

Victimology

Eighth Edition

William G. Doerner and Steven P. Lab



The topic of victimology is always a very sensitive issue to discuss. We want to make sure we are sensitive about the topic but have open discussion as well... The book does a wonderful job of reaching the learning outcome standards.

Michelle L. Foster, *Kent State University*

[*Victimology*] provides students with solid foundational knowledge that they must use to successfully experience and implement their community-based projects, as well as engage in class discussion.

Carrie Cook, *Georgia College*



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Victimology

Victimology, Eighth Edition, shows how to transform the current criminal's justice system into a victim's justice system. Doerner and Lab, both well-regarded scholars, write compellingly about the true scope of crime victims' suffering in the United States. They lay out the sources of evidence available to victimology researchers. In later chapters, theory is woven together with the description of each topic and illustrated with specific examples. The second part of the book addresses the full impact of victimization. Part III, Types of Victimization, details specific problems ranging from violent crimes, child and elder abuse, and property crime to crime in the workplace. The authors emphasize their concern with the extent of criminal victimization, explain how obstacles hinder the pursuit of justice, and introduce the idea that reforms have rendered the system much more victim-friendly.

Appropriate for undergraduate as well as early graduate students in Victimology courses in Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Sociology programs, as well as Justice Studies, this book offers an instructor's manual with a test bank, as well as PowerPoint lecture slides and a companion site with student resources.

William G. Doerner has been a Professor in the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University since 1977. He specializes in victimology and law enforcement issues. He earned his M.A. in Sociology at Emory University and Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Tennessee. Doerner retired from active duty with the Tallahassee Police Department after 29 years of service as a part-time sworn law enforcement officer. He served on the Board of Directors for the National Organization of Victim Assistance and was the Founding President of the Florida Network of Victim/Witness Services, past Director of the Program in Criminal Justice at Florida State University, and a previous editor of *the American Journal of Criminal Justice*. In addition to other professional accolades, Doerner received the Outstanding Educator of the Year Award from the Southern Criminal Justice Association and was a winner of the John P.J. Dussich Award from the American Society of Victimology.

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Eighth Edition

William G. Doerner
Steven P. Lab

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Thanks to my best friend and buddy—my wife, Judy.
Bill Doerner

To Suz.
Steve P. Lab



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PART 1

Definition and Scope



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The Scope of Victimology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 1, you should be able to:

- Discuss the change from a victim justice system to a criminal justice system.
- Outline the early interest in victim typologies.
- Account for the attention paid to victim precipitation, some findings, and some shortcomings.
- List the areas that fall under “general victimology.”
- Provide an overview of the broad topics which victimologists study.
- Talk about the victim movement and how it has increased public interest in crime victims.

KEY TERMS

agent provocateur
criminal–victim dyad
critical victimology
deterrence
gemeinschaft
general victimology
gesellschaft
lex talionis
mala in se
restitution
retribution
typology
victim compensation
victim precipitation

INTRODUCTION

Something not very funny happened on the way to a formal system of justice. The victim was left out. As strange as it may sound, the bulk of history has seen crime victims become further removed from being an integral part of dealing with criminals. Fortunately, this trend is beginning to reverse itself. Recent years have seen an increased interest in the plight of crime victims and a movement toward reintegrating the victim into the criminal justice system. This chapter will look at the role of the victim throughout history and will trace the elimination of the victim from the social processing of criminal acts. We will see how victimology emerged and we will investigate the resurgence of interest in the victim.

THE VICTIM THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Most people take the existence of the formal criminal justice system for granted. They do not realize that this method of handling deviant activity has not been the norm throughout history. Indeed, the modern version of criminal justice is a relatively new phenomenon. In days gone by, responsibility for dealing with offenders fell to the victim and the victim's kin. There were no "authorities" to turn to for help in "enforcing the law." Victims were expected to fend for themselves, and society acceded to this arrangement.

This state of affairs was not outlined in any set of laws or legal code. With rare exceptions, written laws did not exist. Codes of behavior reflected prevailing social norms. Society recognized murder and other serious affronts as *mala in se* (totally unacceptable behavior). However, it was up to victims or their survivors to decide what action to take against the offender. Victims who wished to respond to offenses could not turn to judges for assistance or to jails for punishment. These institutions did not yet exist. Instead, victims had to take matters into their own hands.

This depiction does not imply that there were no provisions for victims to follow. Society recognized a basic system of retribution and restitution for offenders. In simplest terms, *retribution* meant the offender would suffer in proportion to the degree of harm caused by his or her actions. Oftentimes, retribution took the form of *restitution*, or making payment in an amount sufficient to render the victim whole again. If the offender was unable to make restitution, his or her kin were forced to assume the liability.

This response system emphasized the principle known as *lex talionis*—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Punishment was commensurate with the harm inflicted upon the victim. Perhaps the most important feature of this system was that victims and their relatives handled the problem and were the beneficiaries of any payments. This arrangement was truly a "victim justice system."

This basic system of dealing with offensive behavior found its way into early codified laws. The Law of Moses, the Code of Hammurabi (2200 B.C.E.), and Roman law all entailed strong elements of individual responsibility for harms committed against others. Restitution and retribution were specific ingredients in many of these early codes. Part of the rationale behind this response was to deter such behavior in the future.

The major goal of *deterrence* is to prevent future transgressions. The thinking is that the lack of any enrichment or gain from criminal activity would make transgressive acts unattractive. Retribution and restitution attempt to re-establish the status quo that existed before the initial action of the offender. Thus, removing financial incentives would make it unprofitable to commit crimes.

This basic system of dealing with offensive behavior remained intact throughout the Middle Ages. Eventually, though, it fell into disuse. Two factors signaled the end of this victim justice system. The first change was the move by feudal barons to lay a claim to any compensation offenders paid to their victims (Schafer, 1968). These rulers saw this money as a lucrative way to increase their own wealth. The barons accomplished this goal by redefining criminal acts as violations against the state instead of against the victim. This strategy recast the state (the barons being the heads of the state) as the aggrieved party. The victim diminished in stature and was relegated to the status of witness for the state. Now the state could step in and reap the benefits of restitution.

A second factor which reduced the victim's position was the enormous upheaval that was transforming society. Up until this time, society was predominantly rural and agrarian. People lived in small groups, eking out an existence from daily labor in the fields. Life was a rustic struggle to meet day-to-day needs.

People, for the most part, were self-sufficient and relied heavily upon their families for assistance. Families often lived in relative isolation from other people. Whenever a crime took place, it brought physical and economic harm not only to the individual victim but also to the entire family network. This simple *gemeinschaft* society (Toennies, 1957) could rely on the individual to handle his or her own problems.

As the Middle Ages drew to a close, the Industrial Revolution created a demand for larger urbanized communities. People took jobs in the new industries, leaving the rural areas and relocating to the cities. They settled into cramped quarters, surrounded by strangers. Neighbors no longer knew the people living next door. As faces blended into crowds, relationships grew more depersonalized. The interpersonal ties that once bound people together had vanished.

As this *gesellschaft* type of society continued to grow, the old victim justice practices crumbled even further. Crime began to threaten the delicate social fabric

that now linked people together. At the same time, concern shifted away from making the victim whole to dealing with the criminal. Gradually, the *victim* justice system withered and the *criminal* justice system became its replacement. In fact, some observers would contend that the victim *injustice* system would be a more apt description.

Today, crime victims remain nothing more than witnesses for the state. Victims no longer take matters into their own hands to extract retribution and restitution from their offenders. The victim must call upon society to act. The development of formal law enforcement, courts, and correctional systems in the past few centuries has reflected an interest in protecting the state. For the most part, the criminal justice system simply forgot about victims and their best interests. Instead, the focus shifted to protecting the rights of the accused.

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE VICTIM

The criminal justice system spends the bulk of its time and energy trying to control criminals. It was within this preoccupation of understanding criminal activity and identifying the causes of criminal behavior that the victim was “rediscovered” in the 1940s. Interestingly, the victim emerged not as an individual worthy of sympathy or compassion but as a possible partner or contributor to his or her own demise. Students of criminal behavior began to look at the relationship between the victim and the offender in the hopes of better understanding the genesis of the criminal act.

