40 percent of the variance. In each study, the key variables associated with victim satisfaction were: 1) the victim felt good about the mediator, 2) the

victim perceived the resulting restitution agreement as fair, and 3) the victim, for whatever reason, had a strong initial desire to meet the offender. The last variable supports the notion that self-selection and choice are involved in longer-run satisfaction. These findings also underscore the important role of the mediator, and, of course, the actual outcome or agreement resulting from mediation.

These high levels of satisfaction with victim-offender mediation also translated into relatively high levels of satisfaction with the criminal justice system. Where comparison groups were studied, those victims and offenders going through mediation were far more satisfied with the criminal justice system than those going through traditional court prosecution (Davis, 1980; Umbreit and Coates, 1993; Umbreit, 1995). For example, a multi-site U.S. study of VOM in four states (Umbreit & Coates, 1993) found that victims of juvenile crime were significantly more likely to be satisfied (79 percent) with the manner in which the justice system dealt with their case than similar victims (57 percent) who went through the regular court process.

Fairness

Related to satisfaction is the question of fairness. Many of the studies reviewed asked participants about the fairness of the mediation process and of the resulting agreement (Davis, 1980; Coates and Gehm, 1985; Umbreit, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1995; Coates and Umbreit, 1992).

Not surprisingly, given the high levels of satisfaction, the vast majority of VOM participants (typically over 80 percent) across setting, cultures, and types of offenses reported believing that the process was fair to both sides and that the resulting agreement was fair. Again, these experiences led to feelings that the overall criminal justice system was fair. Where comparison groups were employed, people exposed were more likely to feel that they had been treated fairly than those going through the traditional court proceedings. In a study of burglary victims in Minneapolis, Umbreit found that 80 percent of those undergoing VOM experienced the criminal justice system as fair, compared with only 37 percent of burglary victims who did not participate in VOM (Umbreit, 1989).

As expected from the quantitative numbers on fairness, statements from victims and offenders about fairness reflected that assessment. Common comments included: "The mediator was not biased, she was not judgmental" (victim) and "he listened to every-

one during the meeting" (offender). (Umbreit and Coates, 1992). A few, however, did not feel the same way. "He seemed more like an advocate for the kid," and "she seemed kind of one-sided to the victim" (Umbreit and Coates, 1992) reflect perceived imbalance and unfairness in the mediation process. While the negative data that emerged was quite small in proportion to the overall positive findings, negative statements offered helpful insight into how the mediation process may have unintended consequences for the participants.

These overall positive experiences of satisfaction and fairness, however, have generated support for VOM as a criminal justice option. When asked, typically nine out of ten participants would recommend a VOM program to others (Coates and Gehm, 1985; Umbreit, 1991).

Restitution

Early on, restitution was regarded by program advocates as an important by-product of bringing offender and victim together in a face-to-face meeting. Restitution was considered somewhat secondary to the actual meeting where each party had the opportunity to talk about what happened. The current emphasis on humanistic "dialogue-driven" mediation (Umbreit, 1997) reflects this traditional emphasis on restitution being of secondary importance. Today, a few jurisdictions see VOM as a promising major vehicle for achieving restitution for the victim. These jurisdictions view the meeting as necessary to establish appropriate restitution amounts and garner the commitment of the offender to honor a contract. Victims frequently report that while restitution was the primary motivator for them to participate in VOM, what they appreciated most about the program was the opportunity to talk with the offender (Coates and Gehm, 1985; Umbreit and Coates, 1992).

In many settings, restitution is inextricably linked with victim-offender mediation. About half the studies under review looked at restitution as an outcome of mediation (Collins, 1984; Coates and Gehm, 1985; Perry, Lajeunesse and Woods, 1987; Umbreit, 1988; Galaway 1989; Umbreit, 1991; Umbreit and Coates, 1992; Warner, 1992; Roy, 1993). Of those cases that reached a meeting, typically 90 percent or more generated agreements. Restitution in one form or another (monetary, community service, or direct service to the victim) was part of the vast majority of these agreements. Looking across the studies,

it appears that approximately 80-90 percent of the contracts are reported as completed. In some instances, the length of contract exceeded the length of study.

