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## Victimology: An Introduction to the Notion of Criminal Victimization

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### **The origin of the term victimology**

There are various claims regarding the origin of the term *victimology*. Kirchhoff (1994) claims Benjamin Mendelsohn first used the term in 1947. Mendelsohn, a practising attorney, based his conception of victimology on data obtained from a survey of his clients. He initially proposed a new social science that, because of its focus on the 'victimal', would be the 'reverse of criminology' (Schafer 1968). Mendelsohn later advocated that the science should deal with all kinds of victims (Kirchhoff 1994), including victims of crime and abuse of power, and victims of accidents, natural disasters and other divine acts (van Dijk 1998).

Fattah (1994) and Zedner (1994) maintain US psychiatrist Frederick Wertham called for a science of victimology in 1949. Wertham (1949, cited in Fattah 1994:91–2) wrote, 'The murder victim is the forgotten man ... One cannot understand the psychology of the murderer if one does not understand the sociology of the victim'.

### **Victimology as a social science**

Victimology, says Schneider (1982), is the 'scientific study of victims and of process, origins, causes and consequences of victimisation'.<sup>1</sup> In the late 1980s, Friday (1988; see also Reiss 1981:705) proffered, 'in order for the

<sup>1</sup> See also Karmen (1990), who defines victimology as 'The scientific study of victimisation, including the relationships between victims and offenders, the interactions between victims and the criminal justice system – that is, the police and courts, and corrections officials – and the connections between victims and other societal groups and institutions, such as the media, businesses, and social movements'. Karmen's definition covers victim–offender relationships, victims and criminal justice, victims and the media, victims and the costs of crime, and victims and social movements.

science of victimology to mature it requires a greater degree of abstractness than has been evidenced thus far'. Almost a decade later, Morosawa (1999) encouraged the further development of a true scientific victimology, which is 'mindful of what is different between victimological study and criminological study, and [recognises] the difference between subjective descriptive anecdotes and objective empirical research'. Fattah (1994:92), however, asserts that victimology is 'neither a fad nor a fashion', but rather a 'scientific reality'. Walklate (2001:17), citing Rock (1986:72), states that victimology is a social science that brings together people from psychiatry to sociology, public-policy makers, public administrators and other public officials from diverse backgrounds who are unified 'by their concentration upon a particular fragment of the empirical world'.

According to Weir (1991:8), victimology achieves the status of a social science by:

- being empirically based on observation and logical analysis;
- being theoretical – for example,
  - summarising complex observations;
  - devising abstract propositions that explain relationships;
- being accumulative – that is, developing theories that build upon one another; and
- publishing research findings for checking by other scholars.

The tasks of victimology are similar to those of any other social science. They include, says Holyst (1982, cited in Whitrod 1986a:3):

- to diagnose the situation;
- to interpret the situation;
- to prevent undesired situations; and
- to suggest ways of creating desired situations.

Two concepts are fundamental to victimology as a social science. One is victimisation (which is discussed next); the other is victim (which is discussed in the context of 'victim of crime', pages 204–5).

## **The meaning of victimisation**

Fattah (1991, 1994) claims the concept of victimisation is problematic. He says the term is encountered in both scientific and non-scientific victimology, yet there have been few attempts to define or explain victimisation (1994). It is not too difficult to recognise what constitutes victimisation. It has been suggested (Fattah and Sacco 1989), however, that it is difficult to impose proper conceptual limits on victimisation. Attempts have been made; according to Fattah (1991), for instance, victimisation can be divided into 'six master categories':

- natural victimisation;
- auto-victimisation (self-victimisation);

- industrial/technological victimisation;
- structural victimisation;
- criminal victimisation; and
- non-criminal victimisation.

One of the challenges for victimologists is to determine 'what sorts of predations are to be included in a definition of victimisation, and what sorts of predations are to be excluded?' (Fattah 1994:86). The answer or answers to these questions influences the scope of victimology.

## The scope of victimology

Like the definition of victimisation, the scope of victimology has often been debated. Garkawe (n.d.) has identified three main divisions. The first suggests that victimology should be confined to the study of victims of crime (see also Fattah 1991, 1994; Kennedy and Sacco 1998; Karmen 1984, 1996, 2001). 'Penal' victimology is another label for this limited area of the study, which focuses exclusively on criminal victimisation (Knudten 1992a; van Dijk 1999).

The second division suggests that there should be a 'general' (Garkawe n.d.), or 'global' (Elias 1986), victimology. Third, argues Garkawe (n.d.), is another category that falls between the penal victimology and general victimology (see also Kirchhoff 1989). Garkawe (n.d.) calls this mid-position 'human' victimology.

The argument that victimology should focus on the scientific study of criminal victimisation and victims of crime is consistent with the early thinking in the field. In the 1940s, von Hentig examined the role, or contribution, victims of crime play in their victimisation and Mendelsohn concluded that some victims of crime might be culpable and therefore guilty of bringing about their own victimisation. Wertham maintained that victims of crime were the forgotten people in the criminal justice process. In recent years, Fattah (1991:24) suggested that it is necessary to limit victimology to 'a single, manageable area', which he contends should be criminal victimisation. He asserts, 'To try to develop a global or macro theory of general victimisation is not only a futile endeavour, but also a hopeless task' (Fattah 1991:24).

Knudten (1992:43) agrees that victimology 'has been in search of its basic scope and identity'. Nonetheless, he argues that victimology

is a scientific discipline which focuses on victimisation, victims, and processes involving these elements and categories in five major areas, each with sub-areas and in some instances sub-sub-areas, identified as criminal/penal, political, economic, familial and medical victimology.

Elias (1986) has also expressed concern that victimology has tended to focus almost exclusively on criminal victimisation. He contends that

victimology as a science has been unnecessarily bound to traditional criminology. Instead, Elias proposes a global or universal victimology that, in addition to considering criminal victimisation, would explore the social and governmental sources of victimisation as well as human rights. Elias' view, although not consistent with mainstream victimology, warrants further consideration.

Elias strongly condemns the current state of victimology. He criticises the law-and-order lobby that has coopted victimology. The politicisation of victimology, he suggests, will not necessarily work in favour of victims of crime. (Harding (1994) has put a similar view, but in the context of the growth of victimology, especially victim services in Australia.)

The politicisation of victimology is, nonetheless, to be expected. Elias suggests that it is both healthy and inevitable. He encourages people to challenge 'right realism' from several standpoints: liberal, feminist, radical, socialist, left realist, and peacemaking (cf. Garkawe 2000). He proclaims that there should be a fundamental shift away from victims of crime to a general, perhaps universal, victimology. He advocates a shift also away from symbolic policies to the development of tangible actions. As Israel (1996:3) surmises, Elias 'asks us to foster a healthier social environment which in turn might generate fewer incidents of victimisation'.

The rest of this chapter will focus on criminal victimisation, so its content will be drawn from the realm of criminal victimology. This should not be construed as advocacy of a narrow approach to victimology, or as putting the victims of crime above other victims. Rather, the decision reflects the nature and scope of the text, which is essentially on crime, criminology and criminal justice.

## **Criminal victimology**

Criminal, or penal, victimology is the scientific study of criminal victimisation. It is a victim-oriented approach to the study of crime. It covers (among other things) the study of victims of crime, the part such victims play in criminal victimisation and the effects of crime on them. It also incorporates the study of the administration of criminal justice systems. Consequently, whether or not victimology is a new science or a subspecialty of criminology remains contentious.

Schneider (1987:87–8, cited in Kirchhoff 1994: 17) states the victim of crime is 'an independent dimension of criminology', but asserts victimology is 'a part of criminology'. Kaiser (1994:104) writes about a 'victim orientation in criminology', but Lincoln (1985) distinguishes criminology and victimology. Lincoln posits that criminological studies centre on the criminal, the crime and its causes, and the effects of the criminal justice system on the offender. Criminal victimology, however, explores (among other things)

the effect of crime and the criminal justice system on the victim. Table 8.1 outlines ways victimology can be distinguished from criminology.

