

# Origins of Victimology

## A Brief History and Development

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# 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
- Understanding Criminal and Non-criminal victimizations
- Lifestyle and Lifetime Circumstances of Victimization and Victim Resilience and Preventing or Reducing 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

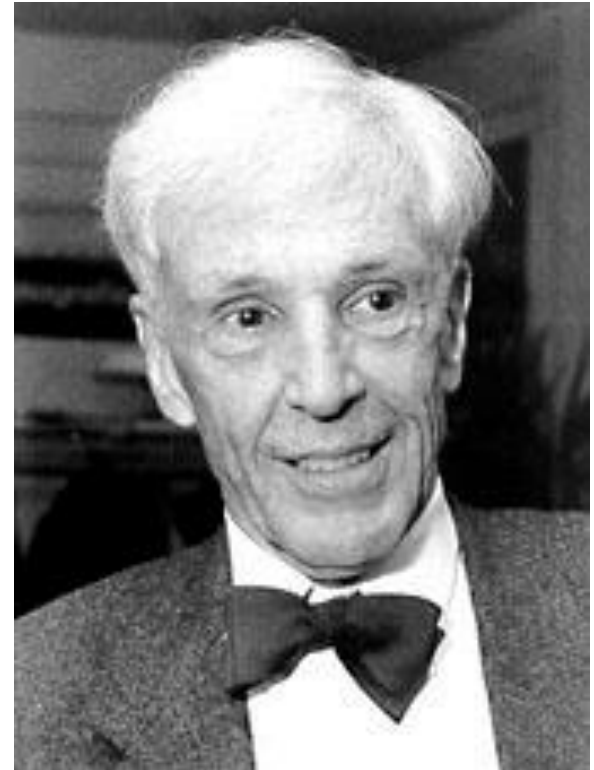
- Complementary areas of study
- Criminology considers crime from the offender's perspective
- Victimology considers crime from the victim's perspective
- Opinions differ as to whether victimology is a subfield of criminology, a separate field, or a distinct field with overlapping focus

# 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

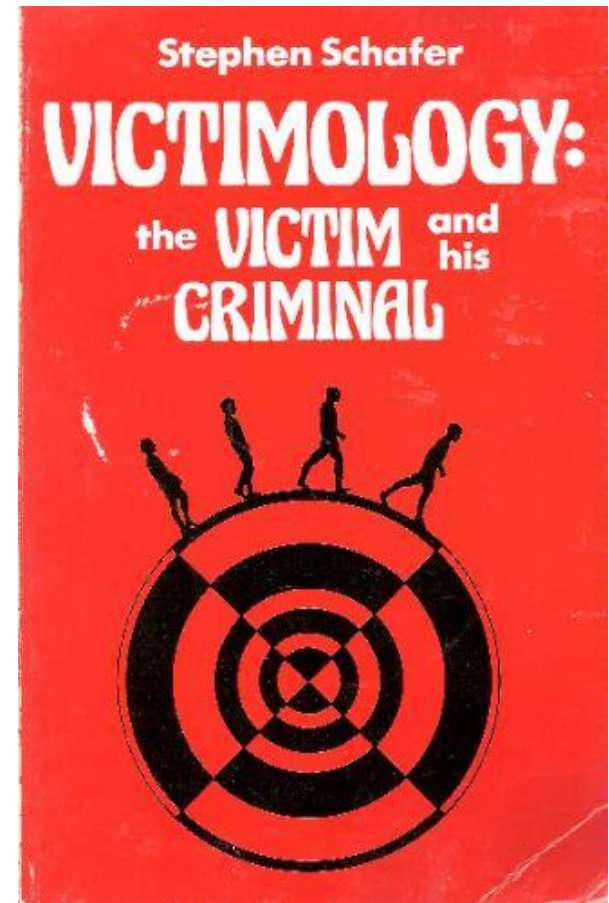
- 1990–1998
- Israeli defense attorney
- “Father of Victimology”
  - Coined term “victimology”
  - Advocated the study of victims to be separate from criminology
- Typology categorizing victims according to their *degree of responsibility*

# 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

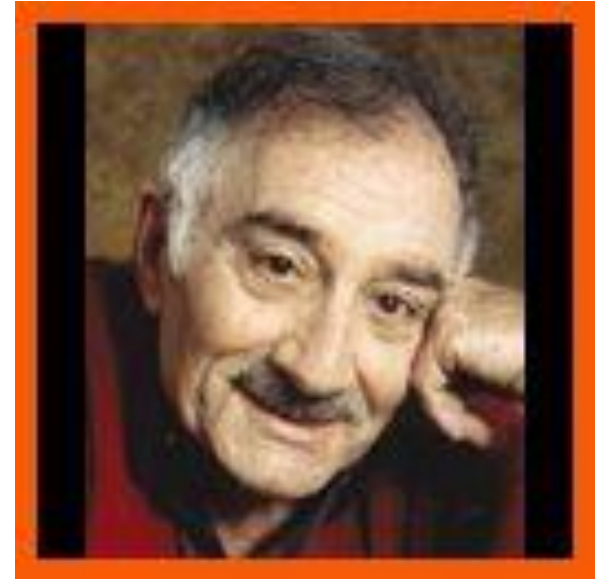
- Victim consents and is also an offender
- Assisted suicide

## 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

# Continuing Academic Developments

- Demographic Focused Victimizations
  - Gender, Race, Age, Class, Group, Genocide
- Topical Issue Criminal Victimizations
  - Environmental, Theoretical, Cultural, Scope, Artificial Intelligence
- Global, International and Transnational Victimizations
  - Historical Revisits, Intellectual, Immigration, Refugees, Human Trafficking,
- Emerging Issues and the Future of Victimology
  - Reversing Victim/Offender Roles
  - Transformative Justice, Victimization Justice

# 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