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Do victims of violent crime prefer a proactive or protective approach to the offer of restorative justice?

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Background

- How to reach out to victims of crime?
 - Balance between
need for information and protection
- Protective versus proactive approach
 - Wemmers and Van Camp (2009-2011)



Objective

- What are the views of victims on offer RJ?
 - Is protective offer overly cautious?
 - Is proactive offer intrusive?



Method

- Semi-structured interviews
- With
 - Victims of violent crime
 - Who did VOM, VOE or conferencing
 - In Belgium and Canada
- Inductive analysis



Sample

Respondents	N
Nationality	21 Belgian - 13 Canadian
Gender	25 Women - 9 Men
Type of offence	11 Murder/manslaughter 1 Sexual Abuse 8 Physical Assault 1 Robbery 7 Incest 1 Stalking 2 Threat with Weapon 1 Fraud 1 Home Invasion 1 Arson
Restorative Intervention	26 VOM - 6 VOE - 2 FGC
Direct or Indirect Victim	22 Direct - 11 Indirect - 1 Collateral
Relation to Offender Prior to Crime	21 Known - 13 Unknown
Age (own) Offender Moment Crime	26 Adult - 8 Juvenile



Views on protective offer

- Forms:
 - Victim addressed question to non-RJ service
 - Offender initiated RJ
 - Victim directly reached out to offender
 - Victim selected for RJ
- Appreciation:
 - Selection for RJ = empowering
 - Request to non-RJ service often ignored or misunderstood
 - Offenders better informed than victims



Views on proactive offer

- Forms:
 - Direct referral to RJ by judicial service
 - Information about RJ from Parole Board
 - RJ suggested by support worker
 - Written information about RJ in police or court documentation
- Appreciation:
 - Outreach much appreciated, not upsetting
 - Information allows making choices



(Contra-)indicators

- Seriousness of crime? No limitations!
- Trauma? No, but victim needs to be ready
- Particularly, but not exclusively, useful when victim and offender know each other
- Hence: general offer
which enables informed choice



Conclusions and implications

- Prefer refusing offer than not knowing about it
- Information from
 - Victim support
 - Judicial authorities
- Hence need for continuing sensitization



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Thank you....

Wemmers, J-A. & Van Camp, T. (2011). *The offer of restorative justice to victims of violent crime: should it be protective or proactive? Final report.* Montreal: CICC, Université de Montréal.

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