As interest in victims began to sprout and attract more scholarly attention, writers began to grapple with a very basic issue. What exactly was victimology? Some people believed that victimology was a specialty area or a subfield within criminology. After all, every criminal event had to include a criminal and a victim, by definition. Others countered that because victimology was so broad and encompassing, it deserved to stand as a separate field or discipline in its own right. They foresaw the day when college catalogs would list victimology

as a major area of study along with such pursuits as biology, criminology, psychology, mathematics, and political science.

Early scholarly work in victimology focused considerable energy upon creating victim typologies. A *typology* is an effort to categorize observations into logical groupings to reach a better understanding of our social world (McKinney, 1950, 1969). As we shall see in the following sections, these early theoretical reflections pushed the field in a direction



WEB ACTIVITY

The concept of *victim* and the growth of interest in victims may be examined through a range of materials available through the Office for Victims of Crime (<http://www.ojp.gov/ovc>) and the documents in the OVC archive (<http://ovc.gov/archive/index.html>).

that eventually created an explosive and haunting reaction, nearly crippling this fledgling enterprise.

The Work of Hans von Hentig: *The Criminal and His Victim*

An early pioneer in victimology was a German scholar, Hans von Hentig. As a criminologist, von Hentig spent a great deal of time trying to discover what made a criminal predisposed to being a criminal. As he focused on crime victims, von Hentig began to wonder what it was that made the victim a victim. The key ingredient, according to von Hentig, was the *criminal-victim dyad*.

In an early publication, von Hentig (1941) claimed that the victim was often a contributing cause to the criminal act. One example would be an incident in which the ultimate victim began as the aggressor. However, for some reason, this person wound up becoming the loser in the confrontation. Von Hentig's message was clear. Simply examining the outcome of a criminal event sometimes presents a distorted image of who the real victim is and who the real offender is. A closer inspection of the dynamics underlying the situation might reveal that the victim was a major contributor to his or her own victimization.

Von Hentig expanded upon the notion of the victim as an *agent provocateur* in a later book called *The Criminal and His Victim*. He explained that "increased attention should be paid to the crime-provocative function of the victim. . . . With a thorough knowledge of the interrelations between doer and sufferer new approaches to the detection of crime will be opened" (1948: 450).

Von Hentig was not naive enough to believe that all victim contribution to crime was active. Much victim contribution results from characteristics or social positions beyond the control of the individual. As a result, von Hentig classified victims into 13 categories depending on their propensity for victimization (see Table 1.1).

Many of von Hentig's victim types reflect the inability to resist a perpetrator due to physical, social, or psychological disadvantages. For example, very young people, females, and elderly persons are more likely to lack the physical power to resist offenders. Immigrants and minorities, due to cultural differences, may feel they are outside the mainstream of society. This lack of familiarity may lead them into situations in which criminals prey upon them. Individuals who are mentally defective or deranged, "dull normal," depressed, lonely, or blocked may not understand what is occurring around them or may be unable to resist. The acquisitive person and the tormentor are individuals who, due to their own desires, are either directly involved in the criminal act or place themselves in situations in which there is a clear potential for victimization.

The typology von Hentig created does not imply that the victim is always the primary cause of the criminal act. What he does suggest is that victim characteristics

TABLE 1.1 Hans von Hentig's Victim Typology

Type	Example
1. The Young	Children and infants
2. The Female	All women
3. The Old	Elderly persons
4. The Mentally Defective and Deranged	The feeble-minded, the insane, drug addicts, alcoholics
5. Immigrants	Foreigners unfamiliar with the culture
6. Minorities	Racially disadvantaged persons
7. Dull Normals	Simple-minded persons
8. The Depressed	Persons with various psychological maladies
9. The Acquisitive	The greedy, those looking for quick gains
10. The Wanton	Promiscuous persons
11. The Lonesome and the Heartbroken	Widows, widowers, and those in mourning
12. The Tormentor	An abusive parent
13. The Blocked, Exempted, or Fighting	Victims of blackmail, extortion, confidence games

Source: Adapted from von Hentig (1948: 404–438).

may contribute to the victimization episode. According to von Hentig (1948: iii), we must realize that “the victim is taken as one of the determinants, and that a nefarious symbiosis is often established between doer and sufferer.”

The Work of Benjamin Mendelsohn: Further Reflections

Some observers credit Benjamin Mendelsohn, a practicing attorney, with being the “father” of victimology. Indeed, he coined the term *victimology*. Mendelsohn, like von Hentig, was intrigued by the dynamics that take place between victims and offenders. Before preparing a case he would ask victims, witnesses, and bystanders in the situation to complete a detailed and probing questionnaire. After examining these responses, Mendelsohn discovered that there was usually a strong interpersonal relationship between victims and offenders. Using these data, Mendelsohn (1956) outlined a six-step classification of victims based on legal considerations of the degree of the victim’s blame (see Table 1.2).

Mendelsohn’s types range from the *completely innocent victim*, who exhibited no provocative or facilitating behavior prior to the offender’s attack, to the victim who is *more guilty than the offender*, because the victim instigates or provokes the criminal act. The person who comes out on the losing end of a punch after

TABLE 1.2 Mendelsohn's Victim Types

Completely Innocent Victim	No provocation or facilitating behavior
Victim with Minor Guilt	Victim inadvertently places him- or herself in a compromising situation
Victim as Guilty as Offender	Victim was engaging in vice crimes and was hurt; suicide victim
Victim More Guilty than Offender	Victim provokes or instigates the causal act
Most Guilty Victim	Started off as the offender and was hurt in turn
Imaginary Victim	Those who pretend to be a victim

Source: Mendelsohn (1956).

making an abusive remark or goading the other party would fit this description. The *most guilty victim* is one who entered the situation as the offender and, owing to circumstances beyond his or her control, ended up as the victim. Mendelsohn's classification is useful primarily for identifying the relative culpability of the victim in the criminal act.

The Work of Stephen Schafer: *The Victim and His Criminal*

Scholarly interest in victims and the role they played in their own demise evoked little interest throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Stephen Schafer, in a playful twist on Hans von Hentig's seminal work, revisited the victim's role in his book *The Victim and His Criminal*. The key concept that undergirded Schafer's thinking was what he termed *functional responsibility*. Once again, the victim-offender relationship came under scrutiny.

As Table 1.3 shows, Schafer (1968) provided a typology that builds upon victim responsibility for the crime. In many respects, Schafer's groupings are a variation of those proposed by von Hentig (1948). The difference between the two schemes is primarily one of emphasis on the culpability of the victim. Where von Hentig's listing identifies varying risk factors, Schafer explicitly sets forth the responsibility of different victims.

Other Scholarly Efforts

Von Hentig, Mendelsohn, and Schafer were not the only persons to produce significant analyses regarding victims during this time. Most assuredly, some other scholars began recognizing the importance of a victim-based orientation. These early attempts to probe the victim-offender relationship signaled the beginning of a renewed academic interest in the victim.

This concern, however, was lopsided. The early victimologists generally failed to look at the damage which offenders inflicted upon their victims, ignored

TABLE 1.3 Schafer's Victim Precipitation Typology

1. Unrelated Victims (no victim responsibility)	Instances in which the victim is simply the unfortunate target of the offender
2. Provocative Victims (victim shares responsibility)	The offender is reacting to some action or behavior of the victim
3. Precipitative Victims (some degree of victim responsibility)	Victims leave themselves open for victimization by placing themselves in dangerous places or times, dressing inappropriately, acting, or saying the wrong things, etc.
4. Biologically Weak Victims (no victim responsibility)	The aged, young, infirm, and others who, due to their physical conditions, are appealing targets for offenders
5. Socially Weak Victims (no victim responsibility)	Immigrants, minorities, and others who are not adequately integrated into society and are seen as easy targets by offenders
6. Self-Victimizing (total victim responsibility)	Individuals involved in such crimes as drug use, prostitution, gambling, and other activities in which the victim and the criminal act in concert with one another
7. Political Victims (no victim responsibility)	Individuals who are victimized because they oppose those in power or are made victims in order to be kept in a subservient social position

Source: Adapted from Schafer (1968).

victim recuperative or rehabilitative efforts, and bypassed a host of other concerns. In an attempt to understand the causes of crime, they concentrated on how the victim contributed to his or her demise. Eventually, the idea of victim precipitation emerged from this preoccupation with “blaming the victim.” As we shall see later in this chapter, the assumption that somehow the victim shared responsibility for or instigated the criminal episode would spark a major ideological confrontation and would temporarily paralyze the field.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF VICTIM PRECIPITATION

Victim precipitation deals with the degree to which the victim is responsible for his or her own victimization. That involvement may be either passive (as much of von Hentig’s typology suggests) or active (as seen in Mendelsohn’s classification). Each typology presented in this chapter implicates victim contribution as a causative factor in the commission of a crime. However, the first systematic attempt to provide empirical support of this argument was Wolfgang’s (1958) analysis of police homicide records. A few years later, one of Wolfgang’s students, Menachem Amir, applied this framework to forcible rape cases. His formulation and interpretation quickly met with a barrage of stinging criticism.