During the 1960s, the US President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice identified the aims of criminal victimology as preventing crime, helping detect offenders, calming unrealistic fears, and preventing unwarranted complacency, as well as reducing expenditure on criminal justice. The commission also recommended that criminologists pay more attention to victims of crime. Since then, the aims of victimology have expanded to include reducing victims' suffering, improving the response of the criminal justice system, and ensuring that victims are appropriately compensated (Karmen 1996:12). Further, Weir (1991:11) says the aims include achieving equal justice for victims and victimisers.

### Victimology as a social movement

Whereas scientific interest in victims of crime began to come to the fore in the 1940s, wider community concern did not gain momentum until the 1960s (in the United States, Greenberg and Ruback 1992; in the United Kingdom, Rock 1988, 1995, and Reeves 2001; in Australia, Whitrod 1986b, and O'Connell 2000). Criminal injuries compensation was perhaps the most obvious initial response from governments (Justice Strategy Unit 1999).

During the 1960s and 1970s, two major lines of inquiry were evident. The first explored victims' reporting behaviours and their motivations (for example, Hindelang and Gottfredson 1976). The second explored the victims' role in crime (for example, Amir 1967, 1971; Hindelang, Gottfredson and Garofalo 1978; Karmen 1979, 1980) and its control and prevention (for example, Cohn, Kidder and Harvey 1978). During the late 1970s and

**Table 8.1: Victimology versus criminology**

<i>Victimology</i>	<i>Criminology</i>
Asks which variables made a difference to the outcome	Asks what laws have been broken
Focuses on all parties involved including victims	Focuses on the crime
Asks about the cause and the precipitation of the victimisation	Asks about motivation of the offender
Seeks victim restitution and compensation	Seeks offender punishment and rehabilitation

the 1980s the victimological research led to a range of different theoretical and policy perspectives as researchers grappled with questions on the impact and consequences of criminal victimization (for example, Davis and Friedman 1985; Maguire 1985; Resick 1987), and victims' and others' reactions to crime (for example, Emerson Smith and Maness 1976; Dubow, McCabe and Kaplan 1979; Janoff-Bulman 1985a, 1985b; Lurigio 1987). A more critical analysis of the media began to emanate from the research on fear of crime (for example, Skogan 1986; Young 1994; NCAVAC 1998). Questions about the role of the media in distorting the realities of crime and evoking a moral panic came to the fore as personal safety became a marketable commodity (for example, Harding 1994).

Better victimological data through, for instance, national crime victimisation surveys became more readily available (victimization surveys, for instance, were carried out in the United States, Australia, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Japan and the United Kingdom). Statistical analysis showed that certain groups had a greater risk of victimisation; that is, some victims are more prone to victimization (for example, Sparks 1981). During the 1970s, feminists and others had drawn attention to the plight of women and children as victims of crime. Increasingly, the focus broadened, as did the depth and breadth of information on the position and role of victims in criminal justice systems (for example, SAPOL 1987a, 1987b; Kaiser, Kury and Albrecht 1991; Erez 1990, 1991, 1994). Victims themselves began to gather in self-help groups, often forged after some horrific crime. Several of these groups (for example, the Victim Support Service in South Australia) have evolved from their volunteer-victim base into organisations that employ professionals largely from the social-work field.

A multitude of policy issues, legal matters and practical problems began to emerge in the 1960s, but by the 1980s the push for change and for improvements were underpinned by an expanding body of research data and a wide range of theoretical perspectives. In 1981, for example, the Committee of Inquiry on Victims of Crime made more than sixty recommendations to improve the position and role of the victim within the South Australian criminal justice system (see also NSWTF 1987; OCS 1988; ACTCLR 1993).

The role of the state and public officials was also scrutinised as victims' needs and expectations were more clearly articulated.<sup>2</sup> Shapland, Willmore and Duff (1985) and Gardner (1990), for instance, explored the circumstances of victims in the criminal justice system. Karmen (1984; see also 1990, 1996) also focused on issues such as the victim's treatment in the criminal justice system, restitution and compensation. These researchers and others provided a valuable insight into the plight of victims who have

<sup>2</sup> Knudten (1992) explains that criminal victimology also 'examines victimisation in relationship to law, and legal systems, law enforcement, legal functionaries, prosecution'.

contact with the criminal justice system. The *revictimisation* of victims of crime by public officials and state institutions (sometimes referred to, perhaps inappropriately, as *secondary victimisation*, or the *second injury*) arose as a particular concern.

In 1985, the introduction of the *Declaration on Victims' Rights* in South Australia was seen as deserved recognition that victims were treated poorly in a criminal justice system that depends on their cooperation. In the same year, the United Nations' endorsement of the *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power* was seen, and still is, as a triumph for victims and their advocates. Since then, other Australian states and territories have promulgated charters or declarations on victims' rights. Initially these were administrative directions. Australia's constitution gives the states and self-governing territories the primary responsibility for crime control and victim assistance. The Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia have now enshrined their charters or declarations in law. In 1996 the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General agreed to a national charter comprising ten principles of justice for victims of crime. Table 8.2 (pages 200–203) compares the Australian charters or declarations with the United Nations' declaration.

Throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, governments of all persuasions responded with legislative reforms and improvements in services for victims. Some researchers then turned their attention to evaluating the laws and the services. Surveys were conducted on the operation of the criminal injuries compensation scheme (OCS 1989; JSU 2000a), victims' experiences with the criminal justice process (Gardner 1990; VCCV 1994; Cook, David and Grant 1999) and the use of victim impact statements (Erez, Morgan and Roeger 1994; Mansell and Indermaur 1997). Governments also ordered reviews such as the Review of the Criminal Offence Victim Act in Queensland (Department of Justice 1998; see also Currie and Kift 1999); the Review on Victims of Crime in South Australia (JSU 2000a; see also JSU 1999, 2000b); the parliamentary report on plea bargains, compensation, victim impact statements and support services in New South Wales (Rowena 2002); the Review on Victim Services on Victoria (2002) and the evaluation of the Crime Victims' Support Unit (Wilkie, Ferrante and Susilo 1992), as well as reviews on the operation of the *Victims of Crime Act 2001* (SA) (for example, Social Systems Evaluation 1997).

Questions about the role of the victim in the administration of criminal justice, as well as rising concern about crime leading in some cases to increasing fear of crime (Mukherjee and Carcach 1998), fuelled a search for alternative ways of preventing and resolving crime (Griffin 2000).

On the one hand, several commentators (Elias 1986, 1996; Grabosky 1987; Harding 1994; Fattah 1997) have expressed their concern about some

of the recent programs, procedures and legislation designed to advance the cause of victims of crime. Elias (1986:231) who wrote extensively about the politicisation of victimisation, wrote,

Research suggests that victims may function to bolster state legitimacy, to gain political mileage, and to enhance social control. By championing the victim's cause, government may deflect criticism about ineffective law enforcement, and portray itself as the friend of victims, instead of as possibly their greatest threat. ... And victims may help promote social control ... as a rationale for enhancing state power.

Commenting on victimology and victim-support organisations in Australia, Harding (1994) has gone so far as to claim that some of these victim-oriented organisations have been hijacked by law-and-order lobbies (Harding 1994; see also comments in Anderson 1995). Elias (1994) observed that a punitive element was inherent in some victim advocacy. Similarly, Fattah (1992) points out that paralleling the growth of the 'victims' movement' have been calls for the reintroduction of the death penalty, mandatory sentences, abolition of the right to silence and a tougher approach to juvenile crime.

On the other hand, victim-offender mediation and like programs began to capture the attention of progressives, who foresaw the potential of victims in settling criminal conflicts without necessarily turning to traditional criminal justice responses, such as courts. The first real sign in South Australia of this trend was the introduction of family conferences in the youth justice system (Daly and Immarigeon 1998, Daly and Hayes 2001, Daly 2002, Curtis-Fawley and Daly forthcoming; cf. Wemmers and Cyr 2003; Edwards 2003). The focus of criminal victimology shifted again to restorative justice, and with it a move away from the notion that crime is only an offence against the state, to a view that crime is an offence against people (Van Ness 1986; Van Ness and Strong 1987; Marshall 1999; Sarre 2000; see also Chapter 6, this volume). Crime in this context is fundamentally about the harm done, especially to the victim, and repairing that harm, rather than about the injured state.

