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Anneke Ransijn
Exploring the Experience of Victim
Offender Mediation through
Winnicottian Object Relations
Theory and Self Psychology

ABSTRACT

In light of the growing practice of victim offender mediation practice in the United States, this paper explores the experience of the victim throughout the process using the application of D.W. Winnicott's theory of object relations and Heinz Kohut's theory of Self Psychology. I will use these psychodynamic theories to provide an in-depth analysis of the victim's experience of victimization and the process of victim offender mediation, including the internal and external worlds of the victim, her needs, and the roles of those involved in the process. This study will highlight the effective interventions that may facilitate a more positive and healing experience of victim offender mediation through the applications of psychodynamic theory, informing social work policy, research and practice within the realm of restorative justice. Mediators can be better informed regarding their role in facilitating the process of victim offender mediation.

**EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCE OF VICTIM OFFENDER MEDIATION THROUGH
WINNICOTTIAN OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY AND SELF PSYCHOLOGY**

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2014

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to expand the literature discussing the effects of victim-offender on a victim of violent crime. Victim-offender mediation is a process in which victims of a crime take part in a dialogue with the offender about the crime committed. The process of victim offender mediation falls under restorative justice practices, which are seen as alternative to traditional criminal justice practices. For the purpose of this thesis, I will be discussing victim-offender mediation in which the victim convenes face-to-face with the offender of the crime committed against him or her. In this practice, both parties have the opportunity to discuss the crime, or address the harm that was done. This study will explore the experience of victim-offender mediation through the lens of Object Relations Theory and Self Psychology in order to deepen the understanding of the process through the experience of the victim.

Literature has shown that victims' response to crime negatively impacts crime victims' views of themselves, others, and the world around them (Hill, 2003). Additionally, the personal narrative of crime victims often shifts - namely, to that a victim, which often carries with it conceptions of the self as weak and vulnerable (Frieze, Hymer & Greenberg, 1987; Koss, 1990). Compounding this negative impact of the crime is often an additional harm experienced by the victim in response to her needs not being met by others, including the criminal justice system. Victims often experience secondary victimization, or what Symonds (2010) originally described as a "second injury" (n.p.) , which is described by "a perceived rejection and lack of expected

support from the community, agencies, treating personnel, society in general, as well as, family or friends to an individual who has been injured or victimized” (n.p.).

A significant part of victim-offender mediation is that it gives the victim an opportunity to meet her needs that are often not accommodated by the traditional criminal justice system. Victim-offender mediation places great emphasis on serving the victim’s needs of addressing the harm done by the offender and giving the victim an opportunity to have her voice heard. This study will be addressing the experience of being victimized through physical assault and the process of victim-offender mediation through the lens of Winnicottian object relations theory and Self Psychology.

Object Relations Theory

Object relations theory focuses upon the internal and external relationships with the self. The *object* in object relations refers to either a “real” and present individual or the internal mental representation of a person, and object relations theory explores the rich interactions of these present people in the external world as well as the mental representations of these people (Flanagan, 2010). Object relations theory describes the work of several theorists that emerged out of Freudian psychoanalysis, specifically from the contributions of drive theorist Melanie Klein in the 1920s and 1930s (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Klein extended psychoanalysis to children and focused upon the caregiver and child interaction. Klein postulated that children were wired for human interaction, a concept that other theorists such as D.W. Winnicott built upon in creating their own work that contributed to object relations theory.

D.W. Winnicott was a British pediatrician and later psychoanalyst who was supervised by Melanie Klein. Winnicott worked closely with Klein until he and other independent theorists broke away from Klein and traditional Freudian psychoanalysis in the 1940s. This group of

‘independent’ theorists developed non-Kleinian object relations theories (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 133), and focused upon caregiver-child relationships. Winnicott’s theory of object relationships, or “Winnicottian” object relations theory, addresses the needs of the child through development, transitioning to the state of separateness, and creating a subjective sense of self.

Object relations theory addresses the victims’ experience more deeply by looking at the internal and external worlds of the victim throughout their experiences of victim-offender mediation. This analysis focuses on Winnicottian object relations theory due to his emphasis on the process of separation from the caregiver and the development of an authentic sense of self, which will extend to the process of victim offender mediation. It will apply Winnicottian concepts of *the holding environment, transitional object*, as well as the *True Self and the False Self* to deepen the discussion of the process. In addition this analysis, will discuss the preparations leading up to the convening of the victim and offender in the same space with a skilled facilitator, or mediator as well as the actual process of convening face-to-face within the structure set forth by the mediator.

Self Psychology

Self Psychology, as developed by Heinz Kohut, is a comprehensive psychoanalytic theory that includes both a model of development and a model for clinical consultation and therapy (Banai, Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005). Kohut was an Austrian-born American neurologist who was trained in Freudian psychoanalysis in Chicago in the 1940s (Kirsner, 2001). Kohut developed Self Psychology largely in response to what he viewed as a gap in psychoanalysis concerning patients who were diagnosed with narcissistic disorders (Lessen, 2005).

According to Kohut, the development of the self occurs along three pathways, or *poles*: the *parent imago, grandiose self* and the *twinsip pole*. Each of these poles of the self have needs

for development that are met or not met by *selfobjects*. *Selfobjects* are defined as “people or things outside of the self, vitally necessary to every individual as source of mirroring, sources of perfection and grandeur to merge with, and as similar selves to feel at one with” (Berzoff, Flanagan & Hertz, 2008, p. 171). *Selfobjects* are therefore needed to create a strong, healthy and vibrant self (Flanagan, 2010). Kohut described the necessity of “optimal frustration” in which needs are not always met, so that the “developing child is challenged to find strength and comfort within the self” (Flanagan, 2011, p. 176). Contrastingly, the absence of *selfobjects* or continual failure of *selfobjects* to meet needs results in psychological suffering or illness, categorized as *primary* or *secondary disorders of the self*.

This analysis will apply Self Psychology to the process of victim-offender mediation in order to more deeply explore how the victim’s needs are/are not met by using the concepts of the three *poles*. In additions, this analysis will use the concepts of *selfobjects* in analysis of those involved in the process. Overall, this paper will discuss the impact of crime on the self, and how the experience of victim-offender mediation may provide a corrective experience from the point of view of Self Psychology.

Relevance to Social Work

This study is relevant to social work practice for several reasons. First and foremost, social justice is integral to both restorative justice and the field of social work: the belief that humans are equal and possess human dignity. Therefore, every individual who is affected by a crime deserves to meet his needs in the recovery process. This emphasis of victim empowerment is compatible with the core values of social work practice (Choi, Green, & Kapp, 2010, p.857).The guiding tenet in restorative justice theory aligns with social work values: crimes are seen as committed against individuals and communities, rather than injuries against the state,

(Umbreit, Vos, Coates & Lightfoot, 2005). Therefore, victim-offender mediation is a way to address the crimes by involving the very individuals who are arguably most impacted by the crimes committed.

Conclusion

In the following chapters, I will explore the victim's experience of violent crime. First, I will discuss how I plan to conceptualize and explore the victim's experience of victim-offender mediation through the lens of the two theoretical perspectives, including the limitations and strengths involved in doing so. I will then briefly discuss the experience of a victim of physical assault and then detail the process of victim-offender mediation as it is practiced. Next, I will introduce the two psychological theories that I will use to explore the victim's experience of victim-offender mediation. Then, I will discuss how each of these two theories applies to the experience of victim-offender mediation in order to more deeply understand the phenomenon. I will then discuss the possible implications of this research to social work practice, education, and policy. Overall, I hope to expand on the research of the influence that victim-offender mediation has on a victim of a violent crime's experience by providing an in-depth discussion through the application of well-studied, coherent psychological perspectives with which clinicians use to explore the human experience.