The Work of Marvin E. Wolfgang: *Patterns in Criminal Homicide*

Using homicide data from the city of Philadelphia, Wolfgang reported that 26 percent of the homicides that occurred from 1948 through 1952 resulted from victim precipitation. Wolfgang (1958: 252) defined victim-precipitated homicide as those instances in which the ultimate victim was:

the first in the homicide drama to use physical force directed against his subsequent slayer. The victim-precipitated cases are those in which the victim was the first to show and use a deadly weapon, to strike a blow in an altercation—in short, the first to commence the interplay of resort to physical violence.

Wolfgang identified several factors as typical of victim-precipitated homicides. First, the victim and the offender usually had some prior interpersonal relationship. Typical examples include relationships of spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, family members, and close friends or acquaintances. In other words, victims were more likely to die at the hands of someone they knew rather than from the actions of a complete stranger.

Second, the homicide act is often the product of a small disagreement that escalates until the situation bursts out of control. That change in degree could be either short-term or the result of a longer, drawn-out confrontation. For instance:

A husband had beaten his wife on several previous occasions. In the present instance, she insisted that he take her to the hospital. He refused, and a violent quarrel followed, during which he slapped her several times, and she concluded by stabbing him.

(Wolfgang, 1958: 253)

Third, alcohol consumption by the victim is a common ingredient in many victim-precipitated homicides. Several possibilities surface here. It may be that as intoxicated persons lose their inhibitions, they vocalize their feelings more readily. Eventually, these inebriated parties grow more obnoxious and belligerent and unwittingly provoke their assailants into a deadly confrontation. Another alternative is that alcohol consumption renders these people so impaired that they lose the physical ability to defend themselves in a skirmish. In any event, Wolfgang (1958: 265) points out that “connotations of a victim as a weak and passive individual, seeking to withdraw from an assaultive situation, and of an offender as a brutal, strong, and overly aggressive person seeking out his victim, are not always correct.”

The Work of Menachem Amir: *Patterns in Forcible Rape*

Several years later, Menachem Amir undertook what perhaps became the most controversial empirical analysis of rape. Amir (1971) gathered information from police records on rape incidents that took place in Philadelphia between

1958 and 1960. Based on details contained in the files, he claimed that 19 percent of all forcible rapes were victim precipitated.

According to Amir (1971: 266), victim-precipitated rape referred to those situations in which:

the victim actually, or so it was deemed, agreed to sexual relations but retracted before the actual act or did not react strongly enough when the suggestion was made by the offender. The term applies also to cases in risky situations marred with sexuality, especially when she uses what could be interpreted as indecency in language and gestures, or constitutes what could be taken as an invitation to sexual relations.

Amir proceeded to list a variety of factors that helped precipitate the criminal act. Similar to Wolfgang's homicide findings, alcohol use—particularly by the victim—was a major factor in a precipitated rape. The risk of sexual victimization intensified if both parties had been drinking.

Other important factors include seductive actions by the victim, wearing revealing clothing, using risqué language, having a “bad” reputation, and being in the wrong place at the wrong time. According to Amir, such behaviors could tantalize the offender to the point that he simply “misreads” the victim's overtures. At one point, Amir (1971) even suggested that some victims may have an unconscious need to be sexually controlled through rape.

In the concluding remarks of the section on victim precipitation, Amir (1971: 275–276) commented:

These results point to the fact that the offender should not be viewed as the sole “cause” and reason for the offense, and that the “virtuous” victim is not always the innocent and passive party. Thus, the role played by the victim and its contribution to the perpetration of the offense becomes one of the main interests of the emerging discipline of victimology.

Criticisms and Reactions

The notion of victim precipitation, particularly regarding Amir's claims about rape, came under swift attack. Weis and Borges (1973; Weis, 1976), for example, attributed Amir's conclusions to faults implicit in relying on police accounts, to a host of procedural errors, and to ill-conceived theoretical notions. For example, Amir suggested that victims may *psychologically* prompt or desire the rape as a means of rebelling against accepted standards of behavior. In contrast, though, the male is simply responding to *social* cues from the female. Interestingly, Amir does not provide any justification for why female behavior stems from psychological factors while male actions derive from

social variables. Amir's study attracted blistering rebuttals from academic quarters along with enraged reactions from women's groups and victim advocates. This reception made many victimologists very uncomfortable with the precipitation argument as it had developed to that point.

Cooler heads soon prevailed. Rather than abandoning the idea of victim precipitation, some scholars began a more sensitive probing. Curtis (1974), for one, suggested that what was needed was a more accurate definition of victim precipitation. For example, one set of researchers might define hitchhiking as a precipitating factor. Other studies may not make such a blanket assumption or may view hitchhiking as substantively different from other precipitating actions.

A more productive approach came from a critical examination of the underpinnings of the victim-precipitation argument. Franklin and Franklin (1976) exposed four major assumptions behind this victimological approach (see Box 1.1). First, victim precipitation assumes that the behavior of the victim can explain the criminal act. However, some factors often identified as precipitous also appear in instances where no criminal act takes place. For example, many people go to bars at night. Sometimes they drink excessively and then stagger home alone without becoming victimized. Thus, supposedly precipitating acts are not enough, in and of themselves, to cause criminal behavior.

Second, victim precipitation assumes that the offender becomes activated only when the victim emits certain signals. This belief ignores the fact that many offenders plan their offenses ahead of time and do not simply react to another person's behavior. For these criminals, crime is a rational, planned enterprise.

Third, Franklin and Franklin (1976) disagree with the assumption that a victim's behavior is necessary and sufficient to trigger the commission of a criminal act. In fact, the opposite is probably closer to the truth. Many offenders commit crimes despite any specific action by the victim. Others will not seize the opportunity to commit a crime, for whatever reason, although a potential victim presents him- or herself.

Finally, victim precipitation arguments assume that the intent of the victim can be gauged by the victimization incident. Unfortunately, if intent is equivalent

BOX 1.1 PROBLEMATIC ASSUMPTIONS OF VICTIM PRECIPITATION

- The behavior of the victim may explain the criminal act.
- The offender becomes activated only when a victim emits certain signals.
- A victim's behavior is necessary and sufficient to cause a criminal act.
- The intent of the victim may be gauged by the victimization incident.

Source: Compiled by the authors, from Franklin & Franklin (1976).

to action, there would be no need for criminal court proceedings beyond the infallible identification of the person who perpetrated the crime. Our criminal justice system, however, explicitly assumes possible variation in intent, regardless of the action.

Although each of these assumptions shows how the victim precipitation argument falters, there is a much larger issue requiring attention. Studies of victim involvement tend to be myopic; that is, they do not address the offender. Instead, they imply that all offenders are equal in their drive and desire to engage in deviant activity. This assumption, however, is untenable. Some offenders may actively hunt for the right situation, while others display little or no prior intent. What was needed was an integrated approach that would take both the victim and the offender into account.

Curtis (1974) attempted to do just this when he outlined a simple grid that allows the degree of victim precipitation to vary. As Table 1.4 shows, Curtis merged victim provocation with offender intent. This strategy results in recognizing five degrees of precipitation, ranging from pure victim precipitation to total offender responsibility. This presentation shows that even in the position of clear outright provocation by the victim, the offender may still be an equally responsible partner in the final outcome. What is important to remember here is that, at best, one should conceive of victim precipitation as a contributing factor and, certainly, not as the predominant force.