One study was able to compare restitution completion between those youth participating in VOM with a matched group who did not (Umbreit and Coates, 1993.) In that instance, 81 percent of participating youth completed their contracts contrasted with 57 percent of those not in the VOM program, a finding that was statistically significant. In another study comparing an Indiana county that integrated restitution into victim-offender mediation with a Michigan county that imposed restitution without mediation, no difference in completion rates were found (Roy, 1993). Each was just shy of 80 percent completion.

Diversion

Many VOM programs are nominally established to divert youthful offenders into less costly, time consuming, and (it is believed) less severe options. Although diversion is a goal lauded by many, others express concern about the unintended consequence of widening the net, that is, ushering in youth and adults to experience a sanction more severe than they would have if VOM did not exist. While much talk continues on this topic, there is a dearth of study devoted to it. Only a handful of the studies reviewed here address this question.

One of the broadest studies considering the diversion question was conducted over a three-year period in Kettering, Northamptonshire, England (Dignan, 1990). Offenders participating in the VOM program were matched with similar non-participating offenders from a neighboring jurisdiction. The author concludes that at least 60 percent of the offenders participating in the Kettering program were true diversions from court prosecution. Jurisdictional comparisons also led him to conclude that there was a 13 percent widening-the-net-effect, much less than local observers would have predicted.

An agency based in Glasgow, Scotland, where numbers were sufficiently large to allow random assignment of individuals between the VOM program and a comparison group going through the traditional process, found 43 percent of the latter group were not prosecuted (Warner, 1992). However, most of these pled guilty and were fined. This would suggest that VOM in this instance was a more severe sanction and indeed widened the net of government control.

In a very large three-county study of mediation in North Carolina, results on diversion were mixed (Clark, Valente, Jr., and Mace, 1992). In two counties, mediation had no impact on diverting offenders from court. However, in the third county the results were quite dramatic. The authors concluded: "The Henderson program's effect on trials was impressive; it may have reduced trials by as much as two-thirds."

Mediation impact on incarceration was explored in an Indiana-Ohio study by comparing consequences for 73 youth and adults going through VOM programs with those for a matched sample of individuals processed in the traditional manner (Coates and Gehm, 1985). VOM offenders spent less time incarcerated than did their counterparts. And when incarcerated, they did county jail time rather than state time. The length and place of incarceration also had substantial implications for costs.

Recidivism

While recidivism may be best regarded as an indicator of society's overall response to juvenile and adult offenders, it is a traditional measure used to evaluate the long-term impact of justice programs. Accordingly, a number of studies designed to assess VOM have incorporated measures of recidivism.

Some simply report rearrest or reconviction rates for offenders going through the VOM program under study (Carr, 1998; Roberts, 1998). Since no comparison group or before/after outcomes are reported, these recidivism reports have local value, but offer very little meaning for readers unfamiliar with typical rates for that particular region.

One of the first studies to report recidivism on VOM was part of a much larger research project on restitution programs (Schneider, 1986). Youth randomly assigned to a Washington, D.C. VOM program were less likely to have subsequent offenses resulting in referral to a juvenile or adult court than youth in a comparison probation group. These youth were tracked for over 30 months. The results were 53 percent and 63 percent; the difference was statistically significant. A third group, those referred to mediation but refusing to participate, also did better than the probation group. This group's recidivism prevalence was 55 percent.

Marshall and Merry (1990) report recidivism on two programs handling adult offenders in Coventry and Wolverhampton, England. The results are tentative but encour-

aging. In both sites, the offenders were divided into the following groups: those who did not participate in mediation at all, those who were involved in discussions with staff even though their victims were unwilling to participate, those who were involved in indirect mediation, and those who met their victims face-to-face. Offender records were analyzed to determine criminal behavior for comparable periods before referral to program and after program intervention.

In Coventry, while there was no statistically significant differences between the "no work" or no participation group and the others, those who went through direct mediation and those who received individual attention even though their victims were unwilling to meet, did better, that is, either they committed fewer crimes or less serious offenses.

In Wolverhampton, the indirect mediation group fared best, with 74 percent improving their behavior compared to 55 percent direct mediation, 45 percent individuals receiving staff attention only, and 36 percent for those not involved in the program. The authors regard these findings as highly tentative and remain puzzled about why in one site indirect mediation fared so much better than direct while the reverse was found in the other.

