



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 38
Issue 4 December

Article 15

2011

Review of *Social Work & Restorative Justice: Skills for Dialogue, Peacemaking, and Reconciliation*. Elizabeth Beck, Nancy P. Kropf & Pamela Blume Leonard (Eds.). Reviewed by Robert McAndrews.

Robert McAndrews
Salem State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

McAndrews, Robert (2011) "Review of *Social Work & Restorative Justice: Skills for Dialogue, Peacemaking, and Reconciliation*. Elizabeth Beck, Nancy P. Kropf & Pamela Blume Leonard (Eds.). Reviewed by Robert McAndrews.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 4 , Article 15. Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol38/iss4/15>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

and 1980s. On the whole, *Contesting Community* is an excellent historical analysis of the evolution of community practice. This book is valuable reading for scholars, graduate students and practitioners in sociology, social work, public administration, public health or political science.

Nancy Giunta, School of Social Work, Hunter College, CUNY

Elizabeth Beck, Nancy P. Kropf & Pamela Blume Leonard (Eds.) (2011). *Social Work & Restorative Justice: Skills for Dialogue, Peacemaking, and Reconciliation*. New York: Oxford University Press, \$45.00 (hardcover).

The three co-editors of this important and groundbreaking text are affiliated with the School of Social Work at Georgia State University. Elizabeth Beck and Nancy P. Kropf are professors at the University, and Pamela Blume Leonard is the Executive Director of the Council for Restorative Justice which is based in the School of Social Work. It is their understanding and advocacy of restorative justice that comprises the first four chapters of the text. The editors have one overarching goal: to bring restorative justice principles and values, theories, research, and practices closer to the education and practice of social workers. Strengthening the linkage between the social work profession and the restorative justice movement, they argue, will result in mutual gains for both disciplines and innovative solutions to social problems.

The restorative justice movement grew out of community practice models in the 1970s that were seeking to offer alternatives to the dominant criminal justice institutional practices, particularly in the area of juvenile justice. Communities and governments abroad, most notably in New Zealand, and a few community justice centers in the United States, began experimenting with models of victim-offender mediation. The emerging paradigm shift was towards viewing crime as a breakdown in interpersonal relations and community life that required a transformative process that would allow individuals and communities opportunities for healing and restoration. The models of "justice" in the restorative justice movement strive to move away from the purely retribution approach of

our criminal justice system, with its focus on what should be done to the offender, towards interventions that focus first and foremost on the needs of the victim, while also attending to the obligations and needs of the offender.

The editors and case study contributors are successful in clarifying the intellectual debates, criticisms, and limitations surrounding the restorative justice movement and the diverse practice models that are used in restorative justice programs. While many restorative justice programs remain rooted in the criminal justice context, over the past two decades restorative justice programs have moved out into diverse social and institutional settings in the United States.

The contributors provide eight case studies, each focusing on a particular social or institutional context and illustrating the different practice models that have evolved in the restorative justice field. The case studies also delineate the commonalities between social work and restorative justice values, principles, skills, and practice theories (notably, strengths perspective, resiliency and empowerment theories). The case studies provide clear examples of different restorative justice processes. The case study on a school-based student conflict and the case addressing the needs of family survivors following a homicide illustrate the use of a Healing Circle process. A community conflict case, involving youth and community residents, demonstrates a Community Conferencing approach. The child abuse-protective service case shows the efficacy of using a Community Engagement/Team Decision-making approach. A case involving intimate partner violence and child protection illustrates a Child and Family Team Meeting approach. And a case study concerning elder maltreatment and protective services demonstrates the intervention of an Elder Justice Program that uses a Family Care Conferencing process. There is also a case study that illustrates the use of a Group Dialogue approach in one of Pennsylvania's maximum security prisons that was based on inmates' viewing a live performance of the play, "A Body in Motion," about victims of violent crime. And there is a chapter on restorative justice in an international context which discusses the significance (and shortcomings) of Truth Commissions and the specific case of post-war Liberia and the community challenges of addressing crimes of rape

and sexual violence.

The editors, as well as some of the contributors, are open in their recognition of the social change limitations of the restorative justice movement at the present time. Fundamental cultural change might be an aspiration for some in this movement, based on a revolution of social values and relations starting within local communities, but the challenge for restorative justice proponents and, of course, for social workers is whether they will also play a role in social movements that challenge structures of inequality and oppression. With this understanding, the editors of this text have provided practitioners and scholars alike with a text that should be as accessible and valuable to the uninitiated as it is to those who have years of restorative justice practice experience.

*Robert McAndrews, School of Social Work
Salem State University*

Elisabeth Clemens and Doug Guthrie , Eds. (2010). *Politics and Partnerships: The Role of Voluntary Associations in America's Political Past and Present*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, \$55.00 (hardcover), \$19 (paperback).

The relationship between the nonprofit and governmental sectors is often a difficult one, with many competing views about the proper role of each sector. In the current political climate, this connection is becoming more and more contentious. These differences are reflected in the scholarly conversation in research about lobbying, advocacy, privatization and devolution. Much of this literature tends to oversimplify the nature of the relationship and concentrate on the problems involved in purchase of services-contracting to the exclusion of other important considerations. Nonprofits are important actors in the political systems, and this is sometimes ignored. Fortunately, Elisabeth Clemens and Doug Guthrie and their colleagues have produced a book that asks provocative and creative questions about this important set of issues, raising theoretical issues and reviewing different aspects of the government-nonprofit relationship.