Paralleling this development, however, has been a resurgent interest in private responses to crime control and crime prevention. Private policing is covered in Chapter 10, and crime prevention in Chapter 3. Suffice to say many victims do not have the resources to seek private remedies, such as employing security guards or security devices. Moreover, there is an inherent risk that the focus on individual responsibility to reduce the risk of criminal victimisation can lead to victim-blaming, and even victim-bashing.

At an international level and a local level, criminal victimology as a social science continues to evolve as the instruments used become more

**Table 8.2: Rights of victims of crime**

<i>United Nations</i>	<i>National charter</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>Vic.<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>WA</i>
Victims should be treated with compassion and respect for their dignity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Victims should be informed of their rights in seeking redress	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Victims should be informed of their role and the scope, timing and progress of the proceedings	Yes	Yes	Yes (Not required to attend preliminary hearings)	Yes (inconvenience minimised)	Yes (Not required to attend preliminary hearings)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Victims should be allowed to present their views and have them considered at appropriate stages	Yes	Yes (Bail hearings, VIS) <sup>2</sup>	Yes (Bail hearings, charge bargaining, VIS and parole)	Yes (Bail hearings, VIS)	Yes (Bail hearings, VIS and parole)	Yes	Yes (Bail hearings, VIS)	Yes (Bail hearings, VIS)
Victims should be provided proper assistance throughout the legal process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes



United Nations	National charter	ACT	NSW	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA
Victims should receive restitution from the state whose officials or agents were responsible for the harm inflicted	Yes (CIC) <sup>3</sup>	Yes (CIC)	Yes (CIC)					
If compensation is not fully available from the offender or other sources, states should endeavour to provide financial support to:	Yes (Financial loss and non-financial – e.g. pain and suffering – limited by offence/victim category)	Yes (Financial loss and non-financial – e.g. pain and suffering)	Yes (Financial loss and non-financial – e.g. pain and suffering)	Yes (Financial loss and non-financial – e.g. pain and suffering)	Yes (Financial loss and non-financial – e.g. pain and suffering)	Yes (Financial loss and non-financial – e.g. pain and suffering)	Yes (Financial loss and non-financial – e.g. distress in homicide cases and pain and suffering by offence)	Yes (Financial loss and non-financial – e.g. pain and suffering)
a) victims who sustained significant bodily injury or impairment of physical / mental health								
b) family of persons who have died or become physically/mentally incapacitated								
Victims should receive necessary material, medical, psychological and social assistance	Yes (Govt victim service scheme)	Yes (Govt and funded private counselling)	Yes (Govt and grants to non-govt victim services)	Yes (Govt and grants to non-govt victim services)	Yes (Govt and grant to non-govt victim support service)	Yes (Govt and grant to non-govt victim support services)	Yes (Govt referral and assist. scheme)	Yes (Govt victim support service and contract services)

United Nations	National charter	ACT	NSW	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA
Victims should be informed of the availability of health and social services			Yes	Yes	Yes			Implied
Police, justice, health, social service and others should receive training to sensitise them to victims' needs and to ensure proper and prompt first aid	Yes			Yes	Not in rights, but compulsory police training	Yes		Yes
Attention should be given to victims with special needs arising from race, colour, sex, age, religion, ethnic or social origin, disability, and so on	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Implied		Implied

**Notes:**

- 1 In 1988 a Declaration of Rights – Victims of Crime was circulated for discussion. Several organisations, including the Victoria Police and the now-defunct VOCAL, adopted the declaration. A new declaration is being discussed, which the government intends to promulgate, although it has not been decided whether to do so in law or as an administrative direction.
- 2 Victim impact statement.
- 3 Criminal injuries compensation.

sophisticated and as comparative data become available. International, national and local crime victims' surveys, for example, have produced a considerable volume of information on victims' attitudes, experiences and fears, as well as their needs.

Like the scope of victimology, the research concerns have extended beyond conventional crimes to white-collar crimes, environmental crimes and electronic crimes (Elias 1986; Knudten 1992; O'Connell 2001). Moreover, these new concerns are beginning to emerge in policy and practice. The International Criminal Court deals, for instance, with crimes against humanity, including genocide (Garkawe 2002).

### **The meaning of 'victim of crime'**

Clearly, criminal victimisation, despite being only one aspect of the scope or parameters of victimology, includes 'a huge variety of multifarious and heterogeneous behaviours' (Fattah 1991:11). Despite this, there is a propensity to define crime, and hence criminal victimisation, narrowly (Elias 1986). Within the realms of criminal victimisation considerable attention has been devoted to people; that is, it is person-centred (Reiss 1981). Organisational victims have, largely for expedience, been excluded. Whether organisations could be victims of crime was an issue taken up by the Australasian Society of Victimology. Several prominent Australians (Challinger 1990; Freiberg 1991; Duigan 1994) maintain that organisations could be victimized, while Freiberg (1988) considered the state as a victim of crime.

#### ***Direct and indirect victimisation***

According to Hyde (1983), everyone is a victim of crime, either directly or indirectly. A person who is the object of a crime can be described as the direct victim, but crime also harms people who have not been directly victimised. The co-victims of homicide victims are an obvious example (O'Connell and Nitschke 2000). Fattah and Sacco (1989) refer to people whose quality of life suffers due to, for instance, fear of crime as indirect victims.

#### ***Primary, secondary and tertiary victims***

A direct victim may also be described as a primary victim. Secondary victims include those who are psychologically or emotionally dependent on the primary victim (Department of Correctional Services 1986; O'Connell 1992); and tertiary victims extend to the community at large. Taxation and Medicare frauds burden, although not directly, all people who pay tax and the Medicare levy (O'Connell 1992). Similarly, many citizens are burdened with the costs of the criminal justice system (Hyde 1983).

Sellin and Wolfgang (1964) also distinguish primary, secondary and tertiary victimisation, but add mutual victimisation and no victimisation. As above, primary victimisation equates with direct victimisation. However, secondary victimisation, say Sellin and Wolfgang, refers to commercial victimisation, but may extend to the community at large.

Tertiary victimisation certainly extends to the community at large. Mutual victimisation occurs whenever people mutually consent to perform or engage in acts or omissions that are illegal, whereas no victimisation embraces a range of offences commonly associated with young people; for example, truancy.

### ***The concept of victimhood***

Hogberg (1994) contends that the culture of victimhood pervades Western societies. In the media and in the courtroom the culture of victimhood, Hogberg explains, has been used to relieve the burden of personal responsibility by excusing and justifying human weaknesses, including offending, no matter how heinous the crime. Consistent with this, Karmen (1996:xxii) cites a news-magazine commentator who complains,

We are deep into the era of the abuse excuse. The doctrine of victimology – claiming victim status means you are not responsible for your actions – is beginning to warp the legal system ... The irony of this seems to escape victimologists. A movement that began with the slogan, ‘Don’t blame the victim’ now strives to blame murder victims for their own deaths.

According to Bayley (1991), the following are the conditions of victimhood:

- a person has suffered a loss or some significant decrease in well-being unfairly or undeservedly and in such a manner that they were helpless to prevent the loss;
- the loss has an identifiable cause; and
- the legal or moral context of the loss entitles the person who suffers the loss to social concern.

A person becomes a victim only when all three criteria apply. Bayley’s concept of victimhood is not consistent with mainstream victimology. Indeed, some people (especially emergency-service workers such as police) might take exception to Bailey’s concept. Karmen (1996) says victimology has been inappropriately singled out for criticism. The problem, he suggests, lies not in victimology itself, but in the pervasive ‘victim mentality’.

### ***Survivors of Crime***

In her review of the victimisation experience, Young (1991) identifies three primary injuries – financial injury, physical injury, and emotional trauma

– and acknowledges the second injury caused by the criminal justice process. She describes those who endure the victimisation experience as survivors of crime rather than victims. Survival, she argues, 'is often coupled with the need to confront the crime and to confront the loss' (Young 1991:36). NOVA in the United States also explain that 'survivors of homicide victims' are individuals who had special ties of kinship with murder victims.

Likewise, a Minneapolis Medical Research Foundation (1980) report discusses victims as survivors. The report suggests that the notion of surviving is both positive and conducive to a public-health approach to victim services. The term victim, on the other hand, highlights the negative consequences of criminal victimisation.

Machan (1991) offers another 'positive' alternative to victim. The author suggests that commonsense denotes that some people do wrong to others and are responsible for their wrongdoing, and those wronged may correctly be regarded as victims. Victims, whether they resist or submit to their victimisation may also be construed as 'champions'.