The study based in Kettering, England (Dignan, 1990) compared recidivism data between the VOM offenders who went through face-to-face mediation with those who were exposed only to "shuttle mediation." The former group did somewhat better than the latter: 15.4 percent and 21.6 percent. As with satisfaction measures reported earlier, face-to-face mediation seems to generate better results both in the short run and in the longer run than the less personal indirect mediation.

In a study of youth participating in VOM programs in four states, youth in mediation had lower recidivism rates after a year than did a matched comparison group of youth who did not go through mediation (Umbreit and Coates, 1992). Overall, across sites, 18 percent of the program youth re-offended, compared to 27 percent for the comparison youth. Program youth also tended to reappear in court for less serious charges than did their comparison counterparts.

The Elkhart and Kalamazoo county study (Roy, 1993) found little difference in recidivism between youth going through the VOM program and the court-imposed restitution program. VOM youth recidivated at a slightly higher rate, 29 percent to 27 percent. The

author noted that the VOM cohort included more felons than did the court-imposed restitution cohort.

A study of 125 youth in a Tennessee VOM program (Nugent and Paddock, 1995) reported that these youth were significantly less likely to re-offend than a randomly selected comparison group: 19.8 percent to 33.1 percent. The VOM youth who did re-offend did so with less serious charges than did their comparison counterparts.

A sizeable cohort of nearly 800 youth going through mediation in Cobb County, Georgia between 1993 and 1996 was followed along with a comparison group from an earlier time period (Stone, Helms, and Edgeworth, 1998). No significant difference in recidivism rates was found: 34.2 percent mediated to 36.7 percent non-mediated. Three-quarters of the mediated youth who returned to court did so because of violation of the conditions of mediation agreements.

In a recent article, Nugent, Umbreit, Wiinamaki and Paddock (2001) conducted a rigorous reanalysis of recidivism data reported in four previous studies involving a total sample of 1,298 juvenile offenders, 619 who participated in VOM and 679 who did not. Using logistic regression procedures, the authors determined that VOM youth recidivated at a statistically significant 32 percent lower rate than non-VOM youth, and when they did re-offend they did so for less serious offenses than the non-VOM youth.

All in all, recidivism findings across a fair number of sites and settings suggest that VOM is at least as viable an option for recidivism reduction as traditional approaches. And in a good number of instances, youth going through mediation programs are actually faring better.

Cost

Relative costs of correctional programs are difficult to assess. Several studies reviewed here addressed the issue of costs.

Cost per unit case is obviously influenced by the number of cases handled and the amount of time devoted to each case. The results of a detailed cost analysis in a Scottish study were mixed (Warner, 1992). In some instances, mediation was less costly than other options and in others more. The author notes that given the "marginal scope" of these programs it remains difficult to evaluate how much they would cost on a scale large enough to affect overall program administration.

Evaluation of a large-scale VOM program in California led authors to conclude that cost

per case was reduced dramatically as the program went from being a fledgling to being a viable option (Niemeyer and Schichor, 1996). Cost per case was \$250.

An alternative way of considering the cost impact of VOM is to consider its effect on the broader system. Reduction of incarceration time served can yield considerable savings to a state or county (Coates and Gehm, 1985). Reduction of trials, such as in Henderson County, North Carolina, where trials were reduced by two-thirds, would have tremendous impact at the county level (Clarke, Valente Jr., and Mace, 1992). And researchers evaluating a VOM program in Cobb County, Georgia point out that while they did not do a cost analysis, time is money (Stone, Helms, and Edgeworth, 1998). The time required to process mediated cases was only a third of that needed for non-mediated cases.

The potential cost savings of VOM programs when they are truly employed as alternatives rather than as marginal showcase additions is significant. Yet a cautionary note must continue to be heard. Like any other program option, these programs can be swamped with cases to the point that quality is compromised. And in the quest for savings there is the temptation to expand the eligibility criteria to include those who would not otherwise penetrate the system or to take on serious cases that the particular program staff are ill equipped to manage. Staff and administrators must be prepared to ask, "Cost savings at what cost?"

VOM and Crimes of Violence

In 1990, a survey of victim-offender mediation program, in the juvenile justice system noted that most programs excluded violent offenders and sex offenders (Hughes and Schneider, 1990). Two-thirds of cases reported by VOM programs in a 1996-97 survey (Greenwood and Umbreit, 1998) involved offenders with misdemeanor offenses. Forty-five percent of reporting programs worked only with juveniles while nine percent handled adults only. The remainder worked with both. These figures support the notion that VOM is often used as a "front-end" diversionary option often working with "less serious" cases. In fact, the largest VOM programs in the United States, some receiving over 1,000 referrals a year, serve as a diversion of young offenders with little or no prior court involvement from formal processing in the juvenile court.

