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## VICTIMOLOGY

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF VICTIMOLOGY

The second half of the twentieth century saw the development of social concern, protest, activism, intervention, legal, political, and social services reform, research, and teaching about victims of crime. In some countries, the victim movement became an important separate political force leading to substantial reforms in many fields. It is particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world that the movement began and flourished, expanding eventually to other parts of the world. In the United States, the victim movement began in the 1970s. The women's movement, inspired by the civil rights movement, was one of its primary moving forces. Another was the social concern about the dramatic increase in crime rates in the United States. Conservatives and right-of-center activists and politicians pointed out that the system of constitutional protections in the United States favored the suspect and the convicted criminal while it trampled on the needs of the victims denying them minimal rights and consideration. Thus, focusing on the victims became a rallying cry for a more restrictive approach to criminal law and the administration of justice. Also influential were the substantial efforts undertaken after the urban riots of the late 1960s to improve the operations of the criminal justice system, as well as the nascent consumer movement, which demanded more accountability not only of producers of consumer goods but also of the state, the justice system, and social, medical, and other services (Viano 1992a:1-2).

Feminists forcefully pointed out the problem faced by women victims of sexual assault when they came into contact with the police, hospitals, and the courts. Practitioners

and academics realized that the justice system did not serve the victims of crime. Instead, it "used" them to obtain needed information, cooperation, and services (e.g., as witnesses) without giving them any active role, respect, or consideration in return. In essence, it was said that the system "revictimized" the victim.

Other groups contributed to creating a general awareness of the concept of victim and the plight of various victims and of the need for support services and, most of all, appropriate legislative reform. A good example of this type of group is Mothers against Drunk Drivers.

Child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, missing and exploited children, the elderly, the survivors of victims of homicide, date rape, sexual harassment, and patient abuse by therapists were added to the areas of concern of victimology. The success of these groups served to highlight the general importance of "victims" as an effective political symbol and as a rallying point for a variety of grievances, dissatisfactions, and political agendas. In the United States, the early 1980s saw several expressions of this political awareness and recognition through the establishment of the Victims of Crime Task Force (1980), subsequently called the Presidential Commission on Victims of Crime, and the Family Violence Task Force (1984), as well as the passage at the federal level of the Victims and Witness Protection Act of 1982, the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, the Justice Assistance Act of 1984, and, importantly, the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, which was subsequently revised.

Several state-level developments demonstrated the importance of the victim movement in the United States. Beginning with California, where in 1982 the voters

approved the widely publicized Victim's Bill of Rights, or Proposition 8, most states in the United States have passed similar bills of rights, granting the victims a better standing in the criminal justice system, even though it does not yet approximate the rights that the defendants have.

The first jurisdictions to introduce a program of compensation or reimbursement for victims of crime were Australia, England, and California. The enactment of compensation programs for victims of crime by practically all states and the U.S. federal government and several countries, the provision of funds to support domestic violence shelters, and the funding of victim/witness programs are other positive developments engineered on behalf of the victims.

One important innovation in the criminal justice system has been the introduction and use of victim impact statements, statements that represent one of the major breakthroughs in the victims' rights movement. Mandated by law in many states, such statements inform the sentencing judge of the physical, financial, and emotional impact of the crime on the victim or on the victim's survivors so that these elements can be taken into account when reaching a sentencing decision. Most states in the United States now allow for some form of victim participation at sentencing (Viano 1992a:2).

### International Victimology

The field of victimology is international. Worldwide interest in the victims of crime began and grew during the 1970s for many of the same reasons that led to the beginning of the victims' movement in the United States—namely, the increase in crime rates, the inefficiency and lack of care on the part of the criminal justice system, and the growing realization of the complicated and long-lasting negative effects of crime on its victims. However, the emphasis on the rights of the individual and the struggle for the recognition of the rights of groups discriminated against are historically unique to the United States and cannot be considered the roots of the victim movement in European countries (Viano 1992a:3–4).

