

History and the Theoretical Developments in Victimology

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The Scope of Victimization

- Every crime has at least one victim
- NCVS (2012):
 - 6,842,593 violent victimizations
 - 19,622,977 household victimizations
- *Victimization*: events that harm individuals, households, businesses, communities, or institutions
 - *Criminal victimization*: harm is suffered as a result of a violation of the criminal law

Purposes of Victimology

- The study of crime victims and the circumstances surrounding their victimization
- Ensuring victims are provided with services and advocates
- Identifying risk factors for different types of victimization

Victimological Research

- Estimating the *extent* of different types of victimization
- Explaining:
 - *Why* victimization occurs
 - *To whom* it occurs
 - *Where* it occurs
- Understanding the consequences of victimization
- Victims' rights and remedies
- Victims' roles in the criminal justice (CJ) system

Victimology and Criminology

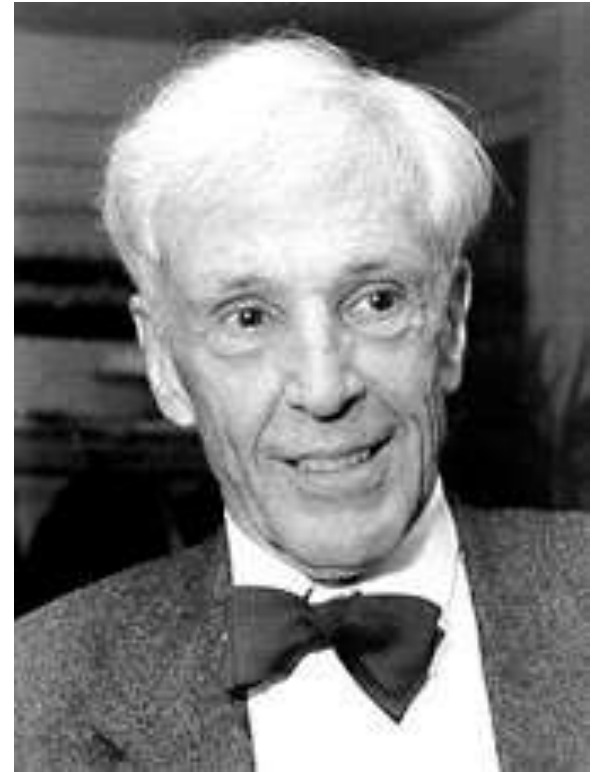
- Complementary areas of study
- Criminology considers crime from the offender's perspective
- Victimology considers crime from the victim's perspective
- Opinions differ as to whether victimology is a subfield of criminology, a separate field, or a distinct field with overlapping focus

Academic Origins of Victimology

- “First-generation” victimologists
- First theory of victimization: **victim precipitation**
- Victims contribute to the crime event through:
 - **Victim facilitation**
 - Victims often set in motion the events that result in their own victimization
 - **Victim provocation**
 - Victims can overtly act in ways that result in their victimization

Hans von Hentig

- 1887–1974, Germany
- *The Criminal and His Victim* (1948)
- First to consider the role of the victim in a crime
- *Typology* of victimization dividing victims into general classes and psychological types



von Hentig's Typology

General Classes of Victims

- 1. The young
- 2. The female
- 3. The old
- 4. The mentally defective and other mentally deranged
- 5. Immigrants, minorities, and dull normals

Psychological Types of Victims

- 6. The depressed
- 7. The acquisitive (Ponzi schemes)
- 8. The wanton
- 9. The lonesome and the heartbroken
- 10. The tormentor
- 11. Blocked, exempted, and fighting victims (drug dealer robbery)