### ***The United Nations definition***

Formulating a definition of victim of crime proved a challenge for the United Nations as well. In 1985, after much debate, the organisation (see UN 1985; Lamborn 1987) resolved that a victim of crime means:

persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss, or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws.

This definition has been described as 'perhaps [the] most aptly applied' (Raphael 2001:121).

### **Attributing the label 'victim of crime'**

The discussion thus far has not been exhaustive but just sufficient to demonstrate the various meanings of victim of crime. In addition to the definitional issues, the attribution of the label 'victim' is important. As Viano (1989) explains, victims need not only recognise they have suffered a crime, but also must decide to report it. Moreover, the person in whom the victim confides must also acknowledge the victimisation before the label 'victim' is attributed.

Consider a young child who is assaulted by a parent. First, the child has to identify the parent's act as wrong, and then decide to report it to a third person. Thereafter the third person has to define the act as criminal victimisation and attach the label 'victim' to the child. Whether or not the label

is attached has a number of implications; for example, for the accuracy of official statistics.

## **The development of victimological theories**

The origins of victimological theories, insofar as they apply to the study of victims of crime, can be traced to the work of Mendelsohn and von Hentig in the 1940s. Both sought to understand better the relationship between the victim and the offender, and in so doing constructed typologies. While Mendelsohn concentrated on victim culpability, von Hentig was concerned with victim proneness.

Mendelsohn's typology differentiates the totally innocent victim from the criminal who becomes the victim. He believed that many victims had an 'unconscious aptitude for being victimised'. Unlike the innocent victim (a person simply in the wrong place at the wrong time), Mendelsohn claimed the other five types of victims in his typology were culpable to varying degrees because they somehow contributed to their victimisation.

Von Hentig's (1948) study included victims of homicide. He argued that a real mutuality frequently could be observed between the criminal and the victim. Often, he asserted, 'the victim shapes and moulds his criminal'. He identified characteristics that made some victims more prone, or vulnerable, to victimisation. He distinguished 'born victims from society-made victims' (Schafer 1968:19).

Mendelsohn and von Hentig's studies provided the basis for the concept of victim-precipitation, which has endured despite negative connotations that precipitation is 'victim-blaming'. These early typologies were crude, and features of them were speculative rather than based on empirical data. They also, argues Walklate (2001), reflect a masculine gender bias. Mendelsohn's means of distinguishing victims, she says, conveys 'notions of what might be considered reasonable or rational behaviour in particular circumstances', which is a gendered one.<sup>3</sup> Von Hentig's categories are based on a series of comparisons with a so-called 'normal person' who, given the era in which he wrote, is '(implicitly) the white, heterosexual male' (Walklate 2001:28).

Nevertheless their early work provided the basis for Wolfgang's research in the 1950s on homicide victims. Wolfgang (1957; see also Wolfgang 1970) theorised that 'many victim-precipitated homicides were, in fact,

<sup>3</sup> Gender in this context refers to men and women. Because men, however, have had a 'stronger position than women in societies around the world, the values and norms in society have been shaped accordingly' (Kvinna till Kvinna 2001:6; see also Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez 2002). Consequently, von Hentig's typology has a male bias and does not adequately account for the social and power structures that, for instance, diminish women's position in societies.

caused by the unconscious desire of the victims to commit suicide'. Like Mendelsohn, Wolfgang's connotation of victim-precipitation has a legalistic undertone. Wolfgang's study did not attract the fury of feminists and victim-advocates as did Amir's (1967, 1971) study on rape victims, which is mentioned below.

Schafer further developed the concept of victim-precipitation in his book *The Victim and His Criminal* (1968). Noting the 'many attempts at understanding the criminal-victim relationship' (Schafer 1968:5), he posited that some victims are functionally responsible for their victimisation because they contribute – knowingly or unknowingly – to their own victimisation. He contended, for instance, that the victim may have helped the criminal by becoming easy prey. He also discussed ways that victims might share responsibility with their offenders.

Fattah's early studies in victimology led him to theorise on the extent to which victims participated in their victimisation. Like Mendelsohn and von Hentig, Fattah devised a typology. Some victims, he concluded are non-participating, whereas others are false victims (that is, they are not a victim, or they are a victim of their own actions). Between these two categories, Fattah (1967) identified:

- the latent or predisposed victim (for example, people who due to certain predisposition are more likely to be victimised);
- the provocative victim (for example, a person creates a situation that results in his or her victimisation); and
- the participating victim (for example, a person makes it easier for the criminal and might even help the criminal).

While these early victimological writers and others were not without their critics, Amir's (1971) study on rape attracted 'strong reaction', particularly from feminist commentators (Walklate 2001). Amir, although his definition of precipitation is vague, concluded that some rape victims precipitate their victimisation. As Walklate (2001:29) asserts, 'the associated connotations of attributing blame are very difficult to shed'. Indeed, over the years, victim-precipitation has been attacked by many, not just feminists, as a negative concept that is victim-blaming (see, for example, Walklate 1989).

The idea that some victims might contribute to their victimisation is obviously contentious, but it has influenced thinking on crime and crime policy (Fattah 1991). For example, Karmen (1990) applied the concept to burglary as part basis for his argument that there should be a move towards 'victimisation prevention'. Many criminal injuries compensation laws require the adjudicating body to consider the contribution of the victim to their injury.

More recent victimological theories have drawn on situational and individual explanations. Drawing on sociological studies on deviance, Luckenbill (1977) suggested that interpersonal crime can be explained as a contest comprising six stages: insult, clarification, retaliation, counter-retaliation,

presence of a weapon, and presence of onlookers. Criminal victimisation is, therefore, a situated transaction that can escalate from an insult into a violent interaction.

Hindelang, Gottfredson and Garofalo (1978), in their 'lifestyle-exposure' theory, acknowledged that some situations are more dangerous than others, and individuals whose activities or lifestyles put them in these situations are more likely to be criminally victimised. The more time individuals spend in these situations the greater the risks of victimisation (Felson 1998). In sum, therefore, the lifestyle theories suggest that people's behaviours, including their habits, increase the risk of victimisation by (among other things) increasing their exposure to criminal offenders.

Cohen and Felson's (1979) routine activities theory is another that takes into account contextual and individual variables. For instances, in a modern metropolis there are more targets for crime and fewer guardians to prevent it due to lifestyle changes. In many cities people commute to and from work, leaving their homes unguarded and consequently vulnerable to criminals. Proponents of routine activities theory also highlight the proximity of criminals to their targets, the time a target is exposed to criminals, and the target's attractiveness.

As with other theories, routine activity is not without its critics. It has been argued that the theory does not explain why some people are not victims, and it places much emphasis on the victim rather than the criminal. Nevertheless, Hope (1995) posits that routine activity may provide a framework for the analysis of the 'crime flux' (Barr and Pease 1992), which is the outcome of the 'changing components of the distribution of crime rates within a given community, even though overall incidence rates often remained largely unchanged' (Barr and Pease 1992:339). For example, asks Hope,

do changes in crime flux reflect changes in offenders' decisions to increase their activity by taking on new victims [the offender's perspective], or ... do they reflect actions on the part of, or on behalf of, individual victims which might change their vulnerability, removing them from, or exposing them to risk (the victim's perspective), or do they reflect changes in the social or community structure which affect the volume of potentially criminogenic social interactions taking place in circumstances of low control (the guardianship perspective)?

Miethe and Meier (1993) have also focused on individual factors that tend to be associated with risk or proneness. Proximity, exposure to crime and target attractiveness are some of these factors, as well as capable guardianship. According to Miethe and Meier (1994), proximity and exposure are structural factors that influence the level of crime risk, and target attractiveness and capable guardianship are factors that influence which specific 'targets' are likely to be chosen by potential offenders.

Sparks (1981) and later Bracey (1990) further developed the concept of victim-proneness. They identified factors that tend to make people more prone to criminal victimisation. These include:

- precipitation (where the victim might have precipitate, even actively encouraged, his or her victimisation);
- facilitation (where the victim does not necessarily actively encourage his or her victimisation, but the victim deliberately, recklessly or negligently places him or her self at risk);
- vulnerability (where the victim's risk of victimisation is increased because of his or her attributes, behaviour or social standing);
- opportunity (which is often associated with the victim's lifestyle);
- attractiveness (which relates to the criminal's perception, for instance, of the anticipated reward or benefit to be gained from attacking the target); and
- impunity (the victim might make it easy for the criminal to get away with the crime; for instance, the victim might decide not to report the crime to the police).