In European nations, a strong central government has traditionally played a major role in providing extensive social services from “cradle to grave.” Thus, the needs of the victims of crime have been addressed by appealing to the already existing responsibility of the government for the social welfare of the citizenry. Victim services represent an extension of the role of provider and protector that European central governments have been fulfilling for decades. Consequently, the transition there was different, smoother and not as confrontational as in the United States. In addition, the civil law system prevalent in continental Europe provides victims considerable rights to take active part in the justice system, for example, by joining the criminal prosecution of the offender with a civil action seeking compensation and restitution.

For this reason, the victim movement in Europe has concentrated more on providing services than pursuing victim rights and has done this more cooperatively with governmental agencies. In all European countries, victim services are normally funded by the government. Thus, the effort to enact legislation empowering victims and allowing them a larger and more active role in the justice system, which has consumed considerable energy and resources in the American victim movement, is not as prevalent in Europe.

Victim services in European countries are not based on the criminal justice system. Rather, they are independent social agencies, staffed by professionals. This again represents a significant difference from the American experience where services were founded and still function in many localities on a grassroots basis thanks to the tradition of volunteerism existing in the United States. With the exception of Great Britain, volunteer work is definitely not valued as much in Europe (Viano 1992a:3). One of the difficulties faced by the victim movement in some countries is the belief that the legal and social welfare systems of the country already provide for the needs of the victim.

## INTERDISCIPLINARITY PERSPECTIVES OF VICTIMOLOGY

### Theoretical Perspectives

Although victimology may lack a theoretical foundation, it is not necessarily improper for victimology to adapt to its needs the theoretical perspectives of sociology, social work, public administration, social policy, law, and justice. Victimology simply represents a different kind of application of theoretical insights developed within other disciplines.

The uniqueness of victimology may stem from its focusing on populations and crises that have been neglected in the past by more established disciplines (Viano 1992a:3). Vulnerable people who experience crisis may indeed constitute the common denominator linking victimology with disciplines that provide a focus for research and intervention. Victimology is an interdisciplinary field that depends on the contributions of sociologists, social workers, psychologists, doctors, nurses, political scientists, criminal justice officials, and other professionals, activists, advocates, and reformers. In the academic world, victimology is considered a branch or area of specialization within criminology.

### Victimology and Criminology

While criminology investigates why people commit crime, victimology pursues questions relating to why some individuals, households, and businesses are the target of criminal activity. That is, victimology looks at the roots of

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vulnerability. While criminology dedicates considerable attention to repeat offenders, victimology analyzes why certain victims are victimized more than once and why. Moreover, whereas criminologists investigate how social, economic, and political situations may instigate criminal activity, victimologists examine personality characteristics, social factors, and cultural pressures that assist in explaining why certain individuals or groups in society are victimized more than others or why certain persons may be inclined to take risks and become victimized as a consequence (Viano 1992a:1–4).

The methodology is commonly rooted in social science research methods. Both areas of inquiry examine the legal and justice systems, the social services, and the welfare and emergency medical and psychological health systems. In particular, criminologists attempt to identify the needs of offenders such as counseling, therapy, job training, drug treatment, and rehabilitation, while victimologists work on the psychological, emotional, medical, and financial needs of victims of crime and verify the effectiveness of the programs offered to victims of crime.

Some analysts maintain that beyond victims of crime victimology should be concerned with victims of abuse of power, accidents, and man-made and natural disasters. The ultimate goal is to develop crisis-intervention strategies and introduce short- and long-term approaches to solving the pressing problems facing victims. However, the majority of victimologists favor a more restrictive view of the field as limited to criminal victimization. This allows for a clearer focus, definite boundaries, and a field easier to define and manage (Karmen 2004:21–24).

### Victimology and Politics

Victimology takes its practitioners into the political spectrum. Liberal, conservative, or moderate philosophies play a major role in influencing how one approaches victim-related problems. The conservatives stress personal responsibility and thus tend to blame the victim and place on the victim the burden of solving his or her problems without relying on the state or the community. A liberal focuses on conditions in society, such as racism, poverty, sexism, ageism, that influence the likelihood of being victimized. Thus, liberals stress on solutions that give the government a considerable intervention role to alleviate the root causes of victimization while promoting the notion of entitlement for the victimized.