A NEW APPROACH: GENERAL VICTIMOLOGY

The preoccupation with victim precipitation, along with its divisiveness and ensuing fragmentation, threatened to stagnate this fledgling area of interest. The lack of theoretical advances brought genuine worries from some quarters that victimology was becoming bogged down in an academic quagmire

TABLE 1.4 The Precipitation Grid Outlining the Relative Responsibility of Both Victim and Offender

Degree of Offender Intent	Degree of Victim Involvement		
	Clear Provocation	Some Involvement	Little or No Involvement
Deliberate premeditation	Equal	More offender	Total offender responsibility
Some intent	More victim	Equal	More offender
Little or no intent	Pure victim precipitation	More victim	Equal

Source: Adapted from Curtis (1974: 35).

(Bruinsma & Fiselier, 1982; Levine, 1978). In response to this situation, Benjamin Mendelsohn called for victimology to move out of the provincial backwaters of criminology and into its own rightful domain. Mendelsohn attempted to assure victimology of its independence from criminology by devising the term *general victimology*.

According to Mendelsohn (1982: 59), victimologists aim to “investigate the causes of victimization in search of effective remedies.” Because human beings suffer from many causal factors, focusing on criminal victimization is too narrow a perspective. A more global term, like *general victimology*, is needed to convey the true meaning of the field.

According to Mendelsohn (1976), *general victimology* subsumes five types of victims. They include victims of:

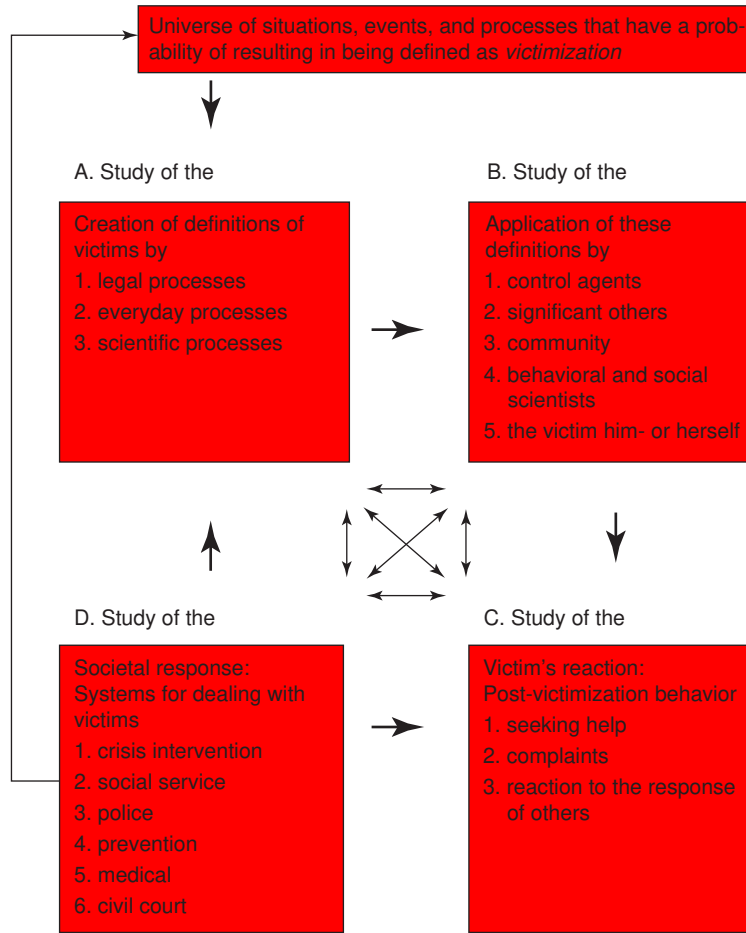
- a criminal;
- one’s self;
- the social environment;
- technology;
- the natural environment.

The first category (crime victims) is self-explanatory. It refers to the traditional subject matter that victimologists have grown accustomed to studying. Self-victimization would include suicide as well as any other suffering induced by the victims themselves. The term *victims of the social environment* incorporates individual, class, or group oppression. Some common examples would include racial discrimination, caste relations, genocide, and war atrocities. Technological victims are people who fall prey to society’s reliance on scientific innovations. Nuclear accidents, improperly tested medicines, industrial pollution, and transportation mishaps provide fodder for this category. Finally, victims of the natural environment would embrace those persons affected by such events as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and famine.

In line with Mendelsohn’s formulations, Smith and Weis (1976) proposed a broad overview of the areas encompassed by general victimology. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, there are four major areas of concern. They include the creation of definitions of victims, the application of these definitions, victim reactions during the post-victimization period, and societal reactions to victims.

When viewed in this context, general victimology becomes a very broad enterprise with extensive implications. As Mendelsohn (1976: 21) explains:

Just as medicine treats all patients and all diseases, just as criminology concerns itself with all criminals and all forms of crime, so victimology must concern itself with all victims and all aspects of victimity in which society takes an interest.

**FIGURE 1.1****General Model of the Areas of Research and Application in the Field of Victimology**

Source: Smith & Weis (1976: 45).

CRITICAL VICTIMOLOGY

One trend in victimology since the 1990s is the call to shift focus from the more general approach outlined in the preceding section to what some people call *critical victimology*. Proponents of this move maintain that victimology fails to question the basic foundations of what crime is, overlooks the question of why certain acts are sanctioned, and, consequently, has developed in the wrong direction. Mawby and Walklate (1994: 21) define *critical victimology* as:

an attempt to examine the wider social context in which some versions of victimology have become more dominant than others and

also to understand how those versions of victimology are interwoven with questions of policy response and service delivery to victims of crime.

Central to critical victimology, therefore, is the issue of how and why certain actions are defined as criminal and, as a result, how the entire field of victimology becomes focused on one set of actions instead of another. The result, according to this line of thinking, is a set of blinders that causes victimologists to neglect important issues, restricts their interests, and takes an overly conservative approach. Rather than curtailing attention to traditional concerns, critical victimologists would be more interested in expanding the field so as to include, among other things, some of the following topics:

- genocide;
- war crimes;
- bribery of government officials and political campaign law violations;
- clandestine arms sales and weapons of mass destruction;
- corporate involvement in ecocide and environmental degradation;
- smuggling;
- piracy;
- trading human organs on the black market and transplant tourism;
- human slave trade;
- deportation;
- investment and consumer fraud;
- the market for archeological and antiquities treasures;
- human rights violations.

Under critical victimology, most victim-oriented initiatives tend to perpetuate the existing definitions of crime by failing to question the supportive social factors that give rise to the action and the response (Elias, 1990). The reason for this failure is multifaceted. One contributing factor is the reliance on official definitions and data in most analyses of victim issues. This inevitably leads to solutions that do not question the underlying social setting. Another factor is the ability of existing agencies to co-opt and incorporate emerging movements (such as children's rights) into existing social control systems. A more radical argument posits that the control of criminal justice and victimology rests in the hands of a powerful few who would view a critical approach as a threat to the status quo.

While critical victimology offers an interesting viewpoint and carries great potential for the field, debating its merits is beyond the scope of this text. Instead, we have elected to develop a unique orientation, which we will unveil at the end of this chapter, and which provides a distinct prism with which to view the field. Various points throughout this book, however, will raise issues that are relevant to a critical approach. Examples include sociocultural

discussions of why violence occurs and investigations of impediments to victim programs. A deeper and more intense examination of critical victimology will be left for other forums.

THE VICTIM MOVEMENT

While academicians were debating the victim-precipitation argument, practitioners had pinpointed the victim as someone who deserved assistance from society and the criminal justice system. To some extent, this grassroots concern for the victim's well-being was a reaction to the charges of victim complicity in the offense. Several different movements occurred simultaneously and contributed to the renewed interest in the plight of the victim. Among them were: (1) the women's movement; (2) efforts to establish children's rights; (3) concerns over the growing crime problem; (4) the advocacy of victim compensation; (5) legal reforms; and (6) some other factors. While we will devote greater attention to these areas in Part 3 of this book, what follows is an abridged rendition of some of these developments.