CHAPTER II

Conceptualization and Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the influence that victim-offender mediation has on the experience of a victim of physical assault. In Chapter III, I present the phenomenon by reviewing literature on the experience of a victim in response to violent crime, the process of victim-offender mediation and research that explores the experience of victim-offender mediation. In Chapters IV and V, I will present the two theoretical perspectives that will be used to explore how the experience of a victim of violent crime is influenced by the process of victim-offender mediation. In Chapter VI, I will apply these theories to the experience of victim-offender mediation and discuss the implications for the field of social work. Together, these chapters provide a systematic approach to exploring the influence of victim-offender mediation on the experience of a victim of violent crime.

Theoretical Framework

I will use object relations theory and Self Psychology in order to explore the influence that victim-offender mediation has on the experience of a victim of violent crime. Object relations will be used to more deeply discuss the changes that occur in the victims' internal and external world of relationships of the self and other in response to crime, as well as how the process of victim-offender mediation may influence a change in these worlds. Self Psychology will provide a more in-depth view of the experience of the victim and how his/her needs are or are not being met throughout the process and providing an in-depth analysis of the roles that each

person plays in the process. Below I provide a brief overview of each theory and detail the components of each theory that I will use in my discussion of the phenomenon.

Object Relations Theory.

Object relations theory refers to the work of many psychodynamic writers that focuses on the relationship of the self to the other (Flanagan, 2011). Object relations theory addresses both the internal and external world of relationships and how they relate to the self. The external world refers to the interactions of “real” and present people, while the internal world refers to the internal mental representations of these people, including the self. The terminology to represent both the external and “present” people as well as their internal mental representations is *objects*.

Traditionally in psychodynamic theory, the use of the word *object* often refers to people as well as other things such as music, art, or physical objects that are either experienced as objects of the inner world or as targets of sexual and aggressive impulses. Flanagan (2011) writes that objects in object relations theory more closely refers to a person either real or present in the external world or internalized, or incorporated into the internal world. Object relations theory postulates that humans take in the world around them, a process by which the psyche takes in experiences with others, including personal experiences and social forces, to become a part of the self. External experiences, therefore, are taken into the self and effect internal representations and expectations of situations and people, looking at the ‘situation-in-person.’ Object relations theory explores the interactions of the self and other beginning with infancy and bridging into adulthood, placing great emphasis on the child-caregiver relationship throughout development.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will be applying object relations as formulated by British pediatrician and psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott, referred to as ‘Winnicottian object relations theory.’ D.W. Winnicott developed his theory of object relations largely through the influence of

drive theorist Melanie Klein. Klein was instrumental in the development of object relations theory from Freudian theory, as Klein asserted that infants and children were capable of being analyzed, a distinction from (Anna) Freudian theory (Black & Mitchell, 1995). Klein also asserted that infants were wired for human interaction, and are distinctly human from infancy, which differed from Freudian theory that postulated an animal to human development.

As a pediatrician, Winnicott spent a great deal of time focusing upon the mother-child relationship, and often spoke to mothers about what to expect as their child developed (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Winnicott discussed the mother-child relationship in length in psychoanalysis with James Stacey, who was well acquainted with Melanie Klein. Stacey referred Winnicott to Klein due to Winnicott's focus upon the mother-child relationship, an area that Klein studied. It is through this relationship with Klein that Winnicott explored more in depth the mother-child interactions and eventually developed his own ideas about the mother-child relationship and how it impacted child development into adulthood (Mitchell & Black, 1995; Padel, 1991).

Among Winnicott's contributions to object relations theory are two terms which I will be discussing in my discussion of the phenomenon: the *holding environment*, which quite literally means the mother holding the infant in her arms, but also, the ability of the mother to create a safe world for the infant in which the baby feels protected by from danger both physically and emotionally (Flanagan, 2011). This concept is often transferred into psychotherapy, where therapists create a safe emotional and physical space for the client, and can arguably be transferred into other social relationships. I will apply this concept to the process of victim-offender mediation. Additionally, Winnicott contributed the concept of the *transitional object*, a physical object that a child carries with her when physically separating from the caregiver. This object may be a favorite toy given to the child by the parent. This concept can be related to a

plan of reparation produced in the process of victim-offender mediation, a physical document that details a plan of repair. Next, I will address how victim-offender mediation satisfies this need, as well as providing a transitional space for the victim. Lastly, I will be exploring the Winnicottian concepts of the *True Self* and *False Self* within the process of victim offender mediation. Winnicott asserted that through a healthy relationship with the primary caregiver, an individual begins the process of separation, forming a genuine, idiosyncratic, unique self called the *True Self*. Contrastingly, Winnicott postulated that failure for the caregiver to provide a flexible relationship with the child and encourage developing interests and unique identity, resulted in a *False Self* (Mitchell & Black, 1995). .

This theoretical perspective offers a lens from which to explore how crime victims' object relations are effected by experience of violent crime and how the process of victim-offender mediation may influence a victim's object relations. A central focus of object relations theory is whether the needs of an individual are or not met. I will be discussing how victim-offender mediation seeks to meet the needs of the crime victim not fulfilled by the traditional criminal justice system. Additionally, I will be addressing the process of victim offender mediation through Winnicottian terms that enhance the understanding of the experience, both leading up to and during the process of meeting the offender face-to-face.

Self Psychology

Kohut conceptualized the self in three pathways of development called *poles*. These three poles, often referred to collectively as the *Tripartite Self*, include *the idealized parent imago pole*, *grandiose pole*, and *twinsip pole* (Lessem, 2005). Below is a description of the three different poles of development.

The *grandiose pole* is characterized by its needs for mirroring *selfobjects*. Mirroring *selfobjects* describes people who will reflect the “unique capacities, talents, and characteristics” of a person (Flanagan, 2011, p. 169). This aspect of the self desires feeling special and is the location of confidence, individuality, and the core identity of the self. Those with developed grandiose selves are “vibrant, full of confidence, hopeful, ambitious and productive” (Flanagan, 2011, p. 160). The second pole Kohut described is the idealized parent imago. This pole represents an internal and sometimes unconscious object representation of an idealized other (Flanagan, 2010). It is important to note that this idealized parent imago can include caregivers as the name suggests, but also extends to a variety of others throughout the lifetime.

The third pole Kohut described the *twinsip pole*, which is characterized by its need experience twinship, or ‘essential likeness’ (Kohut, 1984, p. 194, as cited in Lessem, 2005). This need for twinship is present throughout the lifetime, but changes through development to increasingly tolerate difference (Lessem, 2005).

Selfobjects are defined as “people or things outside of the self, vitally necessary to every individual as source of mirroring, sources of perfection and grandeur to merge with, and as similar selves to feel at one with” (Berzoff, Flanagan & Hertz, 2008, p. 171). The self is comprised of a system of organization of the subjective experience (Banai, Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005). The self is the core the personality, and includes experiences, sensations, and feelings. I will apply the concepts of the *self*, *selfobjects*, and the *tripartite self* (including the *grandiose self*, the *twinsip pole*, and the *parent imago pole*) and the victim’s experience of victim offender mediation. I will discuss how victim-offender mediation provides needs for these poles. I will discuss how victimization disturbs the experience of the cohesive self, and how victim offender mediation is reparative from a Self Psychology perspective.

Strengths

The application of Self Psychology and Winnicottian object relations theory provide a strong theoretical exploration of the experience of a victim in the process of victim-offender mediation. Self psychology provides an in-depth perspective of the self's needs throughout development and into adulthood, and how the fulfillment and disappointment of these needs affects the subjective experience of the self. Object relations theory, in turn, provides an in-depth exploration of the internal and external processes involved, how interactions with others are internalized, and explores the needs of the individual. Together, these theories provide in-depth analysis of the experience of victim-offender mediation, and how this dialogue influences the victim's experience.

Limitations

Although these two theoretical perspectives offer strengths in their in-depth discussions of the phenomenon, they lend themselves to various biases about the human experience. Both Self Psychology and object relations theory are culturally bound (Flanagan, 2010). Both object relations theory as described by Winnicott and Kohut's Self Psychology highlights the importance of a primary caregiver, traditionally a mother, and does not address the situation of a communally reared child. Additionally, these theories value individuality, and therefore are somewhat exclusive of other ways in which a personal narrative is produced.