There are also radical approaches that stress on the exploitative and oppressive relations that are built in the whole social system. This transcends street crime and expands the field to include a vast number of harmful activities that have been inflicted on people and society through structural inequalities in society, racism, sexism, environmental pollution, consumer fraud, and white-collar crimes in general, restricting access to education and to the job market. Here, the victim is not necessarily a particular person but an entire group of people, for reasons of gender

(women), age, socioeconomic interests, type of work (e.g., mine workers, factory workers) among others. The legal and justice systems are seen as part of the problem, not the solution, because these exist primarily to protect the interests of powerful groups and the privileged.

Victimology focuses on a problematic situation, its consequences, and solutions. While striving for objectivity may make it appear cold and detached from the human tragedies that it studies, it actually has an important positive side as it strives to diminish the impact of human suffering and ultimately to prevent it (Viano 1989:4–10).

### The Contributions of Sociology

The role of sociology in the development and scientific character of victimology is substantial. Victimology is based on a theory of society, social relations, the power structure, and the role and the function of law. Thus, the foundation of victimology is supported by sociological theories that reflect diverse political and value approaches.

Most research conducted in victimology is survey based. Thus, sociology has contributed the tools essential to collect and analyze the essential data, to test for significance and validity, and to conduct the large-scale National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS).

The NCVS has undergone a series of revisions and changes that have been primarily the work of social scientists, survey research specialists, and statisticians (Doerner and Lab 2002:30–31). The same is true for the International Crime Victimization Survey sponsored by the United Nations. The large amount of data collected over the last few decades, especially in the United States, Europe, Australia, Japan, Canada, and other parts of the world, and now often archived for easy access, analysis, interpretation, and policy making is the outcome of surveys and research projects often directed by social scientists, especially sociologists.

## CURRENT STATE OF SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

### Collecting Reliable Information about Crime Victims

Victimologists collect and analyze data to address basic issues. These issues relate to the number of persons who are harmed by criminals each year, the target of most victimizations, the increasing or decreasing likelihood of victimization; the time and spatial locations of certain types of crime; when weapons are used; how people react when attacked; how victims fight back or flee; how many are hurt, the need for medical attention or hospitalization; the losses for the victim, the community, and family members. This type of “big picture” of victimization was not available until the early 1970s.

The usefulness of these data, incidence, trends, and patterns is clear. The data provide a basis for responding to practical questions such as the chances one has to become a victim in a given year or whether or not crime affects all types of people equally. Are there groups that are targeted more often than others? In other words, victimologists develop differential rates of victimization. International surveys also allow us to compare crime rates and probability of victimization. On the basis of these international comparisons, countries are ranked based on crime rates and the likelihood of victimization.

### **The Uniform Crime Reports versus the National Crime Victimization Survey**

In the United States, there are two major sources of information—the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), Crime in the United States, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics NCVS, Criminal Victimization in the United States. Both are distributed by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The UCR was introduced in 1927 by a committee organized by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The mission of the committee was to develop a uniform set of definitions and reporting forms for gathering crime statistics. Presently, about 96 percent of police departments participate in this program.

From the point of view of victimology, the UCR method of collecting data suffers from many defects that limit its use. Among these limitations are underreporting, variant definitions of crime across jurisdictions, lack of information collected on the victim, the mixing of attempted and completed crimes, and crimes against impersonal entities and against a person. The FBI has modified and improved the UCR, for instance, by changing the data-collection format to that of the National Incident-based Reporting System.

Overall, there are strong reservations about the accuracy of the data kept by the 17,000 police departments that report data to the UCR. To address this issue, a survey was introduced and conducted for the first time in 1966 for the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. Ten thousand households were interviewed. The 1966 survey and the subsequent surveys confirmed the existence of the "dark figure" of unreported crimes; thus, there is more crime than that represented by the figures reported by the FBI.

