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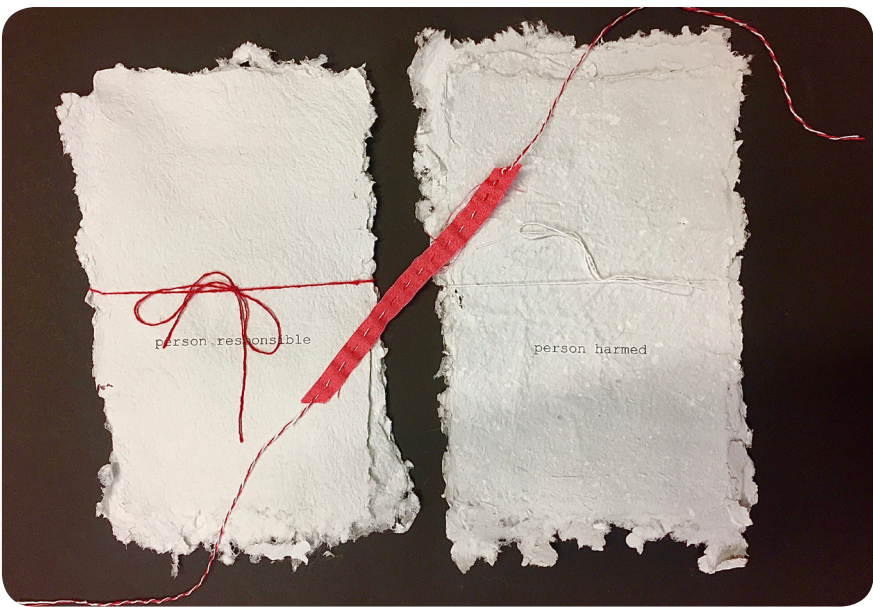
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The potential of co-creation, making and gifting in engaging family members in juvenile restorative cases

Introduction

PhD provisional title:

‘Drawing a line; the role of the co-created artefact in engendering solidarity between participants in a restorative justice process.’

The co-created artefact is formed out of a working relationship between an artmaker and a person responsible for causing harm and/or the person harmed, as part of a restorative justice process. On completion, the artefact is gifted (with appropriate consents and risk assessments) to the other person involved in the conflict or situation of harm.

I am particularly interested in whether the combined making and restorative process can imbue the co-created artefact with enough significance for it to engender moments of solidarity between participants in a restorative process, even if both parties are not present at the gifting.



Case Study / Tree

A son (in his early 20s) had committed assaults on family members (and others). The son had spent most of his late teens and early 20s in and out of prison. We spent 2 years working with the son and his parents in separate parallel restorative processes. The parents were separated but chose to attend sessions together.

Each party created a tree to represent the 3 stages of their restorative process: Roots - Facts (what happened?); Trunk - Consequences (who was affected?); Leaves - Future (what does everyone need in order to move on in a safer way?). The trees were exchanged in a face to face restorative conference. Both sides used their trees as visual aids in the meeting to articulate their thoughts and feelings.

“We’ve never been able to have this type of conversation before.” (Mum)



Case Study // Bench

A son (in his early 20s) stole money fraudulently from his foster parents. We spent a year working with the son co-creating a bench as a gift for his foster parents, as part of his restorative process. We additionally employed a craftsman to help with the making. Concurrently, we were working with both foster parents - the father was, at first, unwilling to engage in a restorative process as he was too angry. As time progressed this changed, and he decided to participate in a joint meeting.

As part of the formal joint meeting, the bench was gifted by the son to his foster Mum and Dad. They were overwhelmed, particularly by the album of photos that detailed the making process. 5 years later, their relationship with their foster son remains strong and Mum is now a trustee of space2face (RJ and Arts charity established by myself and Alyson Halcrow).

“The bench replaced the pain and harm caused.” (Mum)

“Doing this [restorative justice] is far harder than going to prison.” (Son)



Case Study /// Talking Box

A teenage son assaulted his Mum in the family home.

Mum worked with us for a year going through the 3 stage restorative process using creative approaches. This culminated in her creating a gift for her son. The gift was a ‘talking box’ into which she recorded a 10 second message for her son and placed inside it a book she had made alongside other significant artefacts.

The ‘talking box’ was gifted to the son by myself and a colleague in a meeting with him and his community worker.

“The service you provide is outstanding and should be promoted more.” (Mum)

Co-creation

In my experience as a practitioner, co-creation and making can enable young people who struggle with emotional literacy to engage more profoundly in a restorative justice process with their families. Co-creation is not a new concept in the art world; participatory arts practice is a way of a participant with little or no experience of artmaking to co-create an artefact/performance, etc., with a professional artmaker. This is a two-way learning process for artmaker and participant as equal collaborators. There can, however, be varying degrees of participant involvement. In criminology there is an emerging area of research into the value of co-production (between criminal justice professionals and their clients) of disposals and inter-disciplinary approaches in order to increase meaningfulness and improve engagement and desistance levels. Applied in a restorative artmaking context, through making, participants co-create not only their artwork but their own restorative process and through describing their making process during a joint meeting, they are immediately having a restorative conversation. The making process could potentially become the restorative process.

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