The Women's Movement

The women's movement, especially in the mid- to late 1960s, included a large component dealing with victims. Victim-blaming arguments often dealt with rape and sexual assault. The female victim found herself and her lifestyle on trial whenever an offender was apprehended. Reformers complained that the system dealt with sexual assault victims as if they themselves were the offenders. Advocates pushed for equal treatment. They found the actions of the criminal justice system to be strong ammunition for their arguments. Beyond simply calling for changes in the formal system of justice, the women's movement made many gains. A short list would include the development of rape crisis centers, shelters for battered women, counseling for abused women and their children, and other forms of assistance. As women demanded an equal place in society, they worked to overcome the disadvantages of the criminal justice system.

Children's Rights

A growing concern over the needs and rights of youths blossomed during the 1960s. Many writers point to the mid-1960s as the time when child abuse was "discovered." It was around this time that society decided to define abuse against children as a social problem. However, that does not mean that child abuse was a new phenomenon. Child abuse is an age-old practice and, by many accounts, may have been much worse in the past than today. The difference in the 1960s, however, was that many physical and psychological actions used with children began to be questioned and labeled as abuse. States enacted legislation outlining the limits to which a child could be

physically “disciplined.” Specific children’s bureaus within criminal justice agencies were either established or expanded to deal with the growing recognition of child maltreatment. Shelters were created to house children from abusive situations.

Runaways also gained publicity as a serious problem in the late 1960s. The general rebellion of youths in the U.S.A. enticed many juveniles to seek freedom from authority. Consequently, runaway shelters appeared in most large cities for the purpose of assisting the youths rather than returning them to their homes. Children were emerging as a new class of victims—both of abuse at home and of society in general.

The Growing Crime Problem

The level of crime in the U.S.A. began to register giant strides in the 1960s and throughout the 1970s. According to Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) data, crime in the U.S.A. more than doubled from 1960 to 1980. Along with concern over the Vietnam War, crime was the most important issue of the day. Presidential and local elections targeted the problem of law and order as a major concern. In an attempt to identify the causes of the growing problem and possible solutions, President Johnson appointed a commission to examine crime and the criminal justice system. Victim issues were a major focus of the 1967 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. Among the victim components of the commission report (1967) were the beginnings of systematic victimization surveys, suggestions for the means of alleviating the pain and loss of victims, ideas for community programs aimed at providing victim services, and calls for involving victims further in the criminal justice system.

Some 15 years after this report was aired, another national task force concluded that victims still had substantial needs that were going unfulfilled. Many of the identified problems were similar to those noted by the earlier commission.

Victim Compensation

One suggestion made by the President’s Commission (1967) was the establishment of methods for reimbursing crime victims for their losses. Among these techniques were restitution and *victim compensation*. Neither of these ideas, however, originated with the Commission. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, restitution was the common method for dealing with crime throughout most of history. Victim compensation (state payments made to crime victims) was first introduced in Great Britain by Margery Fry in 1957. Although that early attempt failed, victim compensation quickly became a major issue around the world.

New Zealand passed the first compensation legislation in 1963, closely followed by England in 1964. In the U.S.A., California established victim compensation in 1965, New York in 1966, Hawaii in 1967, and Massachusetts in 1968. The



WEB ACTIVITY

While we will examine victim compensation in depth later in the book, you can take a look at this approach and investigate its impact on victimology at the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards (<http://www.nacvcb.org>); the Office for Victims of Crime (<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/topic.aspx?topicid=58>).

federal government enacted legislation in 1984 that outlined compensation in instances where federal crimes were committed. The statute also provided for monetary assistance to states with compensation programs. By 1989, 45 states had enacted compensation statutes. Other countries, such as Australia and Finland, have also established compensation programs. While each program may differ in its particulars, the basic premise of assisting crime victims remains the same.

Legal Reforms

In addition to the establishment of compensation legislation, a variety of legal reforms aimed at protecting and

helping crime victims began to appear during the 1960s. Among the changes that emerged were statutes that protected the rape victim's background and character in court proceedings. New laws were designed to help battered spouses and their children. Legislation mandating that doctors and teachers report suspected cases of child abuse represented a bold initiative. Guidelines for informing victims about court proceedings and the legal system, as well as provisions that allowed victim impact statements in sentencing and parole decisions, began to surface. In some instances, states passed a "Victims' Bill of Rights." These provisions outlined the rights of the victim in a manner similar to those appearing in the U.S. Bill of Rights, which focuses on protections for the accused (see Table 1.5 for more recent developments).

A sign supporting the Illinois Crime Victims' Bill of Rights, also known as Marsy's Law, displayed before the vote. The Illinois constitutional amendment was overwhelmingly approved, with support from 78 percent of the voters.

CREDIT: AP Photo/Seth Perlman



Other Factors

Other factors have played either a direct or an indirect role in emphasizing victim issues. One such source of influence has been the mass media. Rarely a week goes by in which a "crime of the week" does not appear in a special movie or as part of an ongoing series. Shows such as *America's Most Wanted* portray not only the offender but also the harm to the victim, often relying on interviews with the victim or the victim's family. Such media attention and interest in the victim naturally influence viewers in the audience.

TABLE 1.5 Examples of Landmark Federal Victims' Rights Legislation Enacted from 2006 through 2015

2001	<i>Air Transportation Safety and System Stabilization Act</i>
	Created a new federal victim compensation program specifically for the victims of September 11. The program includes many types of damages normally available only through civil actions, such as payment for pain and suffering, lifetime lost earnings, and loss of enjoyment of life.
2003	<i>PROTECT Act ("Amber Alert" Law)</i>
	Created a national AMBER network to facilitate rapid law enforcement and community response to kidnapped or abducted children.
2003	<i>Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act</i>
	Provided new protections against identity theft and helped victims of identity theft recover their financial losses.
2004	<i>Justice for All Act</i>
	Provided mechanisms at the federal level to enforce the rights of crime victims, giving victims and prosecutors legal standing to assert victims' rights, authorizing the filing of writs of mandamus to assert a victim's right, and requiring the Attorney General to establish a victims' rights compliance program within the Department of Justice.
2006	<i>Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act</i>
	Increased supervision of sex offenders; also extended the federal Crime Victims' Rights Act to federal habeas corpus proceedings arising out of state convictions, eliminated the statute of limitations for federal prosecution of sexual offenses or child abduction, and extended the civil remedy for child sex crime victims to persons victimized as children, even if their injuries did not surface until the person became an adult.
2008	<i>Protect Our Children Act</i>
	Improved the ability of law enforcement to prosecute child predators.
2008	<i>Identity Theft Enhancement and Restitution Act</i>
	Permits courts to order restitution to cybercrime victims.
2009	<i>Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act</i>
	Changes the federal definition of hate crimes to include crimes based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.
2012	<i>Uniform Crime Reports Changes Definition of Rape</i>
	Victim or perpetrator can be any gender, and defines instances in which the victim is incapable of giving consent because of temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.
2013	<i>Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act</i>
	Expands protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender survivors; provides funding for developing responses to violence against women. Requires jurisdictions to provide examinations to sexual assault victims free of charge.
2013	<i>SAFER Act</i>
	Provides grants to analyze backlogged sexual assault kits.

(Continued)

TABLE 1.5 (continued)	
2013	<i>Trafficking Victims Protection Act Reauthorization</i> It is a crime to destroy, conceal, or confiscate someone’s passport for more than 48 hours for the purpose of smuggling or controlling that person.
2014	<i>National Defense Authorization Act</i> Addresses sexual assault reforms in the military.
2014	<i>White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault</i> Establishes a task force to prevent violence and support victims of sexual assault on college campuses.
2014	<i>Victims of Child Abuse Reauthorization Act</i> Funds children’s advocacy centers and the development of multidisciplinary child abuse investigation and prosecution programs.
2015	<i>Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act</i> Requires states to develop policies and procedures to identify, document, screen, and determine appropriate services for children in foster care who are victims of sex trafficking.
2015	<i>White House Conference on Aging Convened</i> Reflects on issues affecting America’s seniors.
2015	<i>The Center for Changing Our Campus Culture</i> Launches a clearing house of resources related to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking on campus.
Source: Compiled by the authors, from the U.S. Department of Justice (2016b) and Fisher & Lab (2010).	