Comparing data obtained through the NCVS and the UCR shows that there is much more crime than is reported through the UCR. Moreover, the NCVS is very useful in making possible certain types of analysis such as changes over time in violent crime rates, finding out whether more robberies also involved murders; identifying and recognizing differential risks of being robbed or murdered; and being able to project cumulative risks (Doerner and Lab 2002:25–43; Karmen 2004:45–55).

### **Victimization Risk Factors: Blaming the Victim?**

The close relationship between criminology and victimology has led victimologists to adopt criminal law and criminology terminology and expressions such as responsibility, culpability, guilt, blame, participation in crime, and shared responsibility. This terminology could imply that at least some victims, such as certain offenders, did something wrong, ignored warnings, took unnecessary chances, did not take appropriate precautions to reduce their exposure to crime, instigated the crime, acted foolishly, or made bad choices. The underlying reasoning is that the victim is at least partially at fault, that what happened was of their own making, and that victimization was avoidable.

"Blaming the victim" has been a point of controversy, especially in the context of sexual assault, rape, and domestic violence. The women's movement has rejected any insinuation that a woman would precipitate her own victimization by how she acted, where she went to socialize, how much she had to drink, how she dressed, and how she interacted with men. On the contrary, the women's movement and radical feminists stress that women have the right to act, dress, behave, drink to excess, tease, etc., without this justifying in any way their being sexually assaulted or harassed.

Raising the possibility of a victim's contribution to his or her own victimization also brings forth the issue of who should bear the cost and the blame of victimization. How many precautions should a person be expected to reasonably undertake before being blamed for the crime occurring? How much of the cost of preventing crime through behavior modification, target hardening, lifestyle changes, variations in daily routines, installation of alarms, lights, and other defenses, etc., should a citizen bear, instead of society actively taking primary responsibility to prevent crime, so that she or he can claim to be a legitimate, innocent victim, should a crime take place? At what point is safe, safe enough?

The early victimologists did focus freely on risk factors asserting that personal characteristics play a role in certain people being victimized instead of others. They spoke of the "criminal dyad or couple" whose interactions created a strong dynamic leading to the crime. For example, Von Hentig (1941) identifies as more likely victims of crime the mentally retarded, newly arrived immigrants, lower educated people, the very young, and the very old. Wolfgang (1958) examined the types of people whose actions contributed to their homicide. Others spoke of the attraction between greedy and avaricious people and the swindlers who take advantage of them. Tourists are commonly depicted as being vulnerable to victimization because they carry valuables with them (money, travelers' checks, credit cards), often indulge in alcohol and drugs, or look for sexual adventure, which impair their ability to take care of themselves, are vulnerable to all types of

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swindles, and typically do not return to the jurisdiction as witnesses for the prosecution that assures the impunity of their victimizers (Viano 1989:4–11; Karmen 2004:87–89).

### Lifestyle and Routine Activities

Lifestyle and routine activities concepts assist in understanding differences in vulnerability to violence and theft. Sociologically, lifestyle pertains to how people spend their time and money at work or in leisure activities and the social roles they occupy. Although it seems that lifestyles are freely chosen, in reality lifestyle is imposed by circumstances. Role expectations also can lead to victimization, such as the stereotypes imposed on young males based on their willingness to fight to defend their honor and that of their date, or how young people spend their leisure time. Looking for certain types of excitement and fun can also increase risk levels. Examples that increase a person's vulnerability include going out at night without a clear destination in mind, partying with complete strangers, going to bars and nightclubs, and leaving some place intoxicated. This is even more so when one is from "out of town" and thus, as a tourist or visitor, not fully aware of danger levels in different areas of a locality. Such behaviors increase the risk of assault, robbery, battery, sexually assault, and even homicide.