Many program staff contend that in order to work with burglary and moderately seri-

ous assault cases programs must accept the less serious cases. Others would argue that these so-called "less serious" cases still involve human loss and tragedy. And still others claim that making crime a human problem for offenders at these less serious levels will prevent more serious crimes from occurring. As indicated above when discussing recidivism, there is at least some modest empirical support for these contentions.

Without disparaging the work of VOM programs dealing in cases perceived and defined as "less serious," there are signs of at least a subtle shift in the utilization of VOM. In the above-mentioned 1996-97 survey, many program administrators indicated that programs "are being asked to mediate crimes of increasing severity and complexity." And "virtually all interviewees indicated that advanced training is necessary in working with cases of severe violence." (Greenwood and Umbreit, 1998).

Apart from the general pressure to take on more severe and complex cases, some individuals and programs specialize in working with the most violent kinds of crime. Studies involving murder, vehicular homicide, manslaughter, armed robbery, and sexual assault in such disparate locations as New York, Wisconsin, Alaska, Minnesota, Texas, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and British Columbia (Umbreit, 1989; Roberts, 1995; Flatten, 1996; Umbreit, Bradshaw, and Coates, 1999; Umbreit and Brown, 1999; Umbreit and Vos, 2000) are yielding important data for shaping mediation work with violent offenders and victims of violent crime.

These very intense, time-consuming mediation efforts have shown promising, positive results. Victims who seek and choose this kind of encounter and dialogue with an individual who brought unspeakable tragedy to their lives report feelings of relief, a greater sense of closure, and gratitude for not being forgotten and unheard. In several states, lists of victims seeking to meet with violent offenders far exceed the resources available to accommodate the victims' desires.

Conclusion

Victim-offender mediation has received considerable research attention—more than many other justice alternatives. With over 20 years of experience and research data, there is a solid basis for saying: 1) for those choosing to participate—be they victims or offenders—victim-offender mediation and dialogue engenders very high levels of satisfaction with

the program and with the criminal justice system; 2) participants typically regard the process and resulting agreements as fair; 3) restitution comprises part of most agreements and over eight out of 10 agreements are usually completed; 4) VOM can be an effective tool for diverting juvenile offenders from further penetration into the system, yet it may also become a means for widening the net of social control; 5) VOM is as effective (if not more so) in reducing recidivism as traditional probation options; 6) where comparative costs have been considered, VOM offers considerable promise for reducing or containing costs; 7) there is growing interest in adopting mediation practices for working with victims and offenders involved in severely violent crime and preliminary research shows promising results, including the need for a far more lengthy and intensive process of preparing the parties.

For at least a significant minority of folks involved in the justice system, VOM is regarded as an effective means for holding offenders accountable for their actions. While there is a fairly extensive base of research on victim-offender mediation across many sites supporting this contention, far more work needs to be done. Most of the studies reported offer results that are at best suggestive because of the limitations of their research methodology. Far more rigorous studies, including random assignment, control groups and longitudinal designs, are required. Yet in the real world of field research in the criminal justice system, the 25-year experience of victim-offender mediation has become one of the more promising and empirically grounded reform movements to emerge during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

References

- Bradshaw, W. and Umbreit, M. "Crime Victims Meet Juvenile Offenders: Contributing Factors to Victim Satisfaction with Mediated Dialogue," *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* Vol. 49 (Summer 1998), pp. 17-25.
- Carr, C. (1998). *VORS Program Evaluation Report*.
- Clarke, S., E. Valente, Jr., and R. Mace (1992). *Mediation of Interpersonal Disputes: An Evaluation of North Carolina's Programs*. Chapel Hill: Institute of Government, University of North Carolina.
- Collins, J.P. (1984). *Final Evaluation Report on the Grande Prairie Community Reconciliation Project For Young Offenders*.