Additionally, the discussion of victimization and victim offender mediation is limited to female victims who participate in victim-offender mediation, a population that is not necessarily generalizable to the rest of the population. My hope is to more deeply explore the experience and expand on literature of the phenomenon through a psychological, theory-driven perspective.

Biases

There are several personal biases that I hold about restorative justice. I recognize that having researched victim-offender mediation at length, I am biased towards its effectiveness in its reparative practice. I recognize, however, that victim-offender dialogue does not always produce a satisfactory outcome. I have never been a victim of violent crime nor have I had experience with the criminal justice system. Ideologically speaking, my personal views align with victim-offender mediation emphasis on victim empowerment, forgiveness in response to crime, and a guiding tenet of restorative justice that harm is done to and by people, and not committed against the state.

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives of Self Psychology and Winnicottian object relations theory provide an in-depth exploration of the experience of the victim in victim-offender mediation, including both the external and internal processes involved in the phenomenon. In the next chapter, I will present victim-offender mediation, first providing an introduction of restorative justice, a movement, theory, and set of practices under which victim-offender mediation falls. I will describe the beginnings of restorative justice and victim-offender mediation, outline the process, and discuss the empirical literature addressing the victim's experience of both crime and victim-offender mediation. This chapter provides a description of the phenomenon in order to serve as a basis for the theoretical exploration in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER III

Victim-offender Mediation and Restorative Justice

This chapter provides the description of victim offender mediation, including its history and practice and overall place in the movement and theory of restorative justice. The scope of the study, including the population is described, and a detailed outline of a model of victim-offender mediation practiced in the United States is provided, including brief discussion of the roles of the victim, offender, and mediator. Lastly, literature regarding the experience of victimization and the experience of victim-offender mediation is provided.

Restorative Justice Origins

The restorative justice practice movement has been cited as beginning in the early to mid 1970s (Sylvester, 2003). Sylvester (2003) states that the movement's origin is credited with the opening of the Minnesota Restitution Center and the start of victim offender reconciliation (VOR) programs in Kitchner, Ontario. Yet, many scholars assert that restorative principles have been used since ancient times (Van Ness & Heetderks Strong, 2010) stretching from Germanic tribes to ancient Babylon, operating on the principle that offenders should somehow provide restitution to victims and their families.

Restorative Justice Defined

Restorative justice practitioners and theorists seem to agree that there is no one definition of restorative justice. Rather, restorative justice is comprised of both practice and theory that concerns itself with the "interpersonal dimension of crime" (Choi et al., 2010, p. 859). Gerry Johnstone writes that restorative justice, in quite simple terms, is promoted as an "innovative

way of dealing with crime” (Johnstone, 2004, p. 5), but spans to John Braithewaite’s larger vision that restorative justice involves ‘changing the way justice is done in the world’ (Braithewrite, 2003, as cited in Johnstone, 2004, p. 5).

Restorative justice practice and theory focuses upon meeting the needs of all of those who are affected by a crime, which includes victims and offenders and their family members, as well as community members. Restorative Justice operates on the principle that not only is the law of the state broken when a crime is committed, but that individuals and communities are harmed and interpersonal relationships are damaged.

Restorative justice includes approaches that focus on the victim by focusing on the victim’s needs and active role in the healing process, as well as a more offender-oriented process that also incorporates the offender making amends and being rehabilitated (Hurley, 2007). One theory behind the argument for restorative justice is called “reintegrative shaming,” in which the offense committed by the offender is separated from the offender (Braithwaite, 1989, 2002, as cited in Gromet, Okimoto; Wenzel, & Darley, 2012; Gal & Moyal, 2011), so that the offender can be restored to the community rather than being condemned. Integrative shaming asserts that the offender hearing the feelings of the victim voiced is shame enough, and stigmatization is not necessary nor condoned (Bazemore, 2001). Additionally, another concept is that victims feel more satisfied with the justice process because they are a part of it (Gal & Moyal, 2011), a component of interpersonal dialogue (Bazemore, 2001).

Consistent throughout restorative justice literature is the idea that restorative justice, over retributive justice, is seen as justice that meets the victims’ needs more so than retributive justice (Gromet et al., 2012; Hurley, 2007). In contrast to restorative justice, retributive justice is intended to enforce societal norms through punitive procedures set forth by the state.

Victim-offender Mediation: A Restorative Justice Practice.

Victim-offender mediation is thought to be a restorative justice practice that focuses more acutely on the experience of the victim's role in justice carried out. The victim and offender take part in a mediation process aimed at reaching some kind agreement to satisfy both parties (Wemmers & Cyr, 2004). A beneficial aspect of this process is that the victim's voice can be heard, being involved in the process of justice, and can decide whether to meet with the perpetrator through direct mediation (face-to-face) or to take part in the process through indirect mediation through the use of a person who travels from one party to the other in order to relay dialogue (Wemmers & Cyr, 2004). This process, although sometimes viewed as potentially retraumatizing because victims open a dialogue with their perpetrators, is seen as protective and healing of victims' trauma.

Some victims feel "twice victimized" by going through solely the procedural justice as carried out by the state, being victimized first by the perpetrator, and then by the "uncaring criminal justice system that does not have time for them" (Umbreit, 1993, p. 70). Therefore, restorative practices emphasize the worth and rights of the individual victim, serving to humanize them in the eyes of the perpetrator and in their own eyes, sending a message that what they have to say is important and should be heard.

Outline of the Process of Victim-Offender Mediation

Following Umbreit's (1998) training manual for victim offender mediation, there are four phases in the mediation process that follows a humanistic/transformational model of mediation:

1. Intake Phase
2. Preparation for Mediation Phase
3. Mediation Phase

4. Follow-Up Phase

Intake. The Intake phase occurs after a victim has already expressed interest in mediation. The staff calls the offender, explain the process, listen to the offender, and obtain consent for the process. Staff then arranges a meeting for the offender to meet with the mediator in preparation for the mediation phase. Next, the staff calls the victim, explain the process, obtain consent, and arrange a separate meeting with the mediator to prepare for mediation.

Premediation. During the premeditation phase, the mediator meets with the victim and offenders separately. The mediator reintroduces him/herself, listens to the story describing the harm that occurred, and explains the program again. The mediator encourages participation. If the offender agrees to participate, the mediator assesses the offender's ability to pay restitution and the willingness to perform personal or community service work. If the victim agrees to participate in her separate meeting, the mediator assesses the victim's need for restitution and considers willingness to consider personal service work and community service work. In both of these separate meetings, the mediator may coach the victim and offender separately on how to respond to questions during mediation.

Mediation. During the Mediation phase, the mediator initiates the process by providing introductions and arranging seating and explaining her role. The mediator sets ground rules for the process. The mediator then sets the agenda, which includes talking about what happened and its impact on both parties, discussing losses, and initiating a plan for restitution. Next, the victim and offender each present their stories of what happened and how they felt about it. Mediators are instructed to encourage direct communication

between the two parties, allowing for questions and concerns. The victim often shares first, but is not required to do so. Discussion of loss and need for restitution follows, and the mediator facilitates the creation of a restitution agreement that must be considered fair by both parties. Before the session ends, the mediator may schedule a meeting for follow-up with the victim and offender in order to provide accountability and assess progress/need to renegotiate the restitution agreement.

Follow-Up Phase. The follow-up phase may include a brief 15-minute session that is intended to monitor the restitution agreement, strengthen the process of conflict resolution, and provide an opportunity for closure.

Roles: Victim-Offender Mediation

Mediator: The mediator serves as a facilitator of the process. She prepares each party for mediation, listens to their story, and sets the tone of the process. She assesses each participant for readiness and willingness for different aspects of the process. She sets the ground rules, facilitates communication between the two parties, and creates the restitution agreement (if created).

Victim: The victim's role is to have his/her voice heard, discuss the harm and loss experienced, and participate in a plan for reparation if appropriate.

Offender: The offender is there to listen, share his story, and discuss the harm and loss experienced, and participate in the plan for reparation if appropriate.