Gottfredson (1981) has contrast these lifestyle theories with the earlier typologies of von Hentig and Mendelsohn. He says lifestyle theorists search for 'a single theory capable of generating multiple causes'. On the other hand, the typological approach 'sees distinct causal mechanisms operating for different victimisation events' (Gottfredson 1981:724). He concludes, however, that there is no logical reason to abandon either. Instead, there is merit in searching for 'what victims may have in common – and how they differ from those who are not victimised' (Gottfredson 1981:725).

Lifestyle theories have strengthened arguments that there is a nexus between crime prevention and victimisation prevention (see also Cohn, Kidder and Harvey 1978; Griffin 2000). They have also fed into the research on criminal victimisation, especially crime and safety surveys (see, for example, comments by Sparks (1981)).

Data from early victimisation surveys showed that while most people did not report being the victim of a crime, a minority reported that they had been the victims of one crime in the survey period. More detailed analysis, however, showed that a small group reported they had been victims of several crimes, which indicated a pattern of 'multiple victimisation'. Some researchers began to investigate this phenomenon. Sparks (1981), for example, observed that multiple victims account for a disproportionate amount of all incidents identified in most victimisation surveys. More recently, Hope (2003) contended that there was a small proportion of victims trapped in a state of victimhood. Indeed, research consistently shows that crime (thus criminal victimisation) is concentrated among a relatively few offenders, victims and places.

Whereas multiple victimisation focused attention on the minority of victims who suffer a cumulative life experience of criminal victimisation, which might be of like offences or a range of different offences, repeat victimisation occurs 'when the same person or place suffers from more than one criminal incident over a specified period of time' (National Board for Crime Prevention 1994). Repeat victimisation is likely because:

- prior victims are more attractive targets in the first place and that attractiveness might be so perceived by other offender;
- victimisation might itself cause victims to make changes that add to their proneness; and
- the chance of revictimisation might reflect the effects of the psychological harm endured (for example, self-destructive behaviours such as drug misuse). [Davis, Taylor and Titus 1997]

Individuals who experience criminal victimisation do not necessarily develop a greater feeling of vulnerability. However, some early research indicated that individuals do develop an increased awareness of crime risk.

Studies on multiple victimisation and repeat victimisation show that past victimisation is a strong predictor of future victimisation (cf. Ruback and Thompson 2001; Tjaden and Thoennes 1998). Both phenomena draw attention to the most vulnerable people, or victims, who ought to be 'targets' for concentrated preventive activities (Farrell and Pease 1993) – yet again highlighting the nexus between victimisation prevention and crime prevention.

In Britain (Anderson, Chenery and Pease 1995; Bridgeman 1997) and Australia (Fisher, Chorley and Riches 1999; Holder 2000), action on repeat victimisation has fostered opportunities to meld crime control and crime prevention with victim assistance. As Reeves (2001:1) aptly said, 'To prevent crimes you have to support victims, and frankly you're not supporting victims unless you are doing something to help them not to become victims again'.

Victimologists have also examined many of the preventive techniques claimed to reduce victimisation. Evidence suggests that some techniques intended to reduce crime risk do not necessarily reduce crime (Lindsay and McGillis 1986; Rosenbaum, Lewis and Grant 1986). Moreover, there is some evidence that encouraging victims to take security precautions might heighten fear of crime (Rosenbaum, Lewis and Grant 1986; Skogan 1990).

Skogan and Maxfield (1980) have reported on fear and reactions to crime in several cities in the United States. They distinguish risk-avoidance activities and risk-management tactics. Risk avoidance limits a person's exposure to 'potential' victimisers, or offenders, and includes staying at home. Risk management reduces a person's chance of being victimised when he or she is exposed to potential victimisers, or offenders; for example, walking with other people rather than alone (see also Bard and Sangrey 1979, 1986; Dubow, McCabe and Kaplan 1979; Maguire 1980; Lurigio 1987).

Fattah (1991) has devised a 'tentative' schema in an endeavour to pull together the differing victimological theories. In so doing, he places some forty-odd propositions about criminal victimisation under ten headings:

- available opportunities;
- risk factors;
- the presence of motivated offenders;
- exposure;
- associations;
- dangerous time and dangerous places;
- dangerous behaviours;
- high-risk activities;
- defensive and avoidance behaviours; and
- structural or cultural proneness.

Despite Fattah's endeavour, Walklate (2001:30) contends that all the headings, or elements, 'with one exception, direct attention to the victim's behaviour and they all presume some norm of appropriate rational behaviour which the victim fails to adhere to in some respect'. To this extent, she posits, the dominant ideas in victimology mirror positivist criminology in their emphasis on measurement, determinism and pathology. She adds that, despite the input of feminists that has (among other things) brought a focus on survivors rather than victims, victimological work 'implicitly leaves us with the view that victims are likely not to be male', while criminology leaves us with the view that criminals are more likely to be male. Victimology, then, concludes Walklate (2001), like criminology, is plagued by a gender bias, and the genderising of crime has broader political implications for the debate on crime and its control, and the nature and extent of the services for the victims of crime.

### **The process of victimisation**

Block (1981) explores the victim-offender interaction, having regard for the microenvironment and macroenvironment. The microenvironment includes the social relationships, physical structures, and availability of weapons. Moreover, it is the immediate network of events and structures surrounding the crime or contemporaneous with it. The macroenvironment includes the history of the social relationships, ideas of violence and danger, social class and segregation. It is the physical, social and economic structure of the community. Significantly, both the victim and offender retain their individuality, and their behaviour can never be fully predicted.

### **The victim's response during a crime**

Given that for most people their victimisation is unexpected, their responses tend to be unpremeditated and unplanned. No wonder, says Fattah (1981:

29), 'that the reaction of different victims to the victimisation experience is varied'. Moreover, victims' reactions 'are likely to vary depending on a host of individual and situational variables' (Fattah 1981:30). Researchers have monitored, recorded and analysed victims' reactions or responses to criminal victimisation. For example, a study on the impact of victim's responses to robbers' demands led Baril to assert that by cooperating the victim may prevent the robbery from escalating into a possible murder. Alternatively the victim's resistance could cause either an escalation or an abandonment of the robbery. The victim's nervousness may unintentionally irritate or increase the robber's stress so an escalation occurs.

Greenberg and Ruback (1992) conducted a series of experiments involving a simulated theft of money from a victim-participant, who was unaware of the experiment. The victims' reactions formed the basis of the researchers subsequent conclusions about 'victim decision-making processes'. The researchers proposed a 'theoretical model' composed of three stages (Greenberg and Ruback 1992:182-3):

- victims label or recognise the 'incident' or 'behaviour' as a crime;
- victims determine its seriousness; and
- victims decide what action to take.

The researchers assert that it is important to note that a range of factors – including the victim's reaction, the victim's perception or reality of the resultant harm, and the reaction of support mechanisms – influence each stage of the model. The researchers also concede that their model may not apply to all victims. With these findings and Fattah's observations in mind, the following material should be treated as a 'general' explanation, rather than a 'definitive' explanation, of the process of victims' responses to criminal victimisation.

It seems that most people, probably instinctively, go through a similar process (of course, the following is by design very general). First, victims decide that they are likely to be subjected to an unpleasant, even frightening experience. The intensity of the impact of the danger is said to have three main features: unexpectedness, unpredictability and uncontrollability. However, the ability to recognise signs and cues in a situation that indicates personal risk seems to vary from victim to victim.

During a crime, the victim's reactions can evolve from fright to anxiety, and ultimately to despair or helplessness. Initially the victim perceives the danger and tries to interpret it. The victim might consciously and subconsciously cast around for guidance. A victim might quickly compare the circumstances and consider possible outcomes with reference to his or her definition of a crime. Deciding whether an encounter or confrontation is a crime or not appears to influence which response a victim adopts (Whitrod 1991; Fattah 1991). His or her response could be based on an appraisal of the amount of harm likely to be suffered. A response can be unpredictable but is likely to

be logical in terms of the situation as understood by the victim. Immediate responses are likely to be highly emotive, and with the benefit of hindsight may later appear to have been irrational and ineffective (Raphael 2001).

