VICTIMHOOD: ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Introduction:

Professionals often treat people who consider themselves victims. Why do people define themselves as victims: what are their reasons and expectations when doing so? People consider themselves victims of personal, familial, communal and national conflicts. However, not all people who underwent similar experiences consider themselves 'victims'. Some may define themselves as 'survivors' or even 'winners'.

The objectives of this course are to:

- unpack the construct of victimhood
- explore the process of adopting victims' status and its related role performance
- examine victims' expectations
- consider public responses to victims and 'victimhood' and
- identify the social processes by which some victims are defined as “deserving victims” while other are not.

Course Topics:

The course focuses on the following ten related topics:

1. 'Victimhood' – the concept, its meaning(s) and implication(s)
2. The construct of 'victimhood'
3. Victims' psychological, social and legal expectations
4. Acknowledging victims: International declarations and standards
5. Victims of national/terrorist conflicts
6. Victims of disasters
7. Victims of family conflicts
8. The Victim Movement
9. Responding to Victimization: Victim Offender Mediation (and 'Restorative Justice')
10. Victims and 'Justice'

The course will highlight these topics and discuss the conceptual, theoretical and practical issues that underlie them and their policy implications. It will also present research findings that demonstrate the effectiveness of acknowledging victims, their needs and mission in pursuing public recognition.

Much of the course will be based on research done in Israel, where some individuals and groups define themselves as victims of conflict while others who have experienced similar conflicts do not do so. In most cases, Holocaust survivors, war casualties, victims of hostile (terrorist) acts and crime receive social workers' assistance and treatment. Social workers often treat 'victims' of family conflicts too.

In considering responses to victimization, the course will draw on cases where people who suffered victimization have voluntarily met the 'victimizer'—to discuss their 'case' and find a way to solve the conflict and heal its wounds.