Proponents of the theory of routine activities emphasize three elements and the resultant interactions: the availability of suitable targets, the presence of motivated offenders, and the absence of capable guardians. Daily living patterns that affect victimization are commuting, going to school or work, shopping, and exercising outside the home. Women have become more vulnerable to victimization as they join the work force in higher numbers thereby increasing their exposure to unprotected environments. The daily routines control the ecology of victimization (Karmen 2004:90–93).

The routine activities theory is quite useful because it combines some major themes in criminology and victimology. The first is that social conditions produce criminally inclined individuals. The second is that suitable targets increase as affluence spreads. The third stresses the importance of preventive measures and social control, both formal and informal, in discouraging criminals (Doerner and Lab 2002:273–274; Karmen 2004:93–96). These approaches to explaining why certain people may be victimized more than others are sociological because they emphasize a collective, general social pattern of behavior or perspective as opposed to individualized explanations. They also stress informal and formal mechanisms of social control.

### Balance between Safety and Risk

Victimology raises the issue of what is the proper balance between safety and risk. Although absolute safety may be unattainable, it is possible to reduce risk. This

discourse is particularly relevant in an environment in which people seemingly demand protection from terrorist attacks and are ready to sacrifice civil liberties and constitutional rights to ostensibly guarantee a risk-free environment.

There are also strong cultural values in the United States that are contradictory and confusing. On the one hand, American culture emphasizes and stresses risk taking as a valuable trait that has made it possible for America to grow, prosper, and become a magnet for immigrants. On the other hand, the growth of a settled middle class and also of people living in cities and depending to a large extent on various agencies of government rather than on themselves and their neighbors for essential services has given preeminence to careful and prudent planning and investing for one's future, career, old age, rainy day financial crisis, and the raising and education of one's children. Additionally, our increasing faith in science and its ability to tame nature, increase predictability, and control chance events and our technological advances that also encourage people to think that our mastery over the world and its uncertainties is growing emphasize again that we enjoy considerable and increasing control over our surroundings and life events. All of this translates into widely divergent attitudes toward crime victims. Those who accept risk and unpredictability in life tend to sympathize and support victims of crime without question and regardless of how imprudent their behavior may have been. Those who stress planning and controlling one's life will be more inclined to question and second-guess the victim's choices, behavior, and lifestyle; attribute some responsibility of what happened to the victim; and demand that the victim modify his or her behavior, lifestyle, routines, and/or surroundings to prevent future occurrences (Karmen 2004:95–99).

### Victim Blaming versus Victim Defending

Not all victims are the same. They can be ranked on a continuum of legitimacy that spans from the totally legitimate or innocent and totally undeserving victim to the totally irresponsible person who is deserving of victimization. One example of the first is the virtuous, faithful, and responsible mother who is brutally assaulted and raped while doing family chores. An example of the second is the man who ends up dead or seriously injured as a consequence of a barroom fight that he himself started without provocation. On occasion victims are scrutinized, dissected, and analyzed in an attempt to decide whether or not they are legitimate victims and therefore deserving of compassion, understanding, support, and protection. For instance, during the last quarter of the twentieth century there was a major debate over how society should respond through the law, the administration of justice, and the provision of social and other services to the victims of sexual assault. "Blaming the victim" because of the way she was dressed, behaved, where she went and when, whether or not she consumed alcohol, whether she flirted and/or

“provoked” men through her behavior, and dress, accepted a ride or a date, or going to the apartment of someone she just met was not uncommon; major efforts were required on the part of victims’ supporters to begin changing the attitudes of the public at large and of various professionals. Similarly, successfully introducing legislation to recognize the battered woman as a legitimate victim in need of protection and assistance was not an easy task.

Victim blaming assigns the victim a share of responsibility for what took place because of facilitation, precipitation, and provocation. Victim blaming is affecting all areas of victimology including sexual assault, spouse abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, victims of identity theft, and homicide victims. On the other hand, victim defending rejects as unfair any attempt to hold the injured party responsible for what happened.