The Space They Convene

Victim-offender mediation varies in location as to where it is done. In cases of severely violent crime, victim-offender mediation is done in jail, but in cases of less severe violence, such as such as aggravated assault; the space they convene may be of the victim's choosing. The

setting may often be “neutral settings such as churches, libraries, and banks” (Truman, Langston & Planty, 2013) or may take place in the non-profit that is responsible for initiating the mediation. The meeting with the offender in the premediation phase often occurs in the space of the nonprofit, or on the phone, as well as the space in which the victim convenes (Umbreit, 1998). In 80 percent of cases of victim offender mediation, the premediation meeting is held separately for victim and offender (Nugent & Paddock, 1996), following Umbreit’s (1998) handbook.

Victims of Crime

In 2012, there was an estimated 1,214,462 violent crimes in the United States (Uniform Crime Report, 2012). Violent crimes include “offenses which involve force or threat of force.” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012). Of those crimes, Approximately 62.6 percent of violent crimes reported to law enforcement were physical assault. Furthermore, a reported 23.3 percent of those violent crimes were crimes against women (Truman, Langston & Planty, 2013). For the purpose of this study, I am discussing the adult female’s response to violent crime and participation in victim-offender mediation within the United States, as there is a dearth of literature exploring this experience. There is no conclusive data on what percentage of female victims of violent crime take part in victim-offender mediation, and further study of participation percentages nationwide need to be done.

Response to Victimization

Trauma from victimization has been described in many studies, although individual experience of crime varies. Victims of violent crime may experience intense feelings of fear, helplessness and horror (Brewin, Andrews, & Rose, 2000). Researchers found significant gender differences in coping with to victimization (Green and Diaz, 2008). Green and Diaz (2008) found

that female victims exhibited a more frequent experience of depression and PTSD than males, but overall were found to have higher levels of emotional wellbeing.

Victim Satisfaction and Desire for Punishment

Several studies have examined the victim's experience of mediation through measuring levels of victim satisfaction and desire for punishment (Gal & Moral, 2011; Gromet, Okimoto, Wenzel, & Darley, 2012). These studies asked participants to respond to accounts of various crimes and the agreements reached by victims and offenders for restitution. When desire for restorative justice practice and punitive justice practice were assessed simultaneously, before any restorative justice practices had been described as to have taken place, the literature showed that desire for punitive practices still remain alongside restorative practice (Gromet & Darley, 2009). Yet, another study found that although desire for restorative and retributive justice both remained, as victim satisfaction increased, the desire to seek punitive retribution decreased (Gromet, Okimoto, Wenzel, & Darley, 2012).

Additional studies examined victim satisfaction before and after victim-offender mediation as a part of the criminal justice system and through victim-offender programs that are not required or run by the state (Umbreit, 1994; Umbreit 1999). A study conducted by Umbreit (1994) found that victims who took part in the mediation process were more satisfied with the juvenile justice system than victims who did not take part in the mediation process. In these studies not only did victims feel more satisfaction, but offenders evaluated the process as more fair than the justice system proceedings without mediation. In another study done by Umbreit (1999), over 4,000 mediation cases were involved. Interviews conducted for each case found that not only did victims who participated in mediation feel more satisfied and feel the justice

process was more satisfying than victims who did not, but offenders who took part in the process also felt the restorative practices were fairer and more satisfying.

Choi and Severson (2009) conducted another study that focused upon victim satisfaction of apologies offered during victim-offender mediation. In this collective case study, Choi and Severson (2009) found a range of satisfaction. It appeared as if the victims felt, overall that the offenders more clearly understood the weight of their crimes, but victims overall seemed to think the apologies insincere. However, this study differed from previous studies, in that the victim-offender mediation process differed by simply focusing upon apologies that were made in one particular session, rather than examining the process of victim-offender mediation as a whole, which often involves more than the recitation of an apology.

These studies, on the whole, however that examined victim-offender mediation offered important insight to the idea of retribution, healing, and participation in the justice system, supporting the belief that punitive, or retributive justice can be improved upon by using victim-offender mediation. Strengths of the literature included asking both victims and offenders about their experiences of victim-offender mediation, using open-ended and closed-ended interviewing questions that allowed for more freedom in answering, and also using likert scaled questions that allowed for more standardized answers. In addition to these strengths, one study allowed for the interviewing of offenders' families in the process, getting a more rich view of what had happened (Choi & Severson, 2009).

The literature shows strengths in both conducting quasi-experimental designs in administering surveys and interviews, comparing satisfaction with the justice process with mediation and no mediation (Umbreit, 1994), but there seems to be a lack of studies that explore the change in attitudes of actual victims, rather than participants that were asked to answer

surveys based upon theoretical scenarios (Gromet et al., 2012; Gromet & Darley, 2009). Two studies employed the use of a quasi-experimental design, using quantitative survey methods that assessed attitudes and satisfaction before and after mediation, both done in by Umbreit (1994; 1999). Additional research designs included qualitative studies that chose face-to-face interviews as part of a case study (Choi, Green, & Kapp, 2010; Choi & Severson, 2009). Lastly, a quantitative study was done retrospective of mediation, using qualitative interviewing data (Wemmers & Cyr, 2004).

Sampling populations included in the various studies varied, from two undergraduate psychology college classes, numbering 43 (Gromet & Darley, 2009), to two hundred and thirty participants recruited online (Gromet, Okimoto, Wenzel, & Darley, 2012). Additionally, participants were recruited that had been victims of crimes who had been invited to participate in victim-offender mediation in prior years, and were interviewed about why or why not they took part in mediation, and about various attitudes about the process and offender (Wemmers & Cyr, 2004). Of this sampling population, only 59 people took part in the interviews, and of these interviews, a majority took part in mediation, totaling 44 victims. Another study examined cases in which victims were mandated to resolve issues in court or in victim-offender conferencing (Gal & Moral, 2011). Only three studies interviewed both victims of crimes and offenders of crimes (Choi & Severson, 2009; Umbreit, 1994; Umbreit 1999). One study followed victims and offenders through several different victim-offender mediation programs in over 4,000 cases, in the weeks before and two months after mediation (Umbreit, 1999).

When assessing the sampling populations, there seems to be quite a wide range in diversity. It appears that only one study examined victims' experiences of mediation for both adults and children (Gal & Moyal, 2011). The severity of crimes were described by the victim's

experience of being least affected to most affected by the crime, as well as violent and property crimes. Most studies appeared to examine cases that were of low to moderate severity, such as property theft without violent injuries (Wemmers, 2004; Gromet, Okimoto, Wenzel, & Darley, 2012; Galy & Moyal, 2010). Other studies included age range from 18 to 72, with mostly female participants (Gromet, Okimoto, Wenzel, & Darley, 2012), and focused upon minor property theft. These studies generally lacked description of race, and did not always include age (Wemmers & Cyr, 2004). However, Umbreit (1994; 1999) reported extensive demographic data, which included data about offenders, rather than victims, a majority of whom were male and white. Most studies done with actual victims had been victims of crimes that were committed by juveniles (Gal & Moyal, 2011; Umbreit, 1994; Wemmers & Cyr, 2004).

Although varying wide in their methods and participants, most of the studies assessed satisfaction within a very short amount of time, ranging from immediately when given information about mediation, to two months after mediation. A weakness, therefore, that all studies possessed was a lack of longitudinal research that followed satisfaction of victims and offenders over time longer than two months. Only one study done retrospectively with victims of crimes interviewed victims that had been referred to mediation or completed mediation during a specific time period of 5 years (Wemmers & Cyr, 2004). It is possible that satisfaction about the process may appear to have changed, but it may very well be that the passage of time interfered with a more accurate reflection of the process, and thus impacting the perceived attitudes about the process, but also about the offender. Therefore, it may be more helpful to explore satisfaction in a shorter time period after mediation, such as two to six months. Biases are naturally inherent in collecting interview data, and even the tone with which interview questions were asked may have affected the answers of the participants. I believe that a qualitative study would enable a

more rich understanding of the experience of victim-offender mediation, in which face-to-face interviews would take place within two to six months after mediation.