- Coates, R. and J. Gehm (1985). *Victim Meets Offender: An Evaluation of Victim-Offender Reconciliation Programs*. Valparaiso, IN: PACT Institute of Justice; Coates, R. and J. Gehm (1989), "An Empirical Assessment" in M. Wright and B. Galaway (eds.), *Mediation and Criminal Justice*. London: Sage, pp. 251-263.
- Davis, R. et al. (1980). *Mediation and Arbitration as Alternative to Prosecution in Felony Arrest Cases, An Evaluation of the Brooklyn Dispute Resolution Center*. New York, NY: VERA Institute of Justice.
- Dignan, (1990). *Repairing the Damage: An Evaluation of an Experimental Adult Reparation Scheme in Kettering, Northamptonshire*. Sheffield: Centre for Criminological Legal Research, Faculty of Law, University of Sheffield.
- Fercello, C. and Umbreit, M. (1999) *Client satisfaction with victim offender conferences in Dakota County, Minnesota*. St. Paul, MN: Center for Restorative Justice & Mediation, University of Minnesota, School of Social Work.
- Flaten, C. (1996). "Victim-offender Mediation: Application with Serious Offences Committed by Juveniles." In: B. Galaway and J. Hudson (eds.), *Restorative Justice: International Perspectives*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press, pp. 387-401.
- Galaway, B. (1989). "Informal Justice: Mediation between Offenders and Victims." In: P. Albrecht and O. Backes (eds.), *Crime Prevention and Intervention: Legal and Ethical Problems*. NY, NY: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 103-116.
- Galaway, B. (1995). "Victim-Offender Mediation by New Zealand Probation Officers: The Possibilities and the Reality." *Mediation Quarterly* Vol. 12, pp. 249-262.
- Gehm, J. (1990). "Mediated Victim-Offender Restitution Agreements: An Exploratory Analysis of Factors Related to Victim Participation." In B. Galaway and J. Judson (eds.), *Criminal Justice, Restitution, and Reconciliation*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press, pp. 177-182.
- Hughes, S. and A. Schneider, (1990). *Victim-Offender Mediation in the Juvenile Justice System*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Marshall, T. (1990). "Results of Research from British Experiments in Restorative Justice." In B. Galaway and J. Hudson (eds.), *Criminal Justice, Restitution, and Reconciliation*. London: Sage, pp. 83-107.
- Niemeyer, M. and D. Shichor (1996). "A Preliminary Study of a Large Victim/Offender Reconciliation Program," *Federal Probation*, Vol. 60 (September) pp. 30-34.
- Nugent, W. and J. Paddock (1995). "The Effect of Victim-Offender Mediation on Severity of Reoffense," *Mediation Quarterly* Vol. 12, Summer, pp. 353-367.
- Nugent, W., M. Umbreit, L. Wiinamaki, and J. Paddock (2001). "Participation in Victim-Offender Mediation and Severity of Subsequent Delinquent Behavior: Successful Replications?" *Journal of Research in Social Work Practice*.
- Perry, L., Lajeunesse, T. and Woods, A. (1987). *Mediation Services: An Evaluation*. Manitoba Attorney General: Research, Planning and Evaluation.
- Roberts, L. (1998). *Victim-offender Mediation: An Evaluation of the Pima County Juvenile Court Center's Victim Offender Mediation Program (VOMP)*. Available from Frasier Area Community Justice Initiatives in Langley, British Columbia.
- Roberts, T. (1995). *Evaluation of the Victim-offender Mediation Project*, Langley, BC: Final Report, Victoria, BC: Focus Consultants.
- Roy, S. (1993) "Two Types of Juvenile Restitution Programs in Two Midwestern Counties: A Comparative Study," *Federal Probation*, Vol. 57, pp. 48-53.
- Schneider, A. (1986). "Restitution and Recidivism Rates of Juvenile Offenders: Results from Four Experimental Studies," *Criminology*, Vol. 24, pp. 533-552.
- Stone, S., W. Helms, and P. Edgeworth (1998). *Cobb County Juvenile Court Mediation Program Evaluation*.
- Umbreit, M. S. (1988). "Mediation of Victim-offender Conflict," *Journal of Dispute Resolution*, pp. 85-105.
- Umbreit, M., (1989). "Crime Victims Seeking Fairness, Not Revenge: Toward Restorative Justice," *Federal Probation* (September 1989), pp. 52-57.
- Umbreit, M., (1989). "Violent Offenders and Their Victims," In M. Wright and B. Galaway (eds.), *Mediation and Criminal Justice*. London: Sage, pp. 99-112.
- Umbreit, M. (1991). "Minnesota Mediation Center Produces Positive Results," *Corrections Today* (August), pp. 194-197.
- Umbreit, M. (1995). *Mediation of Criminal Conflict: An Assessment of Programs in Four Canadian Provinces*. St. Paul, MN: Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation, University of Minnesota, School of Social Work. Other publications related to this study include: Umbreit, M. (1996), "Restorative Justice Through Mediation: The Impact of Programs in Four Canadian Provinces," in B. Galaway and J. Hudson, (eds.) *Restorative Justice: International Perspectives*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press; Umbreit, M. (1999) "Victim-offender Mediation in Canada: The Impact of an Emerging Social Work Intervention," *International Social Work*.
- Umbreit, M.S. (2001). *The Handbook of Victim-offender Mediation: An Essential Guide for Practice and Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Umbreit, M. and R. Coates, (1992). *Victim-offender Mediation: An Analysis of Programs in Four States of the US*. St. Paul, MN: Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation, University of Minnesota, School of Social Work. Other publications related to this study include: Umbreit, M. & R. Coates, "The Impact of Mediating Victim-offender Conflict: An Analysis of Programs in Three States," *Juvenile & Family Court Journal* (1992), pp. 1-8; Umbreit, M. & R. Coates, "Cross-Site Analysis of Victim-Offender Mediation in Four States," *Crime & Delinquency* Vol. 39 (Oct. 1993), pp 565-585; Umbreit, M. "Juvenile Offenders Meet Their Victims: The Impact of Mediation in Albuquerque, New Mexico," *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, Vol. 31 (Jan. 1993), pp.90-100; Umbreit, M. *Victim Meets Offender*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press, 1994; Umbreit, M. "Crime Victims Confront Their Offenders: The Impact of a Minneapolis Mediation Program," *Research On Social Work Practice* Vol. 4 (Oct. 1994), pp. 436-447; Umbreit, M. "Restorative Justice through Mediation: The Impact of Offenders Facing Their Victims in Oakland," *Journal of Law and Social Work* Vol. 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 1-13; Umbreit, M. "Restorative Justice Through Victim-Offender Mediation: A Multi-Site Assessment," *Western Criminology Review* Vol.1 (1998).
- Umbreit, M. and A. Roberts (1996). *Mediation of Criminal Conflict in England: An Assessment of Services In Coventry And Leeds*. St. Paul, MN: Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation; and Roberts, A. and M. Umbreit (1996), "Victim-offender Mediation: The English Experience," *MEDIATION UK*, Vol 12, Summer.
- Umbreit, M. and W. Bradshaw (1997). "Victim Experience of Meeting Adult vs. Juvenile Offenders: A Cross-National Comparison," *Federal Probation* Vol. 61 (December), pp. 33-39.