Victim blaming challenges the legal categories of “completely guilty” and “totally innocent,” particularly if precipitation and provocation are considered. Basically, victim blaming stresses that the innocent or guilty categories may be a distortion of reality. It assumes that the victim and the offenders are not always totally distinct, opposite entities, that they can be related through mutual-ity, symbiosis, or reciprocity (Von Hentig 1948).

According to Ryan (1971), victim blaming involves a three-stage process:

1. First, it is assumed that there is something wrong with the victims, that they are significantly different from the people who have never been victimized.
2. These differences are the root source of the victims’ plight. If these differences did not exist, if they were like everyone else, then they would not be victimized.
3. Victims are advised that, if they want to avoid future problems, they must modify how they think and act. They must give up those behavior patterns that caused their victimization in the first place.

Deeply held beliefs stemming from America’s puritan roots stressing personal responsibility and accountability are at the foundations of the U.S. legal system and these beliefs also influence how most people think of human conduct. Most people take it for granted that we all exercise considerable control over our actions and our lives. Similarly, it is said, citizens who are aware of their vulnerability to crime should examine their lifestyle and routine activities so that they can improve their personal safety. This, of course, also places a responsibility on them so that if anything goes wrong and they are victimized, it must be because they failed to act properly or prudently (Karmen 2004:110–114). This approach to crime and victimization is also rooted in what is called the “just world theory,” which says that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get. One of the first and most prominent proponents of this theory was Lerner (1965), who argued that if one follows the rules, nothing negative will happen to him,

but if it does, then the problem was caused by breaking some rules.

### **Practical Applications of Victim Blaming versus Victim Defending**

Given the above orientation, one application of this approach to assessing the role of the victim is identity theft. Another area of victim blaming is promoted by those with a vested interest is auto theft. Insurance companies have an interest in blaming the victim for this type of theft occurring so as to reduce or deny insurance claims. This discourse is even more sensitive when it comes to sexual assault and rape. In this case, the victim-defending voices, originating mostly in the feminist and women’s movement camps, are quite strong and the consequences of each perspective are important. If the victim-blaming camp succeeds in influencing law and policy, then, first, the rapist can be considered less guilty and therefore deserving of a milder punishment. Second, women, especially young women, must be more cautious and also communicate their wishes, desires, and standards clearly. In other words, the burden of controlling men’s sexuality is still the woman’s. Third, the burden of preventing a rape falls predominantly on the woman and not on aggressive males and sexual predators. Her behavior can be used as a defense to the point of claiming implied consent (Schur 1984; Marciniak 1999). Society also benefits from the victim-blaming perspective prevailing because, instead of having to provide more and better police protection, programs to change cultural values and beliefs leading to rape prevention can place the burden and the blame on women in general and the victims in particular (Viano 1989:5–9).

Each approach holds profound implications affecting the definition and nature of crime itself. The victim-blaming camp stresses sexual assault as a crime of passion, of sexual desire unleashed by the provocative and misleading behavior of the woman or at least by miscommunication and misunderstanding between the genders. The victim-defending camp sees sexual assault as an act of aggression motivated by anger, hatred, and the desire to dominate, subjugate, and control women. Victim defending consequently rejects the crime-prevention advice and training offered to women not only as unwarranted interventions into their lifestyle and personal enjoyment but as a setup to then later blame the victim for not having followed the advice given and thereby causing the crime to occur (Doerner and Lab 2002:10–13; Karmen 2004:110–114).

### **Domestic Violence**

Violence between intimate partners has been the object of research, analysis, policy formulation, and legal and administration of justice reform on a sustained basis during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Sociological perspectives and research tools have substantially

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contributed to the development of the field in a number of ways (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980).

One such area of interest and heated debate is the extent of spousal violence. The redesigned NCVS provides better and more reliable information than previous attempts to measure how much intimate violence is there. The expression "intimate partner violence" includes violent episodes involving current as well as former spouses, boyfriends, and girlfriends. In general, females are more likely to experience harm inflicted by their intimates. These events at times escalate into lethal confrontations. Only about half of victims, both female and male, report the crime to the police. The main reason for not reporting the victimization to the authorities is fear of retaliation from the offending partner (Rennison and Welchans 2000:7).