Beniamin Mendelsohn

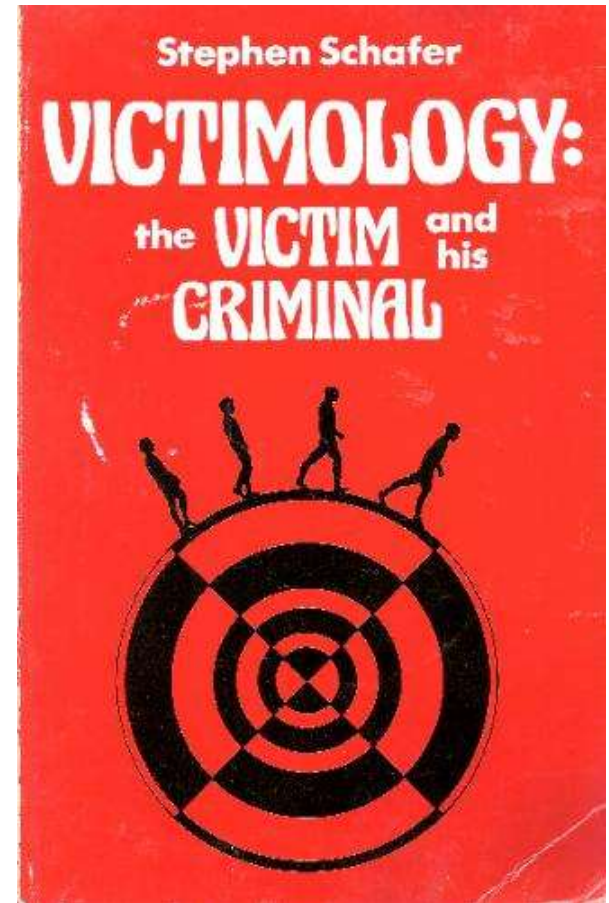
- 1990–1998
- Israeli defense attorney
- “Father of Victimology”
 - Coined term “victimology”
 - Advocated the study of victims to be separate from criminology
- Typology categorizing victims according to their *degree of responsibility*

Mendelsohn's Typology

1. The completely innocent victim
 - Example: children
2. The victim with minor guilt (also known as “victims due to ignorance”)
 - Example: robbery
3. The victim who is as guilty as the offender (also known as “voluntary victims”)
 - Example: fistfight
4. The victim who is more guilty than the offender
 - Example: attacking abuser
5. The most guilty victim (also known as “victims who are guilty alone”)
 - Example: self-defense
6. The imaginary victim (also known as “simulating victims”)
 - Example: senile person

Stephen Schafer

- 1911–1976, b. Hungary
- *Victimology: The Victim and His Criminal* (1977)
- Much victimization is a result of the victim–offender relationship
- Typology based on concept of *functional responsibility*
 - Victims are responsible for not provoking offenders and for actively preventing their own victimization



Schafer's Typology

1. Unrelated victims (bank robbery)
2. Provocative victims (insults)
3. Precipitative victims (unprotected valuables)
4. Biologically weak victims (children)
5. Socially weak victims (minorities)
6. Self-victimizing victims (drug addicts)
7. Political victims (McCarthyism)

Marvin E. Wolfgang

- 1924–1998
- *Patterns in Criminal Homicide* (1957)
 - Examined victim-precipitated homicide
 - First to use official data
 - Philadelphia Police Dept. homicides from 1948 to 1952
 - 588 homicide victims, 26% victim precipitated



Marvin Wolfgang

Sellin and Wolfgang's Typology

1. Primary victimization

- Individuals personally victimized by offenders
- Robbery

2. Secondary victimization

- Impersonal targets
- Shoplifting

3. Tertiary victimization

- Public or society at large

4. Mutual victimization

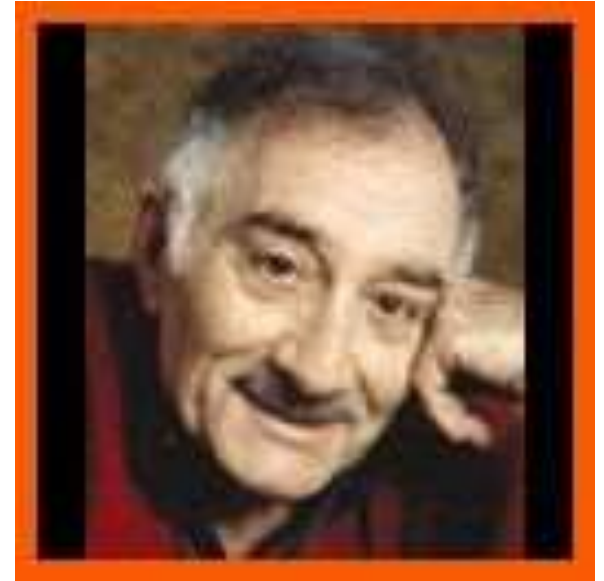
- Victim consents and is also an offender
- Assisted suicide