- Umbreit, M. and J. Greenwood (1999). "National Survey of Victim Offender Mediation Programs in the US," *Mediation Quarterly* 16(3), pp. 235-251.
- Umbreit, M., R. Coates, and A. Roberts (1998). "Impact of Victim-Offender Mediation in Canada, England and the United States," *The Crime Victims Report* (January/February) pp.20-92.
- Umbreit, M. and W. Bradshaw (1999). "Factors that Contribute to Victim Satisfaction with Mediated Offender Dialogue in Winnipeg: An Emerging Area of Social Work Practice," *Journal of Law and Social Work*.
- Umbreit, M., W. Bradshaw, and R. Coates (2001). "Victims of Severe Violence Meet the Offender: Restorative Justice Through Dialogue." *International Journal of Victimology*.
- Umbreit, M. and K. Brown (1999). "Victims of Severe Violence Meet the Offender in Ohio." *The Crime Victim Report*. Vol. 3 (3).
- Umbreit, M. And Vos, Betty (2000). "Homicide / survivors Meet the Offender Prior to Execution: Restorative Justice Through Dialogue." @ *Homicide Studies*. Vol.4 (1).
- Warner, S. (1992) *Making Amends: Justice for Victims and Offenders*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Wiinamaki, K. (1997). Doctoral dissertation. School of Social Work, University of Tennessee.
- Wynne, J. (1996). "Leeds Mediation and Reparation Service: Ten Years Experience of Victim-Offender Mediation." In: B. Galaway and J. Hudson (eds.), *Restorative Justice: International Perspectives*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press, pp. 443–461.