Another aspect not to be overlooked is the increasing interest in victims among academics. Five decades ago there were virtually no books focusing specifically on victims. The publication of Schafer’s (1968) *The Victim and His Criminal* signaled an era of increasing interest in victimology. Many texts have appeared since then. They range from general victim topics to specific discussions of compensation, intimate partner violence, child abuse, victim services, and other areas of interest. The first International Symposium on Victimology was held in Jerusalem in 1973. Since then, there have been dozens more worldwide gatherings and an uncounted number of national, state, and local meetings of academics and professionals working with crime victims. These efforts culminated in the establishment of the American Society of Victimology in 2003. The spurt in college courses devoted to victimology or topical victim issues is encouraging. Some campuses (e.g., California State University–Fresno, Sam Houston State University, University of New Haven) now offer specialized programs in victim services. Box 1.2 lists a variety of specialty journals devoted to victim issues that now exist. In short, the victim movement has made strides over a relatively short period and continues to gain momentum.

BOX 1.2 SELECTED JOURNALS DEVOTED TO VICTIM ISSUES*Child Abuse & Neglect**Child Maltreatment**Homicide Studies**International Review of Victimology**Journal of Child Sexual Abuse**Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect**Journal of Family Violence**Journal of Interpersonal Violence**Trauma, Violence, & Abuse**Victims & Offenders**Violence Against Women**Violence & Abuse Abstracts**Violence and Victims***AN OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK**

As you have read, Mendelsohn (1976) saw general victimology as addressing five distinct types of victims. In addition to crime victims, he listed self-victimization, social victims, technological victims, and victims of the natural environment as legitimate focal concerns. All these victims suffer some degree of social or physical pain or loss. Each deserves assistance to offset the devastating effects of the victimization episode.

While Mendelsohn's vision of general victimology is quite impressive, it does cover a huge territory. Because Mendelsohn's approach is such a large undertaking, we will confine ourselves to a more manageable task. For that reason, this text must restrict itself to only the first category: crime victims. By the time you finish this book, we think you will agree with us. Victimology is so broad and complex that it makes sense to look at it in slices.

A glimpse of what lies ahead in the upcoming pages will reveal a unique and very different orientation compared to what most readers might expect to encounter. The overarching theme this book pursues is the idea that the American approach to the pursuit of justice is currently in the midst of a dramatic transition. It is moving away from a "criminal's justice system" and embracing more of a "victim's justice system." This distinction is not just one of semantics. It is intended to stimulate critical thinking and to impart a deeper appreciation of how the search for justice continues to evolve. A few key points emerge here that will hopefully whet the reader's appetite until we are able to establish a solid foundation.

First, take note of the intentional, and not so subtle, switch in the terms used here. Instead of relying mindlessly on the default phrase "the criminal justice system," we prefer the more vivid possessive format to capture the reader's attention. The harsh reality is that the halls of justice actually reflect the domination of the "criminal's justice system." For more than two centuries now, the

**WEB ACTIVITY**

John Dussich offers a good discussion and overview of the development of victimology and key concepts in the field. Look over his comments at www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/RS_No70/No70_12VE_Dussich.pdf.

pursuit of justice in this country has highlighted offender rights and neglected victim interests. This justice apparatus has been contoured to safeguard and protect the rights of the accused. Your authors absolutely understand the importance of the federal Constitution to this endeavor. That document was purposefully designed to insulate citizens from the unbridled power of government. Our reliance on the term “the criminal’s justice system” does not deviate from this viewpoint. Instead, it brings that preoccupation squarely to the forefront.

Second, we are all indebted to the guiding principles that undergird the Constitution. Jurists have toiled long and hard to reach a number of interpretations detailing just what those words actually mean. However, your authors sincerely question whether the Framers intended for these protections to come at the expense of one group over another. In other words, the “criminal’s justice system” effectively disenfranchises law-abiding citizens who are unfortunate enough to have sustained damages as a result of criminal deeds.

Third, the term “criminal’s justice system” inevitably spawns the notion of a “victim’s injustice system.” A true justice system does not champion the rights of any one particular party. It does not devalue the plight or suffering of victims. Instead, an actual justice system seeks an equitable balance for all the involved parties.

These considerations make sense if one thinks about the system as a pendulum. The task of protecting the rights of the accused lies at one extreme. Advocating on behalf of crime victims occupies the other side. As the pendulum swings away from a preoccupation with offender rights, it begins to gravitate toward victim rights. The real task is to locate that delicate balance which lies somewhere between these two extremes.

What your authors strive to do in this book is to introduce the reader to this transition from the “criminal’s justice system” to the “victim’s justice system.” Victimology was in its infancy when we wrote the first edition of this book some two decades ago. The field has matured immensely since then. Our task is to provide readers with a backdrop they can use to view these changes.

This book is divided into three sections. That strategy will allow us to pursue these themes in greater detail. This first chapter has already laid the foundation for a host of issues and ideas that we will take up in greater detail in later chapters. Many topics will appear in the context of more than one discussion. Chapter 2 examines methods for measuring victimization, particularly the development of victimization surveys. Victim surveys have become a key measure of crime and contribute a great deal of information to the study of victimization. However, you will notice that the first victimization survey took place in 1967. What this means is that victimization surveys are still in a youthful stage. Adjustments became necessary, and it took a number of years to refine

this technique. So when we ask a question along the lines of “Do victims of child abuse and neglect grow up to mistreat their children?,” we have to realize that the field is not yet old enough to have tracked two generations of people and offer clues as to how to answer this query.

Part 2 of the book addresses the impact of victimization. The theme we cultivate here is that victims sustain two distinct sets of losses. First, they suffer as a direct result of their criminal victimization. Then, when victims turn to the justice system for redress, they continue to absorb more losses. Eventually, victims come to realize that the quest for justice merely compounds their losses. At that point, a sizable proportion of participants resolve not to relive those same experiences in the event of a future victimization. Instead, they will avoid any prolonged contact with the “criminal’s justice system.” System representatives came to the realization that the focus on the “criminal’s justice system” was depleting the ranks of cooperative citizens. As a result, they began to introduce reforms intended to offset this burden.

In order to show how these experiences unfold, Chapter 3 looks at the costs associated with being a crime victim and the additional burdens that result from becoming involved with the criminal justice system. As you will see, many people wrongly assume that victims do not cooperate with the authorities because of apathy. This chapter will demonstrate that the real reason reflects a very sensible cost–benefit analysis. Sometimes it is just too costly and too painful to be a “model citizen.” Chapter 4 examines financial remedies for victimization intended to help lure victims back into the “criminal’s justice system.” Included here are discussions of restitution, civil court, and victim compensation. Chapter 5 focuses on addressing the non-financial impact of victimization. The chapter addresses the emergence of restorative justice as well as the development of victim-witness projects within the criminal’s justice system. Chapter 6 traces the development of victims’ rights and discusses the growth of legislation that mandates a role for victims in the system that is not limited to them being just a witness for the state.

The third and final section of the book continues to rely on the notion that we are seeing a transition from the “criminal’s justice system” to the “victim’s justice system.” After showing how each specific type of victimization has become formally recognized, the chapters go on to explain the extent of these kinds of victimizations, present theoretical notions that help us reach a fuller understanding of the phenomenon, and discuss how



WEB ACTIVITY

You may examine and explore the national and international interest in victimology at the following websites: the International Victimology Institute (<http://www.tilburguniversity.edu/research/institutes-and-research-groups/intervict>); the World Society of Victimology (<http://www.worldsocietyofvictimology.org>); the American Society of Victimology (<http://american-society-victimology.us>), and others. Look over these sites and others you can find and make a list of the topics and issues that you think are most interesting.

the justice system has crafted various policies to help remedy past shortcomings. After examining traditional crimes handled by the criminal justice system, the book moves on to topics that include sexual battery, intimate partner violence, child maltreatment, elderly abuse, and hate crimes. Victimization that takes place on school campuses and in the workplace is discussed in the final two chapters.

In short, we hope to convince readers that, while the system has not completed the transformation from a “criminal’s justice system” to a “victim’s justice system,” it has made and continues to make a substantial number of inroads intended to ease the plight of victims.

