

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

LIFE COURSE VICTIMIZATION AND CRIME

Community college student Rae Kim is doing her internship in the prosecutor's office. She is very much looking forward to the time when she herself will be able to help put criminals behind bars. Having grown up in the inner city, she has seen too many lives ruined as a result of crime.

One afternoon she is reviewing legal cases for her supervisor when she is asked to help review a pre-sentencing investigation report. Her boss wants her to recommend whether a plea bargain should be accepted in a recent domestic violence case. She can't wait to read the file.

It does not take long for Rae's excitement to dissipate. As she reads the file, she sees that both the offender and the victim have long histories of both crime and victimization. Both of them were victimized as young children by their parents. They appear to have histories

of physical neglect and the offender's and victim's upbringing seem amazingly similar, even though they grew up miles apart. Rae reads in the file that two years before this incident, the victim had actually been arrested for beating up the individual who is now the offender.

Rae is suddenly not as eager to make a recommendation to her boss. Who is the offender? Who is the victim? Do their histories of childhood maltreatment influence their current experiences?

YOU DECIDE

1. Should the offender be handled leniently in this case?
2. Based on your response to question 1, what are the consequences for the community?
3. How can the cycle of violence be broken in a way that respects current victims' rights?