5. No victimization

- No victim or offense is minor and unrecognizable

Menachim Amir

- Born 1930
- Graduate student of Wolfgang
- *Patterns in Forcible Rape* (1971)
 - Examined victim precipitation in forcible rape
 - Typology based on *continuum of responsibility*
 - Some victims have no responsibility; others are active participants



Amir's Continuum of Victim Precipitation in Forcible Rape

1. Unsoliciting victims
 - Purely accidental
2. Precipitative victims
 - Placed himself or herself in risky situation
 - Bears some responsibility
3. Seductive victims
 - Provocative language, dress, or manner
 - Either a *conscious* (intentional) or an *unconscious* (because of victim proneness) participant

Criticisms of Amir's Typology

- Implies that some victims have a psychological, unconscious desire to be raped
- Based on rapist's perception of behavior
- Victim blaming
 - Led to rejection of Amir's work, as well as stopping the progression of victim precipitation as an explanation for victimization

Grass-roots Origins of Victimology

- Social forces also driving development of the field of victimology
 - Civil rights movement
 - Women's movement
 - Children's movement
- Separately working toward shared goals:
 - Highlighting plight of crime victims
 - Advocating for changes in treatment of victims by society and CJ system

Civil Rights Movement

- 1950s and 1960s
- Focused on ending many forms of discrimination, including in CJ system
- Furthered causes of victims by highlighting unequal treatment of African American victims and offenders:
 - Police brutality
 - Legal representation in the courts
 - Disparate sentences

Women's Movement

- 1960s and 1970s
- Especially influential in two CJ areas:
 - Sexual victimization
 - Repeal of marital exemption laws
 - Legally impossible for wife to pursue rape charges against husband
 - Spousal abuse
 - Poor response by CJ system shows women have subservient place in society
- Development of victim services, shelters, and legal actions

Children's Movement

- 1960s: first time children were recognized as a group of victims with special needs
- 1962: Dr. Henry H. Kempe drew attention to the issue of child abuse
 - “Battered-child syndrome”
 - Occurs when a young child suffers repeated physical abuse by parents or other caregivers
 - Called on medical community to report suspected cases
 - Advocates pushed for expanded rights and services for child crime victims

Political Origins of Victimology

- Efforts of academic interest and grass-roots movements coalesced
- United States began to address, politically, the plight of crime victims
- Change largely driven by:
 - “Law and Order” movement
 - President’s Commission on Law Enforcement
 - Federal legislation

“Law and Order” Movement

- 1960s and 1970s
- Based on particular crime-control philosophy
 - Swift justice
 - Harsh punishments
 - CJ efficiency
- Support for victims’ rights
- Victims’ changing roles in CJ process

President's Commission on Law Enforcement

- 1960s
- Law Enforcement Assistance Act (LEAA)
 - 1965
- Office of Law Enforcement Assistance
- *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*
 - 1967
 - Recommendation for CJ response to victims, among other issues addressed

Federal Legislation

- 1980s and 1990s
- Many federal laws passed
- For example:
 - Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, 1975
 - Victims of Crime Act, 1984
 - Violence against Women Act, 1994
 - “Megan’s Law,” 1996

Summary of Origins of Victimology

- First-generation academic origins
 - Assessed degree to which victims contribute to criminal events through *precipitation, facilitation, and provocation*
 - Development of typologies, early empirical research
- Grass-roots origins
 - Separate social justice movements
 - Aimed at improving lives of marginalized groups, including crime victims
- Political origins
 - Changes in policy and law related to victims