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISES

1. A common occurrence of criminal behavior that takes place on college campuses everywhere is the problem of theft. Do the typologies outlined in this chapter help you reach a better understanding of this behavior? Why or why not?
2. Suppose that you are going to conduct a research project about the problem of theft on campus. You have decided to mirror the approaches taken by Wolfgang (*Patterns in Criminal Homicide*) and Amir (*Patterns in Forcible Rape*) and have titled your forthcoming report “Patterns of Campus Theft.” What types of things would you look at and why? What types of things would you avoid?

Measuring Criminal Victimization

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 2, you should be able to:

- Describe major data sources for measuring crime.
- Outline three advantages and disadvantages of the UCR.
- Give a definition of the dark figure of crime.
- Discuss NIBRS.
- Outline the four generations of victimization surveys.
- List and discuss methodological issues in conducting victimization surveys.
- Discuss redesign efforts behind fourth-generation victim surveys.
- Convey the goals and objectives behind the NCVS.
- Compare and contrast results from the NCVS with those from the UCR.
- Discuss the relationship between victims and offenders in official and victimization data.
- Provide information on the level of reporting victimization to the police.
- Discuss fear of crime.
- Discuss repeat victimization and its importance.

KEY TERMS

boost explanations
bounding
British Crime Survey (BCS)
computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI)
Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)
dark figure of crime
event dependency
fear
flag explanations
forward record check
gray-area events
hot spots
household respondent
incidence data
Index Offenses
International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS)
memory decay
mover-stayer problem

National Crime Survey
(NCS)
 National Crime
Victimization Survey
(NCVS)
 National Incident-
Based Reporting
System (NIBRS)
 near repeat
 NORC survey
 panel design
 Part I Offenses
 Part II Offenses
 personal offenses
 prevalence data
 property offenses
 repeat victimization
 risk
 risk heterogeneity
 reverse record check
 screen questions
 self-respondent
 series victimizations
 Supplementary
Homicide Reports
(SHR)
 telescoping
 Uniform Crime Reports
(UCR)
 vicarious victimization
 victimization survey
 virtual repeat
 vulnerability

INTRODUCTION

Measuring the extent of criminal victimization has long been a goal of the criminal justice system and those who study crime. Researchers and policy-makers typically rely on three major data sources for measuring the level of crime (O'Brien, 1985). The first source, official records of police departments, is the traditional depository for crime information. However, dissatisfaction with police records prompted researchers to look elsewhere. Surveys that ask people about offenses they have committed became a popular alternative. Unfortunately, these surveys are not conducted on an annual or national basis, and they reveal very little about the victims of crime. A third tactic is to question individuals about instances in which they were victimized. As we shall see in this chapter, this is perhaps the most cited data source today. Despite the common goal of measuring crime, none of these strategies alone yields a definitive answer to the question of how much victimization occurs in society. Each scheme provides a slightly different angle from which to view the crime problem. Each one of these methods has its own distinct advantages and inherent flaws.

This chapter examines some issues involved in measuring victimization, paying particular attention to the development and use of victimization surveys. We will also examine the level of crime and victimization presented by official police reports of crime and the *National Crime Victimization Survey*. As you will see, victim surveys provide a wealth of data that is quite useful for studying victims and related issues.

OFFICIAL POLICE REPORTS

The most widely cited measure of crime is the *Uniform Crime Reports* (UCR), produced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The UCR was initially developed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police before being taken over by the FBI in 1931 (Chilton, 2010). The UCR was envisioned as a mechanism by which police departments in different jurisdictions could exchange relevant information about crime. Police administrators around the country were very supportive of this effort. They felt that such knowledge could help identify the magnitude of the crime problem, map changes over time, and guide actions to combat the criminal element. This reporting system was meant to be a tool for the law enforcement community throughout the U.S.A.

The UCR is characterized by a number of interesting and advantageous features. First, crime data are compiled annually from jurisdictions throughout the country. Such consistency and broad geographical coverage allows crime comparisons from year to year and from place to place. The fact that the UCR has been in operation since 1931 means that it is one of the longest-running systematic data collection efforts in the social sciences.

Second, the UCR has been influential in providing standardized crime definitions. Common definitions make it possible to draw comparisons across different times and jurisdictions. To achieve this goal, the FBI introduced what it calls the *Index*, or *Part I*, Offenses. The FBI divides these serious crimes into two groups. *Personal offenses* include murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. *Property offenses* consist of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. While state statutes and local codes are not bound to these definitions, the UCR does introduce a common metric among the 50 states.

Third, the UCR gathers a large amount of information and details about the *Index* crimes. These data are especially useful when attempting to identify patterns and trends about crime and criminals. In addition, the UCR collects data on reported crimes and arrests for an additional 21 categories of offenses, known as the *Part II* Offenses. Included in this category are sex offenses (besides rape), offenses against the family, and vandalism. The same level of detail as found in the *Part I* Offenses, however, is not collected for these crimes.

The UCR is not immune from problems or disadvantages. Perhaps the greatest concern is that the UCR overlooks the *dark figure of crime*. In other words, these tabulations reflect only offenses that are known to the police. Any incidents in which victims or witnesses opt not to call the police are excluded from UCR figures. This drawback prompts critics to argue that the UCR grossly under-reports the true level of crime in society. The UCR reflects police—and not necessarily criminal—activity.

A second limitation with the UCR is its reliance on the “hierarchy rule.” The *hierarchy rule* dictates that only one offense (typically the most serious offense) is recorded when multiple offenses occur at the same time (Chilton, 2010). For example, when an offender robs a bank with a weapon and simultaneously detains customers and takes their wallets, he or she is committing multiple robberies, theft, assault, and kidnapping—but only a single count of robbery is recorded. Under this rule, the number of crimes recorded falls short of the actual number of offenses.

Another major concern, particularly for our discussion, is the fact that the UCR offers little information on victims and offenders. The UCR gathers detailed data primarily on the more serious personal offenses (murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault). Even then, most of the data deal only with persons who are arrested. There is very little information about the victim, the victim’s circumstances, the context of the offense, and other potentially valuable information. This fact should not be surprising because law enforcement is oriented more toward dealing with offenders than with crime victims.



WEB ACTIVITY

You can read a great deal about the UCR and the data that are available on the FBI website at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/ucr-publications>.

Interest in victims and the need to know more about individual criminal events has led to changes in the UCR system over the years. The *Supplementary Homicide Reports* (SHR) was initiated in 1976 and provides data on victim characteristics, location, offender characteristics, relationship between the victim and offender, the use of weapons, and the circumstances surrounding the homicide event. As such, the SHR offers information about the homicide victim and victimization not typically found in the balance of the UCR data. Data from the SHR are incorporated into the *Crime in the United States* reports produced each year by the FBI. Based on the SHR, we know that homicides rarely occur in commercial settings, occur more often on weekends, involve acquaintances or intimates, and typically occur with little planning (Schwartz & Gertseva, 2010). Despite the value of the SHR, problems with missing data and a lack of knowledge about the offender place limitations on its use (Schwartz & Gertseva, 2010).

The most recent set of changes in the UCR has been the introduction of the *National Incident-Based Reporting System* (NIBRS). The NIBRS grew out of a report completed in the mid-1980s that examined the changing needs for data collection and analysis that could assist law enforcement in combating crime. The NIBRS data have several major advantages over the traditional UCR data. First, the NIBRS collects detailed information on 23 categories with 49 total offenses (see Box 2.1) rather than just the eight Index Offenses. Second, rather than abiding by the hierarchy rule and counting only the most serious Index Offenses, the NIBRS reports on all of the offenses that occur during a criminal incident. Third, the NIBRS collects over 50 data elements, most of which are not found in the traditional UCR data, for each crime incident. Among the information included in this expanded data collection process is detailed

BOX 2.1 NIBRS OFFENSE CATEGORIES

Arson

Assault Offenses

Bribery

Burglary/Breaking and Entering

Counterfeiting/Forgery

Destruction/Damage/Vandalism

Drug/Narcotic Offenses

Embezzlement

Extortion/Blackmail

Fraud Offenses

Gambling Offenses

Homicide Offenses

Human Trafficking Offenses

Kidnapping/Abduction

Larceny/Theft Offenses

Motor Vehicle Theft

Pornography/Obscene Material

Prostitution Offenses

Robbery

Sex Offenses, Forcible

Sex Offenses, Non-Forcible

Stolen Property Offenses

Weapon Law Violations

Source: Compiled from Federal Bureau of Investigation (2015a).