Spousal violence is not limited to women being abused by men. Instances of women abusing their mates and of gay and lesbian violence against a partner are noteworthy. When the notion of women attacking men was first introduced (Steinmetz 1977–1978), many dismissed it as a "red herring" or a misleading distortion of the real problem, men's violence against women. In particular, feminists did not accept this idea because it does not fit into their analysis of power and gender relations that emphasize men's forced dominion and control of women. For the same reason, the notion of lesbian violence against a partner was also initially dismissed. It took a while for this type of violence to be recognized as real and for its victims to receive support and assistance. Instead of looking at the issue of spouse abuse along gender lines, it is more useful to recast it in terms of domestic violence or intimate partner violence and direct attention and research to violence within intimate relationships (Viano 1992b).

The initial point when society normally becomes aware of and involved in an episode of domestic violence is when the police are called. Police officers responding to a call of domestic violence have a number of alternatives. Among them are mediation; referral to a minister, a counselor, or to a social services agency; separating the quarreling parties; and ordering one of the parties out of the house for a "cooling off" period.

Traditionally, many police departments followed a strategy of minimal intervention in this type of cases (Hines and Malley-Morrison 2005:159–192). Advocates of victims and women's organizations have insisted for a long time that the police need to take a more proactive role in addressing domestic violence incidents. They have especially called for the police to arrest the accused batterer rather than employing nonarrest alternatives. The assumption is that arrest will deter future abuse more effectively than nonarrest measures. There is support for this approach as shown in the Minneapolis Police Department study (Sherman, 1986, 1992).

The goal of the study was to determine how effective various types of police responses were in preventing the repetition of domestic violence. These responses included (1) automatic arrest, (2) having one party leave

for a cooling off period, and (3) counseling and referral to a social service agency. The data indicated that police returned to 26 percent of the homes where they had issued a warning and the parties had been separated for a brief cooling off period, 18 percent in the case of counseling and referral to a social service agency, and only 13 percent when there had been an arrest. These data attracted attention because they contradicted the commonsense belief that arrest can seriously aggravate an already tense situation and is counterproductive and that minimal police intervention represents the best course of action.

Victim advocates and women's organizations lauded the project results as a clear indication of which policy police departments should follow and lobbied for changes in the law mandating arrest in these types of cases. While academics found flaws in the experiment, growing public pressure generated a strong demand for changes in the laws and police enforcement policies.

As a result of the Minneapolis experiment and the pressure brought to bear by women's advocates, police departments attempted to take away the officers' discretion and forbid selective enforcement in domestic violence cases. Mandatory arrest or pro-arrest policies were adopted stipulating that police officers must make an arrest whenever it is feasible in a domestic violence situation. Some departments adopted presumptive arrest policies that assume that an arrest will be made in every case. A decision not to arrest must be justified in writing. Probable cause requirements are still in force. Failure to conform to agency rules and regulations can result in disciplinary action and even dismissal from the force.

Although the police seem to resent this encroachment on their discretion (Steinman 1991), there are also indications that officers do not apply the mandatory arrest policies. There have also been complaints and even lawsuits by arrestees claiming unfair discrimination in that if they were not males they would not have been arrested. As a consequence, some police departments have shifted from a mandatory arrest policy to a preference for an arrest (Doerner and Lab 2002:165–174).

The Minneapolis experiment is one of the better known examples of how sociological research can affect public policy and governmental practices and influence legal reform. But the six replication studies conducted later failed to confirm the Minneapolis findings. Regardless, while its conclusions need to be considerably nuanced, the experiment demonstrates how sociological research can make a considerable difference and be effective in introducing change (Viano 1989:11–13).