Conclusion

Literature reveals overall that, the experience of victim-offender mediation has often been positive, as measured by levels of satisfaction, positive outcomes, and studies addressing desire for retribution. There exists a dearth of literature, however, more deeply addressing the victim's experience of the process of victim-offender mediation and how victim-offender mediation influences the experience of the victim. The following chapter will outline D.W. Winnicott's theory of object relations, identifying important concepts that will later be applied to the experience of victim offender mediation in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER IV

Object Relations Theory

Object relations theory refers to the work of several psychodynamic theorists in the United States and England (Flanagan, 2011). Object relations theory, therefore, is not one theory, but rather a diverse set of work that is distinguishable from other psychodynamic theories such as drive theory, ego psychology, and self psychology. Instead of focusing upon the sexual and aggressive drives, object relations theory focuses upon the relation of the self to others, focusing upon human needs being met through others. Object relations theory postulates that all people carry with them an internal, often unconscious world of relationships in addition to the external world of “‘real’ and present people” (Flanagan, 2011, p. 119).

Traditionally in psychodynamic theory, the use of the word *object* often refers to people as well as other things such as music, art, or physical objects that are either experienced as objects of the inner world or as targets of sexual and aggressive impulses. Flanagan (2011) writes that objects in object relations theory more closely refers to a person either real and present in the external world or internalized, or incorporated into the internal world (p. 120).

This chapter will outline the work of D.W. Winnicott, a major contributor to object relations theory, a psychoanalyst, and a pediatrician. Among some of Winnicott’s contributions to object relations theory are his exploration of the tension between the need for attachment to others and to be separate from others throughout development, the concept of the *holding environment*, the *good enough mother* and the *transitional experience*. In this chapter, I will

discuss the history of object relations and discuss and identify important concepts that will be applied to victim-offender mediation in chapter VI.

Object relations theory includes two major branches, the British school and the American school. Among the British theorists are Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn, Harry Guntrip, Donald Winnicott, and John Bowlby. Among the American school are theorists Margaret Mahler, Otto Kernberg, Thomas Ogden, and James Masterson. There further lies a division among the theorists as the result of an acrimonious debate and division of the British Psychoanalytic Society in the 1940s (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Winnicott, along with Bowlby, Fairbairn, Guntrip and others, departed from Melanie Klein's object relations theory. These 'independent' theorists built upon Melanie Klein's assertion that infants are wired for human interaction, but rejected her idea that constitutional aggression is derived from an infant death instinct (Mitchell & Black, 1995).

Beginnings of Object Relations Theory: Freud and Mourning and Melancholia

When Freud published his 1917 paper, "Mourning and Melancholia," he expanded on the role of the object. Rather than simply a target of drives and impulses, objects shifted to being seen as important for development and able to be internalized into the psychic structure. Freud wrote about the difference of mourning, in which a person loses interest in the outside world and feels dejected and sorrowful after a loved one dies. In this state, a person's interest lies pervasively with the memory of the loved one as if in an attempt to keep the loved one alive. After time, the person is able to surface from this mourning to return to the present world, self and others by letting go of the object.

Freud wrote that melancholia appeared the same as mourning in its initial stages, however, departs from mourning when the mourner is unable to work through the loss and let go

of the object. Instead, this person, in addition to feeling dejected and sorrowful, begins to reproach and complain about the self, sometimes to the point of self-hatred. In order to preserve the positive regard of the lost object, and not experience the ambivalent feelings associated with the loss of the object, the mourner takes in the ego of the lost object and redirects the anger that is felt toward the object instead toward the self, resulting in self-punishment that ultimately lowers self-esteem. As Flanagan explains, this concept of internalizing the ego of the lost object into the self and then turning against the self is illustrated through Freud's 1917 sentence, 'Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego' (p, 119, as cited in Flanagan, 2011). Flanagan writes that this concept "represented an enormous expansion of psychodynamic theory and eventually became the heart of object relations theory" (p. 124).

Winnicott focused upon the relationship of the child to the mother as the primary caregiver. Winnicott believed that a healthy mother must engage in a state of 'primary preoccupation' with her baby that eased the transition of being in the womb to the external world (Flanagan, p. 127), a state that initiates during pregnancy when the mother prepares for the infant's arrival. During this state, a mother is able to be attuned to her baby and merge into a "kind of blissful union" (Flanagan, p. 111). Winnicott described this state as a temporary mental illness in which the mother's own subjectivity slowly faded into the background as she prepares in the months before birth. When the child arrives, the mother's own interests and desires fall wayside to those of the infant. The mother is able to respond to the baby's 'spontaneous gestures' (Black & Mitchell, p.), intuiting the wants of the child.

Winnicott believed that during this time period, the baby is able to emerge into an awareness of her own subjectivity, as a 'distinctly human person with a sense of life as real and meaningful' (Black & Mitchell, 1995, p. 154). Since the mother is able to intuit the child's

wants, the baby's experience is that she is all-powerful and at the center of all being, able to produce her own desires, which in actuality are gratified by the mother. The baby's experience is called the 'moment of illusion' as the baby is eluded in that she believes she has created the object of desire. The mother creates a *holding environment* in which she attends to the baby's needs but then retreats when unneeded.

This concept of the *holding environment* is both literally a manner of holding the baby close, but also is a term that refers to the creation of a physically and emotionally safe space for the infant. The infant does not know that the mother has created this holding environment for the baby, being protected without knowing he is protected (Mitchell & Black, 1995). This *holding environment* is important throughout development so that the child can feel both free and protected, allowing for "spontaneous interactions, feelings, and experiences" to occur (Flanagan, p. 128).

Winnicott felt that this mother-child union was necessary for healthy development during some time during infancy, and while descriptive of state of attunement, did not need to be perfect but rather, 'good enough' (Flanagan, p, 127), so that the mother is able to attend to, or meet the baby's needs.

Needs versus Instinctual Wishes

Essential to object relations theory is the attachment of the primary caregiver to the child is essential for healthy development, and it is through this relationship that the child's needs are met or not met. Winnicott believed that a child's needs differed from instinctual wishes (referred to as drives and impulses in drive theory), and were to be met or not met rather than gratified. Needs include being seen and valued as a unique individual; to be accepted in one's entirety including both the good and the bad; to be both held tightly as well as being released; as well as

being protected loved, and cared for (Flanagan, 2011). Winnicott placed the importance upon these needs being met by a meaningful person in the child's life, traditionally the mother, thus, accounting for the terminology of the 'good enough mother' who is able to meet the child's needs in a way that is good enough, for optimal development. Contrastingly, Winnicott felt that the instinctual wishes of an infant could be gratified by someone who is not as important or meaningful in the child's life.

The Capacity to be Alone and Transitional Objects

As mentioned earlier, Winnicott explored the tension between the two states of being alone and being with others. Winnicott argued that both states were important for healthy development, and as a child transitioned from the state of blissful attachment toward the state of separateness, children made use of what was labeled *transitional objects*. Flanagan (2011) writes that *transitional objects* can be physical reminders of the primary caregiver, such as a beloved toy given to the child, or nonphysical, such as a mother's favorite tune, enabling the child to maintain the internal representation of the caregiver in her absence. It is through this transitional object that the child is able to begin to bridge the gap between the self and other, and transition into the state of separateness.

Winnicott wrote that this transition into separateness is made attainable by a flexible relationship with the attachment figures, in which both individuals are seen as unique and encouraged to develop their own individuality. If the relationship lacks this encouragement and flexibility, the child's development toward his own individuality will be thwarted. It is through this thwarting that Winnicott believed that a *False Self* is created, a self that is overly compliant and pleasing of others while denying the person's unique, genuine, vibrant self. The genuine and

idiosyncratic self, called the *True Self* flourishes when healthy attachment that does not impinge on individual growth occurs.