BOX 2.2 INFORMATION COLLECTED BY NIBRS**Offense Information**

- Bias motivation
- Location type
- Number of premises entered
- Method of entry
- Type of criminal activity/Gang information
- Type of weapon/Force involved

Property Segment

- Type of property loss/etc.
- Property description
- Value of property
- Date recovered
- Number of stolen motor vehicles
- Number of recovered motor vehicles
- Suspected drug type
- Estimated drug quantity
- Type of drug measurement

Offender Segment

- Age, sex, race, ethnicity

Arrestee Segment

- Arrest date
- Type of arrest
- Multiple arrestee segments indicator
- Arrestee was armed
- Age, sex, race, ethnicity
- Resident status
- Disposition of arrestee under age 18

Victim Segment

- Type of victim
- Age, sex, race, ethnicity
- Resident status
- Aggravated assault/Homicide circumstances
- Additional justifiable homicide circumstances
- Type of injury
- Relationship of victim to offender

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation (2015a).

information on the victim, the victim–offender relationship, injuries, and property loss (see Box 2.2). Other information collected includes the location of the offenses, the presence of weapons, property lost, number of victims and offenders, and arrestee information.

The great advantage of the NIBRS data is the ability of law enforcement and researchers to gain a more in-depth picture of the crime problem and to use that information to decide on appropriate courses of action. Unfortunately, participation in the NIBRS involves increased data entry requirements and data-processing abilities on the part of local law enforcement. The agencies must also meet stringent guidelines for participation. Because of these requirements, in 2014, roughly one-third of the agencies who participate annually in the UCR submitted data through the NIBRS process (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2015a). Consequently, NIBRS data are not nationally representative. The number of agencies participating in the NIBRS is increasing every year. Local agencies using the NIBRS, however, are able to undertake more sophisticated analyses of their crime problems.

Despite the problems with the UCR, the data have a long history and are helpful in answering a variety of questions. Increased involvement in the NIBRS

system will enhance the value of official police crime data. Indeed, NIBRS data have been used to examine childhood victimization, intimate partner violence, and hate crimes (Addington, 2010).



WEB ACTIVITY

The NIBRS system offers a great deal toward understanding crime. A large amount of information about the NIBRS may be found at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2014>.

VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS

While the UCR has a long history, victimization surveys are only about 50 years old. Victim surveys got their start with the work of the President's Commission in the mid-1960s. The Commission came about because of problems with increasing crime and civil unrest during that era. From its inception, the President's

Commission (1967) recognized that an accurate description of the crime problem was lacking. As a result, it authorized a number of independent projects to gather information about crime victims.

From that modest starting point, victimization surveys have grown into an invaluable data source. A *victimization survey*, instead of relying on police reports or other official information, entails contacting people and asking them if they have been crime victims. In looking at the development of victimization surveys, one can divide them into various stages, or "generations" (Hindelang, 1976). Each successive generation is marked by the way it grappled with several methodological problems raised in earlier phases. Box 2.3 summarizes the four generations of victimization surveys since their inception in the mid-1960s.

First-Generation Victim Surveys

The initial victim surveys, undertaken at the behest of the President's Commission (1967), represented little more than a set of extensive feasibility studies.

BOX 2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS

First-Generation Surveys

- Mid-1960s
- Carried out for the 1967 President's Commission
- Pilot studies of the feasibility of victimization surveys
- Showed much greater victimization than police data

Second-Generation Surveys

- Late 1960s and early 1970s
- Probed methods to address problems found in first-generation surveys
- City-specific surveys

Third-Generation Surveys

- Early 1970s to late 1980s
- *National Crime Survey* (NCS) initiated in 1972
- Business victimization surveys—1972 to 1977
- City surveys—26 cities from 1972 to 1975

Fourth-Generation Surveys

- 1988 to present
- NCS renamed the *National Crime Victimization Survey*—initiated in 1992

These efforts tested whether such an approach could elicit sensitive information from the public. The researchers also wanted to determine how the criminal justice system could use these victim-based findings.

Perhaps the best known of all the initial pilot studies was the poll sponsored by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) and reported by Ennis (1967). This effort was the first national victim survey and targeted 10,000 households throughout the U.S.A. Interviewers initially asked participants to report on incidents that happened to them during the preceding 12-month period. Next, the interviewer sought more detailed information on the two most recent and most serious offenses.

What made this survey so well known was the subsequent claim that the UCR underreported by approximately 50 percent the crime rate indicated by the *NORC Survey*. Table 2.1 contains a comparison of crime rates based on the NORC data and the UCR figures. The *NORC Survey* uncovered almost four times as many rapes and more than three times as many burglaries as did the UCR. The lone exception to reporting discrepancies was motor vehicle theft, for which the data sources produced comparable rates. This similarity was probably due to the fact that most auto insurance companies will not issue a reimbursement check unless the victim files a police report. Combining the offenses into broader categories gave a much clearer picture. The *NORC Survey* unearthed 1.9 times as many violent episodes and 2.2 times more property offenses than official crime statistics had logged. Critics quickly pointed to the NORC findings as definitive proof that official crime records were inaccurate and unreliable because they neglected the “dark figure of crime” (Biderman & Reiss, 1967).

TABLE 2.1 Comparison of NORC Victimization Rates with UCR Rates

Crime Category	NORC	UCR	Ratio of NORC to UCR
Homicide	3.0	5.1	0.6
Rape	42.5	11.6	3.7
Robbery	94.0	61.4	1.5
Aggravated Assault	218.3	106.6	2.0
Burglary	949.1	299.6	3.2
Larceny \$50+	606.5	267.4	2.3
Auto Theft	206.2	226.0	0.9
Violent Crimes	357.8	184.7	1.9
Property Crimes	1761.8	793.0	2.2

Source: President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (1967).

Some Methodological Considerations

While the NORC results were dramatic, there were enough problems to compromise their usefulness. First, the claim that there was twice as much crime than what the police acknowledged was based on a very small number of victim accounts. Under normal conditions, someone conducting a victim survey might anticipate uncovering only a handful of rape and robbery incidents. Deriving estimates from a few observations can yield some questionable figures.

Second, the crime instances that victims reported were submitted to a panel of experts to assess whether these events were really crimes. Ultimately, the panel excluded more than one-third of the victim reports. An example of misclassification would be a person who returns home, finds all the furniture gone, and exclaims, “Help—I’ve been robbed!” The real crime here is a burglary, not a robbery. Employing a panel to check victim reports may help validate the results and impart a greater sense of confidence, but it also alerts us to the fact that the survey design included some major flaws in terms of question wording.

A third set of problems dealt with subject recall. Some participants experienced difficulties with telescoping. *Telescoping* takes place when respondents mistakenly bring criminal events that occurred outside the time frame into the survey period. For example, suppose that you are taking part in a victimization survey. The interviewer asks whether you had a car stolen during the past 12 months. In actuality, your automobile was taken 14 months ago. However, because you cannot remember exactly when the incident took place, you advise the interviewer that you were the victim of such a crime.

A related hindrance is faulty memory. *Memory decay* is evidenced when respondents were victimized during the survey time frame but forgot the event and did not provide the correct answer to the question. Researchers also found that respondent fatigue could influence the results. For example, the level of crime reporting decreased as the length of the survey increased. Because of these considerations, victimization estimates derived from these efforts contained an unknown margin of error. Unless telescoping and memory decay “exactly offset one another, the survey estimate of the amount of crime that occurred is inaccurate” (Schneider et al., 1978: 18–19).

Another major concern emerged from the selection of respondents. The study did not randomly select respondents from households, and individuals under the age of 18 were excluded unless they were married. In addition, all household offenses were counted as crimes against the head of the household. Each of these facts could add more bias to the results.

Besides the preceding concerns, a host of other imperfections contaminated the findings. There were definitional problems in the survey questions, an inability to locate where the crime actually took place, a problem in having a