

Work of Benjamin Mendelsohn: further reflections:

- Father of victimology- coined the term 'victimology'
- outlined a six-step classification of victims based on legal considerations of the degree of the victim's blame:
 - Completely innocent victim (no provocative behaviour)
 - Victim with minor guilt (V unintentionally places himself in a compromising situation)
 - Victim as guilty as offender (V engaged in crimes and was hurt)
 - Victim more guilty than offender (Victim promotes or initiates the act)
 - Most guilty victim (Start off as offender and was hurt in return)
 - Imaginary victim (those who pretend to be a victim)

Work of Stephen Schafer

- 1968
- Provided a typology that builds upon victim responsibility for the crime
- Sets forth the responsibility of different victims
- His victim precipitation typology is as follows:
 - Unrelated V's (no responsibility by the V)
 - Provocative V's (V shares responsibility)
 - Precipitative V's (some degree of responsibility e.g. place themselves in dangerous situations)
 - Biologically weak V's (e.g. the elderly are appealing targets by offenders due to physical conditions)
 - Socially weak V's (e.g. minorities who are not adequately integrated into society are seen as easy targets)
 - Self-victimising (total v responsibility- e.g. involved in crimes such as prostitution)
 - Political V's (no V responsibility- e.g. victimised because they oppose those in power)

Factors identified by Wolfgang that are typical victim-precipitated homicides:

- V and Offender having some prior interpersonal relationship
- Homicide act is often the product of a small disagreement that escalates until the situation bursts out of control
- Alcohol consumed by the V is a common ingredient in many victim-precipitated homicides

Problematic assumptions of the V precipitation

- Assumes that behaviour of the V can explain the criminal act
- V's behaviour is sufficient to cause a criminal act
- Intent of the V can be gauged by the victimisation incident

New approach: General victimology

- Mendelsohn attempted to assure victimology of its independence from criminology
- Aimed to investigate the causes of victimisation in search of effective remedies
- General victimology subsumes five types of V's: they include victims of a criminal, one's self, the social environment, technology and the natural environment

Victim movement:

Women's movement:

- 1960's-70's
- Included a large component of dealing with Victims as Victim- blaming arguments often dealt with rape and sexual assault cases
- As women demanded an equal place in society, they worked to overcome the disadvantage of the C.J.S

Children's rights:

- 1960's, many physical and psychological actions used with children began to be questioned and labelled as abused
- Children were emerging as a new class of V's- both of abuse at home and of society in general.

Legal reforms:

- Laws designed to protect battered spouses
- Mandating that doctors and teachers report suspected child abuse

Important definitions for topic One

Agent provocator: where the V was a major contributor to their own victimisation

Criminal-victim Dyad: the V was often a contributory cause to the criminal act

Critical victimology: an attempt to examine the wider social context in which some versions of victimology have become more dominant than others and to understand how those versions of victimology are interwoven

Gemeinschaft: was a historical society in which families lived often in isolation and when a crime took place, it brought physical and economic harm not only to the individual, but also to their entire family network

Gesellschaft: a society that formed with the emergence of the Industrial revolution- people moved to urban areas and lived in crowded areas surrounded by strangers

Mala in se: totally unacceptable behaviour: e.g. in all countries i.e. murder is mala in se, as no country condones it

Victim precipitation: deals with the degree to which the V is responsible for their own victimisation

TOPIC 2: Measuring Criminal Victimisation

Intro:

- Measuring extent of criminal victimisation has long been the aim of the C.J.S

- Rely largely on three sources: official records from police departments, offender surveys, and victim surveys: though NONE of these sources in isolation provides a definite answer to how much victimisation occurs in society

Data obtained from police reports:

- Most widely cited measure of crime- Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)- produced by FBI
- Created to be a mechanism for police in all jurisdictions to exchange information about crime

Benefits:

- I. Has been in operation since 1931- gained substantial amounts of information, consistent and broad geographic range allows crime comparison from year to year and in different places
- II. UCR;s have provided standardised crime definitions, helps academics when analysing data- introduced Index (part 1) offences and divided these serious crimes into personal offences (murder, forcible rape, robbery) and property offences (burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft)
- III. Gathers large amounts of information and details about these Index crimes- especially useful when trying to identify patterns/trends
- IV. UCR also collects data on 'Part 2 crimes': step down from Part 1 offences- includes sex offences other than rape, offences against family and so on- though since there are 21 categories of part 2 crimes, less detail is collected compared to the details in part 1 crimes
- V. Formal
- VI. Produces volumes of data that is fairly high quality

Cons:

- I. Overlooks dark figure of crime- only reflects offences known to police, thus reflects police data, not true crime data
- II. Reliance on hierarchy rule: only most serious offence recorded i.e report the crime of a bank robbery, not other crimes involved in this robbery such as theft and assault
- III. Does not collect detailed information on the Victim
- IV. Not uniform across jurisdictions: may report very similar acts in very different ways

National Incident-Based Reporting Systems (NIBRS)

- Grew out of a mid 1980s report and examined changing needs for data collection and analysis to help law enforcement fight crime

Benefits:

- I. Collects detailed information on 22 categories of offences rather than just 8 index offences (UCR)
- II. Does not follow hierarchy rule- reports on all offences
- III. Creates the ability for law enforcement and researchers to decide on appropriate course of action
- IV. We can understand how to control situations due to experience

Victimisation surveys

Background:

- Only 40 years worth of data
- An invaluable data source
- Divided into 'generations'
- Each successive generation marked by way it dealt with several methodological problems raised in previous phases
- Researchers also wanted to determine how criminal justice system could use victim-based findings
- Showed much greater victimisation than police data

Some problems with subject recall

First generation surveys suffered numerous problems, outlined below:

- **Telescoping:** respondents to a crime survey mistakenly bring criminal events that occurred outside the time frame into the survey period
- **Memory decay:** when respondents were victimised during the time frame, but forgot and this missed from the study

Development of victimisation surveys

1) first generation

2) second generation: late 1960's- early 70's: city specific- probed methods to address problems found in first-generation

3) third generation: more and better data- including Victimization surveys

4) fourth generation: looked at victimisation rates, not just crime rates- 1988 to present

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

- Fourth-generation of victimisation surveys
- Changed title to emphasize the it was NATIONAL
- Adjustments aimed at improving analytical worth of survey: aimed to improve accuracy of responses, adding new questions to tap into different dimensions of crime and victim responses and aimed to make the data more useful to researchers

Main concerns of NCVS:

- I. Concern over recall accuracy: question wording could mislead people, bounding (multiple surveys), telescoping, memory decay
- II. Some screen questions which probe into possible victimisation experiences could be misleading

International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS)

- Wider view of victimisation
- Includes questions on political corruption and hate crimes
- International comparisons= major advancements

Problems:

- 5-year reference period: i.e. think back to the last five years: difficult to recall how many times you have been victimised within this time period

- People reluctant to be honest over the phone- not ideal for data collection

NCVS vs UCR

- NCVS uncovered much more crime than UCR
- Victims reveal more crimes to interviewers that have not come to the attention of the police
- UCR did not provide additional information- provided by surveys

Victim-offender relationship:

- Mainly focuses victimisation surveys on crimes in which victim and offender have personal contact

Repeat victimisation:

- Repeated occurrence of crime involving either the same victim or the same location
- Hard to discover if abuser fills out survey (one per household)
- At a high risk of being burglarised if recently have been i.e. know how to get in, what's in there, and if person has replaced lost items, may be easily taken again

Prevalence and incident data:

- Prevalence data= number of individuals who experience victimisation over a specified period of time
- Incidence data= total number of offences that are reported during a specified period of time
- At any point at which number of incidents exceeds number of victims= re-victimisation
- Does not necessarily involve same victim i.e. near repeat, virtual repeat
- Near repeat= incident of victimisation in which a neighbour for example may be victimised in the same, or similar way as initial victim i.e. place with poor lighting, no CCTV- houses in this area are more subject to burglary

Divisions of repeat victimisation

Risk heterogeneity: prior victimisation or some other factor identifies victim or location as an appropriate target for future victimisation

e.g. a bar with reputation for conflict will attract those looking for a fight

Event dependency: situations in which some offender commits another offence based on past experiences with that victim or location- successful past offending leads to another attempt

Lessons learnt from repeat victimisation:

- When re-victimisation occurs it tends to do so quickly
- Offenders take advantage of opportunities that appear in first offence
- Doesn't mean every victim shall be re-victimised- but they may be more vulnerable.

TOPIC 3: EXPLAINING CRIMINAL VICTIMISATION:

Intro:

- Explaining criminal victimisation is not that different from explaining criminal offending or delinquency: the criminal-victim dyad: cannot distinguish between the 2 inter-relationship, 'victim contributing cause of criminal act'
- Important theories resulting from early work: social interactionism, cultural perspective, strain theory

Intraindividual theories:

- Based on the idea that the causes of criminality are within the offender i.e. victim not to blame
- Intra= within/ individual=person
- Referred to as psychopathology (display of behaviours that may indicate the presence of mental illness or psychological impairment)
- Victimologists say that an example may be victim selection i.e. preselection e.g. paedophile places themselves around children and there may be links to intergenerational violence
- Substance abuse is common in interpersonal violence for a 2 possible reasons: 1) substance caused the offender to aggressive and 2) substance used as a disinhibitor
- Yet critics point out four concerns that weaken support for Intraindividual approaches:
 - 1) most inquirers rely upon critical information as opposed to a random sample larger population
 - 2) studies usually lack a control group
 - 3) very little agreement among researchers about which exact characteristics distinguish abuser from non-abusers
 - 4) research is ex post factor= occurs after the act has taken place and registers very little predicative power

Factors influencing intra-individual offending:

- Mental illness- personality disorders, depression and so on
- Substance abuse
- Stress
- Earlier in history, seen as 'out of sight, out of mind' i.e. described domestic violence as isolated and private issues
- Sex based crimes: early acceptance that society is not at fault, the offender is: these crimes are not the norm- deflects attention away from society and the victim= blameless

'not the norm':

- On average 27 children die each year of filicide (parent intentionally killing child)
- **E.g. Keli Lane:** media labelled her as promiscuous, cold and a murderess: may have been wrongfully convicted
 - Her child was last seen as a 2-day-old being carried out of the hospital by Keli
 - Convicted in 2010 despite her child's body never being found

Symbolic interactionism

- Behaviour is the result of an interaction between 2 or more people

- Applied to criminal activity in the 1960's: Labelling theory- has strong repercussions: individuals adopt the label they are given: includes racism, sexism, gender issues, weight and 'class'
- Proposes that every individual develops their concept of 'self' through a process of interaction with the surrounding world (other people as well as environment)- can be positive or negative
- People label us differently and we may be all these things, yet not label ourselves as that e.g. mother sees you as angel, sister sees you as nerd, see yourself as happy

Victim precipitation (another type of symbolic interaction)

- Offender-victim interaction
- Role reversal= 1 type of symbolic interactionism,
- Not all crime results from role reversal
- Child or elder abuse= symbolic interaction
- Wolfgang's work in 1950's looks at victim's role in murder
- Victims are not a homogenous group: some offenders become victims (homicide), some victims are also offenders (other crimes), some victims become offenders because of their past victimisation
- So victim precipitation is a major contributory factor in serious violence
- Victim-offenders are more likely to have used alcohol prior to the homicidal even than victims