Summary of Empirical Literature

As Winnicott developed his theory through the observation of the child-mother relationship, numerous studies have been done exploring this relationship, assessing the sensitivity of the infant to interruption of maternal communication (e.g., Hebb, 1955) and the effects of the relationship between the infant and her mother suffering from postpartum depression (e.g., Barnard, et. al., 1996). There exists a dearth of literature, however, that explores the victim experience through Winnicottian object relations concepts.

Conclusion

Winnicottian object relations theory includes the contribution of the transitional object, the holding environment created by primary caregiver, and the tension in the transitioning toward the state of separateness. Winnicott asserted that the needs of the infant should be met by the Primary caregiver for healthy development. Although there are numerous studies regarding the child-mother bond, there exists a dearth of literature addressing the experience of victimization through Winnicottian object relations theory. I will apply the Winnicottian object relations theory outlined in this chapter to the experience of victimization and the process of victim offender mediation in Chapter VI. The following chapter details Kohut's theory of Ego Psychology.

CHAPTER V

Self Psychology

An approach that focuses sensitively upon the self of the person, suggesting that the self could be the decisive center of individual experience and developmental possibilities, is the essence of the orientation of the late Heinz Kohut (White and Weiner, 1986, p. xv).

Self Psychology was created by Viennese-born American psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut. In 1959 (White & Weiner, 1986). Kohut emigrated from Austria prior to World War II (Mitchell & Black, 1995). A trained medical student, Kohut went on to specialize in neurology, and later trained in Chicago in Freudian psychoanalysis. Through Kohut's work regarding Freud's concept of narcissism, he developed the beginnings of what came to be known as Self Psychology, which became solidified in the 1970s and 1980s (Flanagan, 2011). In this chapter, I will identify the beginnings and formulation of the theory of Self Psychology and identify important concepts of the theory that will be applied to the discussion in Chapter IV.

Beginnings of Self Psychology: The Concept of Narcissism

Kohut reconceptualized Freud's narcissism (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Freud distinguished between two forms of narcissism: primary and secondary. *Primary narcissism* occurred when the infant directed his libidinal impulses inward and felt herself to be perfect. Freud postulated that over time, the libidinal impulses of the infant are directed outward towards others. Freud believed that when these libidinal impulses became redirected toward the self in excess, a pathological state of primary narcissism occurred (Flanagan, 2011). Freud explained

that this inward direction of libidinal energy was precipitated by “thwarted growth opportunities, disappointments, illness, trauma, or old age” (Flanagan, 2011, p. 163). Freud believed narcissism to be linear in development, and there existed a finite amount of love to direct toward object and to direct toward the self. The self, over time, directed love to those of objects.

Kohut, conversely, did not conceptualize libidinal energy as finite, and instead viewed libidinal energy toward the self positively. He believed that more love of the self enabled the self to offer more love to others (Flanagan, 2011, p. 164). Kohut, therefore, thought of a degree of self love, or narcissism as necessary for a healthy self. Kohut conceptualized pathological narcissism as a result of lack of attunement and love from others.

Kohut developed his conceptualization of narcissism out of need through his work with individuals with narcissistic disorders (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Kohut found that in his work with individuals diagnosed with narcissistic disorders, his offering of interpretation to the patient resulted in the individual’s expression of rage. Exposing shortcomings resulted in strong feelings of inadequacy and humiliation. Kohut discovered that even with a success in bringing awareness of a patient’s narcissism, this was only minor success because the client was unable to appreciate his development of skills and his unique capacities. Kohut began question whether self-love was necessary for a healthy, vibrant experience of self (Lessem 2005).

Kohut came to postulate that the development of narcissistic personality disorder resulted from parental lack of empathy, resulting in the client’s inability to regulate his self esteem (McLeod, 2007). Kohut observed this lack of self esteem regulation through the vacillation of the patient’s expression of an inflated sense of self to that of inadequacy. He asserted that those with narcissistic personality disorder needed the help of others to regulate his self-esteem and recognize his own self-worth. He interpreted the rage expressed by clients with narcissistic

personality disorder in response to his interpretations as narcissistic rage (White & Weiner, 1986). When the client perceived the therapist interpretations as criticism, this was an example of empathic failure, in which the urge to destroy the other is observed. Much like the urge for destruction is seen in a child in whom the mother fails to meet the child's needs, resulting in aggression toward the mother. Kohut postulated that the counteraggression was experienced from the mother, which was turned into the self, resulting in self-loathing (White & Weiner, 1986). This description illustrates how the experience of an individual with narcissistic personality disorder described earlier, in which narcissistic rage followed by feelings of inadequacies results.

In order to treat patients with narcissistic personality disorder, Kohut described the use of 'vicarious introspection,' or the adoption of what he called *empathy* in clinical work (Flanagan, 2011, p. 165). Kohut described empathy as "the projection of one's own personality into the personality of another in order to understand him better: intellectual identification of oneself with another" (Flanagan, 2011, p. 165). Kohut aimed to "experience the world from the patient's point of view...so that the patient feels understood" (McLeod, 2007, p. 40). Kohut used interpretations in order to help the client understand and recover from empathic failures.

The Tripartite Self and Selfobjects

Kohut rejected the Freudian structure of the id, ego, and superego, and dismissed the concept that a healthy self is created by the resolution of intrapsychic conflict. He postulated instead that the healthy self was that of cohesion, developed through needs being met by *selfobjects* (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Similar to the Freudian concept of an object, Kohut came to define *selfobjects* as people or things outside of the self. Instead of simply targets of drives or

impulses, *selfobjects* meet specific developmental needs. The following is an in-depth description of Kohut's conceptualization of the self object:

An object may be defined as a selfobject when it is experienced intrapsychically as providing affect attunement, consensual validation, tension regulation and soothing, recognition of one's autonomous potential, and restoration of a temporarily threatened fragmentation of the self through a variety of activities and comments. (Chesick, 1993, p. 167, as cited in Flanagan, 2011).

Kohut postulated that the self is comprised of three pathways of development, called *poles*. These three poles came to be known as the *Tripartite Self* or *Tripolar Self* (White & Weiner, 1986). The three poles, or pathways include: the grandiose self, the ideal parent imago, and the twinship poles. Although pole is awkward translation, it is used to describe both an aspect of the self and a pathway of development, reflecting the flexible and constantly changing self (Flanagan, 2011). Selfobjects, therefore meet the needs of the three poles for a cohesive sense of self. Although the importance for the needs to be met during childhood is stressed, these needs are present throughout the lifetime, and are not restricted to early caregivers (Flanagan, 2011).

The first pole that Kohut described was the *grandiose self* that represents the need for mirroring selfobjects. *Mirroring Selfobjects* are people who can "mirror" or reflect and identify what makes someone special and accomplished, such as specific talents and unique characteristics. Kohut describes the grandiose self as the core of individuality. Those who have well-developed grandiose selves are full of vibrancy and vitality and have confidence in their abilities within limits and have the drive and productivity to accomplish.

The second pole of the tripolar self is the idealized parent imago (White & Weiner, 1986). This pole is characterized by the need for ideals. The *idealized parent imago* represents the need to have an idealized other that is calm and strong. The merging of qualities that the

child adores, such as competence and strength occurs, inspiring the development of those qualities within the self (Flanagan, 2011). Along with a source of stability and strength, the idealized parent imago can be a source of anxiety. The child (or adult) worries about whether the parent imago can be depended upon. When the child's idealized other is not always there for her, he may conclude that he must rely on only himself (White & Weiner, 1986). Additionally, anxiety can occur when an individual is worried about losing himself in the total merger with another. If a total merger occurs, panic and disorientation can result (Flanagan, 2011). The transference in the therapeutic relationship that results from the need for an idealized other is called idealizing transference.

The third and last pole that Kohut conceptualized is the *twinship pole*. This aspect of the self has needs to feel sameness with another. The twinship relationship, often experienced with friends or partners, is characterized by “similarity in interests and talents, along with the sense of being understood by someone like oneself” (White & Weiner, 1986, p. 103). In the therapeutic relationship, the need for twinship is seen in twinship transference. The meeting of this need can be evidenced by feeling a “likeness with the therapist and therefore more known to herself and less alone” (Flanagan, 2011, p. 175).

