

WHO WANTS TO MEET ME?

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OBJECTIVE

To reflect on victims' motivations for wanting to participate in restorative justice or not.

MATERIALS

None required.

Note: this activity is suitable for both small and large groups (e.g. up to 200 students can easily participate). It can also be delivered online, as long as the software allows you to see students putting their hands up.

INSTRUCTIONS

Explain that students will be asked to put themselves in the shoes of the victim of different offences, and to consider if they would wish to participate in restorative justice under a given set of circumstances. You, the instructor, are the offender – hence “Who wants to meet me?”

Ask a student to select an offence with a victim. Ask other students to develop a backstory to the offence. The instructor can ask further questions to support this. For example, if the first student selects burglary, you can ask others to suggest what was stolen, what was its value, whether you were at home at the time of the offence, whether you were insured, whether the perpetrator was a child or an adult, etc. Generally, three questions/pieces of backstory are sufficient.

The instructor summarises the situation before asking: “By show of hands, who wants to meet me?” Then, “Who does not want to meet me?” Try to remember who put their hands up in response to each question, and, after asking both, ask three people who answered yes and three who answered no to explain: “How come you’d like to meet me in this case? How come you wouldn’t like to meet me in this case?”

Each scenario is used twice because, after the above discussion, the instructor changes one feature of the scenario. For example, if the burglar stole a television – or any item that is not of semimetal value – vary the case so that an item of sentimental value was stolen instead (e.g. jewelry given to you by a deceased grandparent). Alternatively, if the burglar was an adult, they can change to a child. Ask: “By show of hands, who wants to meet me? Who does not want to meet me?” Again, remember who raised their hand for each answer, and ask a few students to explain their reasoning. In the second round of each scenario, try to identify anyone who changes their mind because of the tweak, and ask a couple of these people why they changed their mind (try to ask as many different students for their views throughout the game as possible).

Repeat for another offence. If the first offence was an acquisitive crime (e.g. burglary, mugging, fraud), it might be of value to steer the second conversation towards a violent offence (e.g. assault, sexual assault) or a different kind of property offence (e.g. criminal damage).

If students are slow or reluctant to supply a backstory to an offence, the instructor can steer the scenario a bit more and make suggestions. The instructor can also think about backstories that the students might identify with. For example, an assault may take place in a bar and involve another person hitting you from behind with a glass bottle. The variables here may include a) if you had to go to hospital or not or b) if you knew the offender or not.

This game is also suitable for more serious offences – for example, for manslaughter or murder, the victim would be a family member. Instructors must assess the dynamics and relationships within the class as part of determining what kinds of offences would or would not be suitable for discussion – for example, some groups might not be ready to discuss sexual offences; others might. A ‘low level’ sexual offence that may be suitable for this game could include a person groping your buttock in a bar.

The game is also designed to enable levity. For example, in a scenario where the instructor (the offender) hits the victim in a bar, the instructor might feign an apology to the student who suggested the scenario.

DEBRIEF

Debriefing happens partially after each question, in which students reflect on their reasons for wanting to meet or not. At the end of the game, (try three rounds, finishing with a more serious offence if one has not come up, and if the class dynamic is suitable) the instructor can ask: “What did you notice about your responses to different scenarios? Was anyone uncertain in any of the cases as to whether they would like to meet or not? Would anyone who wanted to meet in some scenarios but not in others like to reflect on why?” What did the classes’ answers indicate about victims’ motivations for participating? (Typically, most people will put their hand up at least once during the game.)

LESSON

Victims’ motivations for participating in restorative justice depend on personal factors and on the precise circumstances of each case. Reflecting more deeply on the range of possible circumstances that surround an offence can help us better to understand victim participation in restorative justice.