The initial fear might intensify and the victim becomes anxious. Anxiety is prompted by fear of the unknown. The victim might become disoriented. Despair, which is an intensified form of anxiety, is brought on by an awareness of an imminent but unknown danger. For many victims it is a paralysing, isolating emotion that renders impossible any constructive action. The victim perceives the threat to be so great and unavoidable that there is no action open to him or her to bring relief. As Everstine and Everstine (1989:163) so aptly said, '[Victims of sexual assault] may be psychologically bombarded by the acute reality of personal frailty, the seeming randomness of life events and the inevitability of death'. Consequently, the victim may withdraw from the situation to the maximum extent possible.

Some victims may react favourably towards their victimiser (or victimisers). The Stockholm Syndrome and the Hijack Syndrome, which propound a positive reaction by a victim to victimisation, have implications for victimological studies. Both phenomena occur when a victim denies the danger he or she is in and forms a positive bond with the captors or hijackers. Ochberg (1978) claims four factors promote the Stockholm Syndrome: the intensity of the experience, its duration, the dependence of the victim on the captor for survival, and the distance of the victim psychologically from authority. Hijack Syndrome likewise is promoted by the nature of the experience and its duration, as well as either a victim's gratitude towards the hijackers for not resorting to violence against him or her, a victim's sense of adventure and personal publicity, or a victim's identification with the hijacker and/or the hijacker's cause (*Time* 1976; Fattah 1991).

Victims respond in various ways ranging from compliance to resistance (see Figure 8.1). A victim could comply, attempt to reason, attempt to escape, resist with force or deception, or seek help. Obviously a victim's decision is made under considerable stress and may not be rational.

**Figure 8.1** Continuum of a victim's range of reactions



In the context of a robbery, for example, victim resistance has been defined as resistance that physically threatens the robber; resistance that poses no physical threat but results in a robbery attempt failing; and no resistance (Block 1977). An analysis (Block 1989) of data on robbery and rape from the United States National Crime Survey indicated that just over half the robbery victims (55.5 per cent) resist, and most rape victims (83.2 per cent)

resist. Distinguishing non-forcible resistance (such as reasoning, verbally threatening, or running away) from forcible resistance (such as physical attack), the same analysis also indicated that:

- robbery victims are slightly more likely to use non-forcible resistance than forcible resistance; and
- just over half of rape victims are likely to use non-forcible resistance, but almost a third are likely to use forcible resistance.

Whitrod (1991; see also MacDonald 1975) cited a US study showing that only about 4 per cent of robbery victims attempted to reason with the robber, about 3 per cent screamed for help, and nearly 7 per cent tried to escape.

Also influencing the victim's response are factors such as age, gender and race of the victim (Block 1989), the presence of a weapon (Block 1977, 1981), the relationship between the victim and offender (Singer 1981; Fattah 1991), plus other situational variables including time and location of the confrontation (Block 1989), the element of surprise (Whitrod 1991), the number of victims and victimisers (Block 1977; Fattah 1991), the presence of drugs, and the presence of others (Fattah 1991).

Research tends to show that victim resistance is the variable most positively associated with both the completion and non-completion of the offence. Further, there is some evidence of a positive correlation between resistance and the seriousness of injury suffered by the victim (Block 1981; Fattah 1991).

In rape cases, resistance seems to influence the perpetrator's behaviour. Chappell and James (1986), for example, interviewed convicted rapists, whose answers showed:

- (1) Compliance (or passivity) on the part of the victims was overwhelmingly preferred, although a small minority desired active resistance to their attack;
- (2) If resistance was encountered the likelihood of it provoking harm to the victim was substantially greater if physical (including screaming) rather than verbal forms of dissuasion were used;
- (3) Of the particular forms of physical resistance offered by victims, attacks directed at the offender's groins were believed most likely to be effective;
- (4) Providing convincing (to the offender) evidence of a victim's altered state of health (pregnancy, sickness or other infirmity) or eliciting the offender's sympathy in some way might terminate the attack or minimise injury. [Chappell and James 1986:77]

Kleck and Sayles (1990) claim that victim resistance can make the completion of rape more difficult. They say that it might, from a rapist's perspective increase the effort and/or the risk of discovery, or raise the probability that the rapist might suffer harm, and hence make the act more costly.

The research findings or evidence regarding resistance and injury should be interpreted and applied with caution. Instructing victims not to resist is

problematic. Symonds (1975), for instance, postulates that victims of crime have to deal not only with their victimisation and its impact on them, but also with societal reactions or responses. He identifies three – what may be called blaming – societal reactions:

- assumptions that the victim provoked or stimulated an attack;
- isolating a victim; and
- indifference to the plight of victims.

Bard and Sangrey (1986) maintain a similar stance. They remind us that people act to relieve their sense of failure by finding someone to blame. Social problems that resist solution raise the need for a culprit, a scapegoat, someone on whom to hand the group's sins. The most logical scapegoat is the one who makes us feel guilty — the victim. [Bard and Sangrey 1986:91]

Crime is a social problem that, despite a range of preventive activities, still pervades all societies. Bard and Sangrey contend that the more people try to prevent crime and fail, the more likely it is that those people will need someone to blame.

### **Victims' reactions in the aftermath of crime**

Victimological research indicates that, despite all victims and all crimes being different, there are similarities in victims' reactions. Furthermore, in many instances, victims' reactions tend to follow a predictable sequence. Table 8.3 (page 217) lists some common reactions in the aftermath of crime.

In addition to the physical, cognitive and emotional reactions, the victimisation experience is likely to generate behavioural reactions. Common behavioural reactions to victimisation include: change in activity, emotional outbursts, suspiciousness, change in usual communications, loss or increase of appetite, alcohol and/or other drug consumption, inability to rest, antisocial acts, non-specific bodily complaints, change in sexual functioning, and erratic movements (Bard and Sangrey 1979, 1986; Lurigio 1987; Skogan, Lurigio and Davis 1990; Newburn 1993; Cook, David and Grant 1999).

It is important to note that some victims experience many of these reactions while other victims may only experience a few. Some victims may experience them strongly, others only slightly. Reactions may be evident soon after the interaction, or a few hours, even a few days, later. Victims are different; interactions resulting in victimisation vary, and victims (despite common patterns in coping) react differently.

For some victims the victimisation experience can cause 'a breakdown in [their] conceptual system. People's basic assumptions ... about themselves and their world are seriously challenged and/or shattered by the experience of victimisation' (Janoff-Bulman 1985). According to Hagemann (1988: 7), coping is an 'applied strategy' that is largely 'determined by cognitive

**Table 8.3: Some of the reactions that victims experience**

<i>Physical</i>	<i>Thinking/cognitive</i>	<i>Emotional</i>
nausea	slowed thinking	anxiety
tremors	disorientation	grief
chills	distressing dreams	anger
dizziness	poor decisions	numbness
rapid breathing	poor concentration	depression
body/muscle aches	difficult problem-solving	irritability
upset stomach	confusion	guilt
profuse sweating	memory problems	sadness
diarrhoea	poor attention spans	fear
rapid/irregular heartbeat	reliving the event	feeling lost/ overwhelmed
headaches	intrusive images	feeling isolated
sleep disturbances	disturbed thinking	desire to withdraw/hide
shock symptoms	blaming someone	agitation

Source: Mitchell 1997.

appraisal’. Moreover, the ‘central function is the reduction of tension and the restoration of equilibrium’. While many victims are able to cope and become ‘non-victims’, or survivors, other victims (especially those who have experienced long-term victimisation) may not cope in a positive manner and, instead, resort to self-destruction.

The impact of victimisation may not always be entirely negative. LeJeune and Alex (1973, cited in Fattah 1991:34) noted, for example, that some mugging victims react positively to the excitement and publicity associated with their victimisation. They reported that,

at least for some, the intrusion of the mugger into their lives is not completely negative. The telling of the story of one’s mugging provides some victims with an exciting contrast to their everyday routine. To the extent that victims can identify with reported victimisation in the media, their mugging is perceived as equally newsworthy. The victim may indeed attain a kind of ‘star’ quality, for within his social circles he has been ‘where the action is’.