Transmuting Internalization

The process by which the self takes in qualities and functions from the selfobjects is called *transmuting internalization*. Transmuting internalization occurs through “optimal mirroring, interaction and frustration” (Elson, 1986, p. 252, as cited in Flanagan, 2011). Kohut described this process of internalization through the word choice of “transmuting” to signify that these qualities were changed when internalized, resulting in a self with unique qualities (Flanagan, 2011).

Self-Fragmentation and Disorders of the Self

Kohut described the fragmentation of the self that results the feeling of falling apart (White & Weiner, 1986). This feeling of fragmentation can include feelings of embarrassment shame, and fear. This feeling is described as inevitable throughout the lifetime. The self fragmentation that is in reaction to events in life, including nervousness, drops in self-esteem, depression is called a secondary disorder of the self (Flanagan, 2011). Contrasting this description of losing self cohesion, Kohut described the primary disorders of the self that signifies a structural damage of the self.

Kohut described and classified these disorders into two forms: primary disorders of the self and secondary disorders of the self. The *primary disorders of the self* align with the American Psychiatric Association's DSM-IV-TR (2000), including the psychoses, borderline states, narcissistic behavior disorders, and narcissistic personality disorders (Flanagan, 2011). These disorders result when an individual's needs for mirroring, idealizing and twinship "have not been met due to chronic deprivation or severe trauma" (Flanagan, 2011, p. 178). The *secondary disorders of the self* are reactions to life events, and include experiences of depression.

Empirical Literature

Very little empirical literature has been done explicitly using the concepts of self psychology with the exception of studies that use the creation and use of self reports for narcissism (Binai, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Researchers Binai, Mikulinver, and Shaver (2005) conducted a series of studies that created self reports for selfobject needs, called the Self Objects Needs Inventory (SONI) and tested the approach or avoidance of selfobject needs in relation to pathology.

Applications to Social Work Practice

Within the field of social work, there is a dearth of literature that applies Kohut's conceptualizations of Self Psychology. However, the ideas that Kohut discussed are have significant links to the experience of trauma. The concepts of the secondary disorders of the self can be applied to many victims' experience of trauma, as victimization is an event that can cause self-fragmentation, resulting in a loss of the experience of the self as cohesive.

Conclusion

In the following chapter, I will apply both Winnicott's theory of object relations and Kohut's theory of Self Psychology to the experience of victimization and the experience of victim-offender mediation, discussing how the process may be helpful in repairing the fragmentation of the self that results in the trauma of the crime committed.

CHAPTER VI

Discussion and Case Study

This chapter will begin with a review of the two psychological theories that will be applied to the phenomenon of the experience of the victim in victim offender mediation. Then, a case study will be presented that is a compilation of previous cases of victim-offender mediation, followed by an analysis of the case study through the lens of both D.W. Winnicott's object relations theory and Kohut's theory of Self Psychology. Next, a synthesis of the two theories will be presented in order to provide a new and deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Strengths and weaknesses of the methodology will then be discussed, followed by implications for the field of social work and a conclusion of this thesis.

Victim-offender mediation

Victim offender mediation is a restorative justice practice that focuses upon meeting the needs of the victim of crime. The process involves the convening of the victim and offender of a crime in efforts to address the harm that was caused by the event of crime. The process generally involves three phases: premediation, mediation, and the follow-up phase (Umbreit, 1998). Literature has shown that a majority of victims experience positive aspects of the process (e.g., (Umbreit, 1994; Umbreit 1999).

Winnicottian Object Relations Theory

D.W. Winnicott's object relations theory conceptualizes the primary caregiver as creating a holding environment, in which the infant feels safe and protected without knowledge of the mother's creation of the holding environment (Mitchell & Black, 1995). The infant feels free to

exercise spontaneous gestures, and later, when a child, to explore the world. Winnicott described the tension of transitioning into the state of separateness. Winnicott described the development of the True Self, the authentic, individual and vibrant self that emerges through the healthy and flexible relationship with the caregiver who recognizes and supports the child's unique talents, interests, and personality. Winnicott explained that the False Self developed when the child's needs were not being met and was not encouraged in her individuality. This False Self is inauthentic and overly concerned with the needs and wants of others.

Self Psychology

Kohut's theory of Self Psychology described the self as the organization of subjective experience. The tripolar self is composed of three pathways or poles of development, including the grandiose self, ideal parent imago, and twinship poles (Flanagan, 2011). These poles each have needs for development of a cohesive, vibrant self. These needs are met or not met through selfobjects, which are people or things that provide psychic nourishment for a strong and vibrant self. The needs include the need for mirroring, idealizing, and twinship. Chronic failure to meet needs by a selfobject results in a primary disturbance of the self. Secondary disturbance of the self, which is characterized by some kind of life event or experience that causes self fragmentation, may result in depression, anxiety, among other conditions.

The Case of Ava

Ava is a 24 year old American woman of Taiwanese heritage who teaches Kindergarten at a public school in San Francisco, California. Ava is a devout non-denominational Christian who attends church on Sundays and bible study once a week. Up until recent incidents Ava describes herself as being "bubbly," "ever-the-optimist," "led by her faith" and over all a cheerful, outgoing and friendly person. Until recently Ava lived in her studio apartment with her

small dog, Pippin. Ava still holds the lease to the studio but has been living with her parents, who emigrated from Taiwan when she was three years old.

Ava began individual therapy after she was assaulted and robbed by a 17 year old white male, Jimmy. Ava was walking home after a dinner party with her friends when Jimmy appeared blocking her path. Ava tried to walk around Jimmy, but he lashed out and grabbed her arm, twisting it behind her back. He slammed Ava into the wall of the building while telling her not to scream. Ava did not listen and screamed, knowing that there were other people out on the nice spring night. Jimmy became more violent, slamming Ava into the wall repeatedly. After yanking her necklace off and removing her purse Jimmy turned Ava around to face him, spit in her face and slammed her head into the wall. Jimmy ran as Ava sank to the sidewalk, dazed and disoriented.

Ava described this night while shaking, and explained that she often thinks of this night, and has had flashbacks of the experience. She expressed to the therapist that she no longer feels safe on the streets near her home, and a great disappointment in others who did not help her during the attack. Ava reported the crime to the police, who were able to apprehend Jimmy based on Ava's descriptions and from a neighbor of Ava's. Several months after the crime was committed, Ava was contacted by a local nonprofit that inquired about her interest in taking part in victim-offender mediation, in which Ava would have the opportunity to meet with Jimmy and address the harm that was done by his physical assault and robbery. Ava consulted with her therapist, and expressed an interest in facing Jimmy, as she no longer felt memories of the event were intrusive.

Ava first met with the mediator in a conference room at the nonprofit. The mediator explained the process of victim-offender mediation and gave Ava an opportunity to tell her story

about the night of the crime. Later, the mediator asked Ava again if she would like to meet with Jimmy for a mediation session. Ava confirmed her desire and willingness to participate and the mediator eventually scheduled a mediation session after meeting and consulting with Jimmy. When Ava arrived at the conference room, the mediator greeted her and then brought Jimmy in. The mediator explained her role as the mediator, to facilitate the discussion of the harm that was done. The mediator then established ground rules, which included allowing both Ava and Jimmy to address the harm without interruption from the other party. The facilitator then explained that both Ava and Jimmy would be able to discuss the events that occurred, and voice the losses and harm experienced.

Ava decided to talk first, and shakily described the events on the night of the harm. She explained her shock, fear, and resulting pain. She described how she viewed herself as weak and unsafe in her neighborhood, and expressed as anger for what Jimmy had done. Jimmy was able to describe the events, his reasons for attacking Ava that night that was mainly precipitated by an urgent desperation for money. He had also had a “bad, horrible” day that day. Jimmy was able to apologize to Ava, and expressed deep regret and sadness for his actions. After the facilitator checked with both Ava and Jimmy, she moved on to discuss a plan for restitution. Ava expressed interest in Jimmy paying her a total of \$50 and having Jimmy volunteer at a local shelter in her neighborhood once a week for five weeks. Ava and Jimmy both signed the restitution agreement that the mediator drew up during the meeting, and were each given copies to take home with them. The mediator kept a copy of the document in her office as well. The mediator scheduled a follow-up meeting with Ava and Jimmy in order to evaluate the progress of the restitution agreement in 6 weeks.