### Child Abuse and Neglect

The mistreatment of children is another one of the social "discoveries" of the second half of the twentieth century. Until recently, children had no special legal safeguards. During the nineteenth century, the only legal

remedy available in the United States was invoking laws forbidding cruelty to animals. It was only during the latter part of the twentieth century that child abuse was recognized as maltreatment, laws for protecting children were enacted, programs to address and prevent the problem were introduced, and public awareness awakened (Doerner and Lab 2002:199).

Research in this area revolves around four major questions: (1) How widespread or prevalent is child abuse and neglect? (2) What are the correlates of child maltreatment? (3) What causes people to mistreat children? (4) What are the long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect?

Question number 4 is particularly relevant because it points to an intergenerational cycle of violence. People with histories of physical abuse in childhood usually experience problems in their financial, emotional, social, marital, and behavioral functioning. Most of the long-term effects research in these areas has been conducted on aggressive and antisocial acts, studies that show people with a history of being physically abused as a child are at increased risk for being arrested for a violent crime and for being repeat offenders (Widom 1989). Females are also more likely to become prostitutes (Widom and Kuhns 1996) and become involved in other forms of sexual risk-taking behaviors (Herrenkohl et al. 1998). Women and men who were so abused also have a higher tendency to abuse alcohol and drugs (Langeland and Hartgers 1998). Both men and women are also likely to be diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder (Luntz and Widom 1994). Persons with such past history are also at increased risk for physically abusing their children and significant others (Kalmuss 1984; Kaufman and Zigler 1987; Widom 1989; Marshall and Rose 1990; Straus and Smith 1990) or for becoming victims of spousal abuse (Cappell and Heiner 1990). There are other areas affected by being physically abused as a child: lower intelligence and reading ability (Perez and Widom 1994) and health problems (Lesserman et al. 1997), including chronic pain (Goldberg, Pachas, and Keith 1999). A 17-year longitudinal study shows that physically abused people are at increased risk for depressive and anxious symptoms, emotional-behavior problems, and suicide attempts (Silverman, Reinherz, and Giaconia 1996).

### **Elderly Abuse**

The most recent concern to emerge in victimology is elder victimization, with Steinmetz (1978) generally being credited with introducing the idea of elder abuse into the contemporary victimology discourse. Older people are a rapidly expanding segment of the population, particularly

in advanced countries. In the United States, in 1900, the elderly were only 2 percent of the population. By 2030, they will constitute approximately 20 percent of the population (Administration on Aging 1997). Thus, the number of potential elderly victims will continue to increase.

Elderly victimization study continues to undergo the process of defining its parameters. Generally, it is divided into two major areas: criminal victimization and elder maltreatment. In general, one can say that of all the age groups in society, the elderly are the least likely to become victims of crime. However, there is considerable concern and fear of crime affecting the elderly. In other words, there is a discrepancy between the objective level of victimization and the subjective perception about the probability of becoming a victim. This fear-crime paradox has attracted considerable attention and debate in the social science community. Reaching a solution is not easy since there is not yet a universally accepted definition of fear. Possible risk factors also have to be identified. Vulnerability is a key concern of the elderly. There is also little agreement on exactly what constitutes abuse and neglect.

When it comes to elder victimization, victimologists are just beginning to sort out the intricacies of the problem, define the terminology, explore its root causes, and provide some solutions. Sociology can and should contribute to the advancement of the discourse on elderly victimization (Doerner and Lab 2002:233–245).

### **PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

The future of victimology is quite promising. There is still much to be learned about the plight of the victims. New topics for research are ripe for exploration, but there is considerable work to be done with definitions and parameters. Exciting new initiatives such as Victim-Offender Reconciliation Programs, Restorative Justice, and Victims' Rights need to be evaluated and analyzed. Considerable empirical research is needed to advance our understanding, intervention, and prevention of various types of victimization. Longitudinal studies will be especially valuable to measure the long-term impact of victimization, its costs to society, and how we can best assist the victims and limit the damage to society. The large amounts of data now available through various clearinghouses offer valuable information awaiting future analyses. Sociology has played a very important and valuable role to date in the development of victimology studies. Sociology also has a great deal to contribute to its future growth, relevance, and impact on society.