Clearly, crime is disruptive to those directly victimised and those indirectly victimised. The capacity of victims to deal with their victimisation varies; it also fluctuates over time. A wide range of phenomena – individual and environmental – influence reactions to criminal victimisation.

### Coping with criminal victimisation

Some proponents of crisis theory claim that victims, as with other people dealing with crisis, follow a similar pattern (see Table 8.4 for an example of that pattern). Bard and Sangrey's (1979, 1986) often cited explanation of victims' 'crisis reaction' consists of three stages: impact disorganisation, recoil, and reorganisation. During the impact stage the victim 'falls apart inside'. The victim experiences emotional, psychological and physiological disturbances. The victim might seek help and reassurance from other people, whose responses can be negative or positive. During the recoil stage the victim begins to adapt to his or her victimization and deal with the resultant emotions. The victim might also engage in some denial, but Bard and Sangrey claim that this is 'an essential part of healing'. Similarly, the wish for revenge is natural. Once again, other people can provide stability and reassurance, but they can also compound the victim's negative feelings. During the reorganisation stage the victim assimilates his or her experience and reactions to it, and emotional energy is then able to be invested in other experiences. The victim may never forget the crime, but its effects lessen their hold and the victim is able to move on – sometimes a stronger person for the experience.

**Table 8.4 Crisis theory**

<i>Pre-crisis phase</i>	Victim is in a normal state of equilibrium.
<i>Impact phase</i>	Stressful event or incident occurs.
<i>Crisis phase</i>	Victim becomes aware of the stressful event or incident <i>and</i> perceives it as a threat. The victim becomes confused and disorganised. The victim attempts to reorganise him/herself; this may involve 'trial and error' or experimentation.
<i>Resolution phase</i>	Victim regains control over their emotions, and begins to resolve their circumstance or reconcile their situation.
<i>Post-crisis phase</i>	Victim emerges from the crisis having reorganised him/herself and resumes normal activities. (It is important to note that some victims remain psychologically / emotionally injured.)

Various stage or phase models have been proposed. A two-phase – acute and reorganisation – reaction to rape, for example, has been devised by Burgess and Holstrom (1977); and a four-phase reaction – initial impact, recoil, adjustment and adaption, and resolution/outcome – was developed by Caplan (1964). On a cautionary note, these models are theoretical and provide a guide to victims' crisis reactions; they are not absolute or definitive.

Indeed, while crisis theory models are useful, they have their critics. Resick and Nishith (1997), for example, in the context of sexual assault, compare and contrast crisis theory, learning theory and cognitive theories. The authors conclude that both crisis theory and learning theory offer inadequate explanations of victims' reactions to rape. Cognitive theories, however, accommodate the wide range of affective reactions to traumatic events.

Advocates for the US-based Mothers Against Drink Drivers (MADD) have also highlighted the risks associated with the stage/phase models. They point out that the way in which a victim reacts is a critical determinant of the responses he or she evokes from service providers. If a victim does not 'fit' into the stage/phase, he or she may not receive appropriate assistance (National Victim Assistance Academy 1998). Wortman, Battle and Lemkau (1997) confirm some of these concerns in their commentary on the trauma resulting from the death of a spouse or child.

In psychological terms the two main types of coping strategies are: intrapsychic/cognitive responses; and direct action or behavioural responses. Intrapsychic responses include redefining the event and self-blame, and direct action responses include reporting the offence, taking legal action, increasing security, lobbying for organisational change, moving location, taking self-defence classes, and seeking social support. Dealing with a crisis situation culminates in rebuilding and recovery. Ultimately the victim's reaction involves making sense of the event; re-establishing a sense of control; restoring a feeling of trust and self-worth; re-establishing meaning, purpose and justice; and re-establishing balance.

A traumatic encounter with death can lead to shock and arousal during the incident, as well as fear, helplessness, terror and often anger. In some instances the incident can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. Losses include personal and property loss, as well as a loss of a sense of personal invulnerability. Helplessness and powerlessness are also common experiences.

## **The effects of crime on its victims**

The impact of personal-violence crime that immediately comes to mind is the physical injury. The impact of property crime that immediately comes to mind is the financial loss. Yet often the full impact of a crime is not so evident. Research on the impact or effects of crime has produced varying results, in part because of the different methodologies used. British researchers

(Maguire and Corbett 1987) concluded that between 30 and 40 per cent of victims of serious assault, burglary, robbery, property damage and unlawful threats were 'badly affected', whereas only a small percentage of victims of illegal use or theft of a motor vehicle and personal theft suffered any serious effects. Waller (1986) categorised the effects of crime under five headings: physical injury, emotional trauma, economic loss, dysfunction in support group, and inconvenience (Table 8.5). Figley and Sprenkle (1979, cited in Whitrod 1986; see also Kilpatrick, Veronen and Resick 1979) differentiated between short-term and long-term consequences or effects of crime. Short-term consequences for victims of personal violence included physical injury, loss of valued property and interaction with the criminal justice system. Long-term consequences included continuing fear, sense of loss, unexplained flashbacks, and depression. Additionally, some victims suffered difficulties in marriages and child-rearing problems, and some victims' families also had difficulties coping. (See, for example, Markesteyn (1992) for a comprehensive review of the psychological harm resulting from non-sexual crimes.)

Shapland, Willmore and Duff (1985) reported similar effects among victims who participated in their British survey. Likewise, Gardner (1990) reported comparable effects on victims in South Australia. Whitrod (1991) has noted the persistence of effects evident in the results of Gardner's study. These results show that victims across a range of property and personal-violence offences reported the following types of effects: injury (31 per cent), emotional effects (91 per cent), family difficulty (48 per cent), employment

**Table 8.5 The effect(s) of crime from a victim's perspective**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Harm suffered by example</i>
Physical	Bruises, wounds or physical disabilities
Emotional	Fear, sleeplessness, anger, anxiety, suspicion, a desire to move
Economic	Property loss, property damage, loss of income, medical expenses
Dysfunction in support group	Residual effects on normal family contacts, effects on spouse/children/greater family, associated marital impact, fear, suspicion, financial loss
Inconvenience	Awaiting restoration, repair or replacement of property, meeting the requirements of the criminal justice system, seeking compensation

difficulty (19 per cent), major life-change (39 per cent), and financial cost (90 per cent). Consequently it would be wrong to presume that only victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or child abuse and other acts of violence suffer long-term effects (Newburn 1993). Research on victims of burglary shows that these victims endure feelings of nervousness and fear, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, and feelings of unease or insecurity. Some of these victims stated they felt 'polluted' or 'violated'. Significantly, these consequences flowed over into other family members. In other words, secondary victims may also suffer long-term effects of criminal victimisation.

As can be seen, the immediate, short-term and long-term consequences of criminal victimisation are varied and, while many victims do not suffer permanent physical or psychological harm, the consequences of crime may be devastating for direct and indirect (secondary) victims. Indeed, Friedman et al. (1982) claimed they 'were stunned at the general impact of a crime on the victim's psychological state, and at the alteration to daily life which were often part of the victimisation experiences'. Bard and Sangrey (1986) conclude that all victims seem to suffer some disruption, but each victim responds in his or her own way.

### **Deciding what to do after a crime**

Consistently around the world, victim survey results show that a considerable number of victims do not report their victimisation. Several factors have been identified as to why victims do not report crime to the police. Some victims, for example, believed the police could not or would not help them. In contrast, some victim surveys show that some victims report crime because they feel a moral duty; other victims state that they had to report the matter to comply with insurance requirements.

Victims of crime have several options available to them. They could contact the police or some other authority such as a public official or other person of significance. They could deal with the matter privately, or they could re-evaluate the situation. They could do nothing (that is, avoidance).

A number of factors impact on a victim's decision-making process. A victim's beliefs about each option and the consequences associated with each may influence any decision. For example, a victim might not be able to identify the offender so he or she decides there is no point reporting the crime. Stored knowledge based on life experience may also influence any decision. Table 8.6 (page 222) shows the factors that might impact on each option.