As a result of this experience, Ava explained to her therapist that although he was extremely nervous about victim-offender mediation, she felt that she had let go of “all that hate I was feeling.” Now, I feel like- well, I feel better. I feel like he got to know what he did- I told him- and now he is making up for it.” Ava reported that, although has not yet moved back into her apartment, she has been attending weekly quiz nights with friends. At the follow-up meeting, Ava and Jimmy were able to discuss the impact of the crime on both of them again and say goodbye.

Analysis of the Case of Rachel through Object Relations Theory

In analyzing Ava’s response to the crime committed, it becomes evident is that she has internalized the negative experience of the crime, effecting her internal world of object relations. Ava, formerly optimistic and positive about the world and others, became frightened to return to her home. He felt as others failed her when she screamed out for help. Ava’s conception of her self is altered to that of a weak person as a result of the trauma from the crime. No longer does Ava feel free and spontaneous, but retreats to the home of her parents instead of venturing out into the world. Ava’s *True Self* that breathes vitality in being impinged upon, and she prefers to retreat into a place of dependence in order to mitigate her feelings of fear and feeling alone. Ava returns to the place that has known as safe, her original *holding environment* with her parents.

When analyzing the process of victim-offender mediation itself, the lens of object relations theory helps deepen the understanding of how the process has been healing for Ava. The mediator provides a holding environment for Ava through several actions taken in the process. First, the mediator displays attunement with Ava during the premediation phase, by recognizing her nervousness and providing her the knowledge of what to expect during mediation. The mediator checks in with Ava, making sure that Ava is ready to proceed in the

process of mediation, encouraging but not forcing Ava to participate. The mediator facilitates Ava's need to be heard in being met, while still facilitating the experience of mediation that is certainly somewhat anxiety-provoking and uncomfortable. Additionally, the mediator recognizes Ava's need for control by establishing an agenda for the process. The mediator establishes what to expect and establishes ground rules, further enhancing the experience of the conference room as a holding environment. The mediator asks for Ava's story, and asks Ava to directly address Jimmy, and Jimmy to directly address Ava, establishing a more interactive dialogue in order to shift the interactions and humanize Ava and Jimmy in each other's eyes, changing the external interactions between Jimmy and Ava. Additionally, the facilitator provides a transitional object for Ava and Jimmy to each take away from this healing experience: the agreement of restitution, signed by both Ava and Jimmy. This document allows for the bridge of what occurred during the mediation session to be carried out into the world, and is a way for Ava (and Jimmy) to take with them the positive caregiving object of the mediator.

As a result of mediation, Ava expressed feelings of satisfaction with being able to address Jimmy and let go of the hate that she was feeling for him. The process of mediation succeeded in humanizing Jimmy. Furthermore, Ava expressed her willingness to attend a weekly social event, indicating that her sense of safety continues to grow.

Analyzing the Case of Ava Through the lens of Kohut's Theory of Self Psychology

Examining the Case of Ava through the lens of Self Psychology provides additional insight to how the victim-offender mediation influences the experience of the victim of crime. When assessing Ava prior to the crime being committed, she appears as if her three poles of development are sound. Ava presents a vibrant, optimistic individual living on her own, indicating that her selfobject needs for mirroring, idealizing and twinship have been met and that

she has acquired desired capacities and qualities through the process of transmuting internalization.

Ava's description of the trauma of the crime and resulting symptoms reveal self fragmentation, as "Ava sank to the sidewalk, dazed and disoriented." Additionally, Ava experiences what Kohut described as a secondary disorder of the self (Flanagan, 2011), in which she experienced flashbacks of the event of the crime and experienced increased anxiety around safety. Additionally, Ava's lack of cohesion of self can be seen in her view of herself as weak, as well as her retreat to her parents' house and lack of interaction with the outside world.

During the experience of mediation, it becomes clear that Ava sees in the mediator an idealized other, and is able to take in her strength and safety that the mediator is able to provide. The mediator is able to serve as a selfobject for Ava. Through the process of telling her story, voicing her losses and addressing the harm done, Ava is able to experience a degree of empathy with Jimmy. Ava is able to not only enable Jimmy's experience of what the events were like for Ava, but Ava is also able to step into the experience of Jimmy through his story of what happened. This sharing of empathy begins to provide reparation of the harm that was done.

As a result of mediation, Ava lets go of the hatred she feels for Jimmy, and ultimately experiences a more cohesive sense of self. Ava is able to venture into social situations, beginning to repair her sense of vitality.

Synthesis

Victim-offender mediators and clinical practitioners can benefit from the combined analysis of the influence that victim-offender mediation has on the female victim of violent crime. Winnicottian object relations theory provides an in-depth analysis of the roles of the mediators and providing insight into how the internal and external world of the victim shifts in

response to violent crime and victim-offender mediation. The importance of the venue of mediation is highlighted, as well as meeting the needs of the victim through the empathic attunement of the mediator. Self psychology highlights the self-fragmentation and disruption of the cohesive sense of self as a result of the harm of the crime (Flanagan, 2011). Again, the role of the mediator is highlighted in providing a sense of safety and strength for the victim to merge with during this time of vulnerability. Lastly, the role of Kohut's conception of empathy plays a large part in facilitating the healing process so that both the victim and offender can more easily understand the experience of the other through the vocalization of each person's story of the events that occurred, the harm done, and the loss experienced. Mediators can benefit from this analysis in order to strengthen the process and facilitate a more effective and positive experience of victim-offender mediation. While the model of mediation I presented is common in the United States, differences in process occur. Highlights include the mediator's creation of the *holding environment* in the venue of mediation, the role of *empathy* in the sharing of stories, and the restitution agreement serving as plan for reparation as well as a *transitional object*.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The application of Winnicottian object relations theory and Kohut's theory of Self Psychology provides an in-depth analysis of the influence of victim-offender mediation on the experience of the female victim of violent crime. The applications of these psychodynamic theories allow for a re-contextualization of the experience, honing in on the roles that each person has and the functions of each phase of the process. There exists a dearth of literature that explores the victim's experience of the process more deeply, as literature tends to focus upon outcomes such as recidivism rather than the process itself.

Although this application of theory provides an in-depth analysis, this thesis includes many weaknesses. The analysis is not necessarily generalizable to the general population for several reasons. Although the process of victim offender mediation that I presented is commonly used and exists in similar forms, the process differs among victim-offender mediation practices. Next, populations of victims who decide to participate vary significantly according to geographic location. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the psychodynamic theories used are culturally bound, and therefore not necessarily applicable to certain populations. Lastly, although literature has shown a generally positive experience as a result of victim-offender mediation, this is not always the case.

Considerations for the Field of Social Work

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the influence of victim-offender mediation on the female victim of a violent crime's experience, contributing to the field of social work in the form of policy, research and practice. This paper bridges the gap between victim-offender mediation and psychodynamic theory, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the victim's internal and external processes in reaction to violent crime and the experience of victim-offender mediation. A dearth of literature exists within the social work field regarding the victim's experience of victim offender mediation. Additionally, this analysis has served to highlight possible positive interventions of mediators that may contribute to an overall more positive experience that encourages healing from the harm done by the crime committed.

Conclusion

This paper highlights the effective interventions of the process of victim offender mediation as outlined in Umbreit's (1998) handbook of victim-offender mediation through the application of Winnicottian object relations theory and Kohut's Theory of Self Psychology. The

process of victim-offender mediation, as detailed in this thesis, provides effective interventions to address the harm to the victim's sense of self and relation to others. More research exploring the victim's experience of mediation is needed in order to ensure positive, productive experiences and identify helpful interventions.

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