### **The needs of victims**

Maguire (1985; see also Newburn 1993) reviewed literature and research findings on victims' needs. Despite his reservations about the attempts to

**Table 8.6: Factors that may influence a victim's decision after a crime**

<i>Option</i>	<i>Issues that may influence a victim's decision-making</i>
Report to the police (or some other authority)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victim's sense of justice; perceived moral obligation</li> <li>Victim's desire to see the 'victimiser' apprehended</li> <li>Victim's desire for property to be recovered</li> <li>Victim's desire to re-establish control</li> <li>Victim's desire for protection</li> <li>Victim's belief about the seriousness of the crime</li> <li>Victim's belief that it will lead to more intense policing</li> <li>Victim's attempt to cope or deal with the post-trauma stress</li> <li>Insurance requirement</li> <li>Deterrence (general and specific)</li> <li>Victim's fear of retaliation</li> <li>Victim's wish to avoid further embarrassment</li> <li>Victim's wish not to be inconvenienced</li> <li>Victim's wish not to be a witness</li> <li>Victim's life experience, including any previous experience with the criminal justice system</li> <li>Victim's knowledge of other people's experience with the criminal justice system</li> <li>Victim's family and employment commitments</li> <li>Influence of family and others</li> </ul>
Re-evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victim blames him or her self (recrimination)</li> <li>Victim concludes incident is not criminal</li> <li>Victim believes the matter is not serious</li> <li>Victim's life experience</li> <li>Victim's sense of helplessness</li> <li>Victim's loss of personal control</li> <li>Victim's interpretation of power imbalances</li> <li>Victim's appraisal of what amounts to a 'successful' resolution</li> <li>Availability of alternative activities to resolve the matter</li> </ul>
Do nothing (avoidance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victim's sense of injustice</li> <li>Victim's sense of vulnerability</li> <li>Victim's feeling of helplessness</li> <li>Victim's feeling of disempowerment</li> <li>Victim's relationship to their 'victimiser'</li> <li>Victim's perceptions of resolution</li> <li>Victim's knowledge regarding other options</li> <li>Victim's belief that taking action is too costly</li> </ul>
Private matter and/or solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victim knows their 'victimiser'</li> <li>Victim's desire to directly confront their 'victimiser'</li> <li>Victim wants help, but not a criminal justice response</li> <li>Victim has lost faith in the criminal justice system</li> <li>Victim considers dealing with it themselves is not as costly</li> <li>Victim's view on the likelihood of further harm</li> <li>Victim's capacity to pursue their 'victimiser' privately (for example, sue civilly)</li> </ul>

measure the extent and distribution of victims' needs, he identified that victims have practical, informational and emotional needs, and acknowledged that these needs were not exhaustive. Rather, he warned that there is a danger focusing almost exclusively on the practical needs of a victim.

The South Australian Committee of Inquiry on Victims of Crime (1981) commented on the failure of criminal justice practitioners to provide adequate information to victims on matters arising from their victimisation. Since then Gardner's study showed that 71 per cent of victims wanted to be regularly informed about the progress of their case. Only about a quarter of victims did not want this information. Similarly, the Victorian Community Council against Violence (VCCV 1994) reported that victims who responded to a telephone survey stated that they were dissatisfied with the police because (among other things) the police did not provide information about the progress of their case. A common plea 'was for the police to acquire and show more sensitivity and listen better (56.4%); followed by a request for police to provide more information about processes and services (33.6%)' (VCCV 1994:60). The survey for the Review on Victims of Crime in South Australia (JSU 2000) showed a majority of victims who asked to be kept informed were, but that about a quarter of those who asked were not kept informed, despite their request.

These findings are not unique to Australia. Several studies (for example, Resick 1987; Skogan and Wycoff 1987) in the United States show that victims need accurate information on a range of procedural matters. Moreover, being sensitive to victims' informational needs ought to be a key component of the police response to victims of crime.

Gardner (1990:54) also found that many victims, no matter what the offence type, wanted practical advice on not becoming a victim again. Indeed, she states, 'Practical advice on revictimisation was the service most needed by victims ... at the time of the first interview' (Gardner 1990:54). In another survey (JSU 2000), ten of ninety-four victims said they would have liked information at the time they reported offences to the police on not becoming a victim again.

Of the 3137 break-and-enter offences in the residential break-and-enter project in South Australia, 994 (that is, about one-third) of referrals made by the police were for interventions consisting of informal victim support, security advice, property marking, neighbour contact, and referral to other agencies. More victims took up the security advice than made contact with an agency that they were referred to, such as the Victim Support Service. Furthermore, in the United States the results of a New York study led Davis (1987:529) to suggest that 'crime prevention training might be a logical service to include as part of a crisis intervention package'.

Research on the practical needs of victims tends to focus on short-term matters, such as repairing a door, window or other security, and replacement

of credit cards, resulting from crimes involving property. Whitrod (1991) suggests other practical needs include transport to and from court, a court companion, and child care. Victims of violent crime may want to be re-located. They may also require 'logistical support' (Skogan 1990). British survey data (1984) indicates that some victims want financial help or advice on how to obtain financial assistance for such things as replacement of a motor vehicle and electronic devices. Other British data (Maguire and Corbett 1987) shows victims' practical needs include repairs, clearing up, and improving security.

Shapland, Willmore and Duff (1985), and Waller (1986), as well as Gardner (1990), have shown that victims suffer various harm or effects of crime. Emotional harm is among the most pronounced effects. Shapland, Willmore and Duff found that in Britain some victims' needs decline over time, except emotional needs, which tend to rise. Gardner (1990) states that around 90 per cent of victims in South Australia experience some emotional effect. Moreover, many aspects of that emotional effect actually intensify rather than diminish over time.

Kilpatrick et al. (1987) interviewed several hundred women residents of Charleston County, South Carolina, about their lifetime criminal victimisation experiences and the psychological impact. Almost 28 per cent of the sample of women victims (n=295) developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Furthermore, 7.5 per cent of these victims still had crime-related PTSD at the time of interview. The latter finding is profound because the mean (average) length of time 'postvictimisation was 15 years and that these victims were not seeking treatment' (Kilpatrick et al. 1987:488).

Whitrod (1991:21) maintains,

The need for emotional support has a number of bases. There is the direct requirement for someone who will listen when the victim is feeling down, encourage the victim, and be understanding. There is the need for problem-solving ... a person who will help the victim explore alternative solutions or courses of action, suggest another source of help, explain how similar problems were solved. There are difficulties for victims when they are considering making an admission of emotional need to another person. The victim has to have a willingness to let someone come close enough to see if they can really help. The victim has to recognise that something is unsatisfactory which cannot be dealt with in the usual way or alone. The victim has to accept that a helper may be able to offer something constructive.

There is therefore a need for victim assistance and victim support. The United Nations has discussed both and proposes that there are nine types of victim services:

- crisis intervention;
- counselling;

- advocacy;
- support during criminal investigation;
- support during criminal prosecution/trial;
- support after the trial;
- victimological training and education of professionals and victim service providers;
- victimisation/crime prevention; and
- public awareness and education on victim issues.

The handbook concedes that no one agency or organisation can provide all these services to all victims. Instead, a multidisciplinary (or intersectoral) approach is advocated. The United Nations identifies three crucial elements of a multidisciplinary approach:

- to create a multidisciplinary network to enhance service delivery;
- to establish partnerships to meet identified service needs and fill service gaps; and
- to determine responsibilities of partners to avoid duplicity within the network and facilitate referrals.

The next section presents an overview of the evolution of victim services.

## **The evolution of victim services**

In the mid-1950s Benjamin Mendelsohn refined his argument for a new social science to be called 'victimity'. He identified two principal areas for research: victimisation prevention and victim assistance. Jan van Dijk (1999) notes that, despite Mendelsohn himself not being involved in 'setting up practical care facilities for victims, he may nevertheless be regarded as the spiritual father of what is known as the victims' assistance movement'.

The nature and type of services available to victims in any particular state is indicative of political, cultural and social conditions (Young 1996; Reeves 2001; Paterson 1996; Singh Makkar and Lyallpuri 1994). However, three trends – philanthropy, government responses, and professional services – are evident in the development of victim services, especially in Western democracies.

Philanthropy – the first trend – is predicated on a desire to relieve social distress. Philanthropic organisations, often 'driven' by victims themselves, have been established in the United Kingdom (Reeves 2001; Imbert 1994) and elsewhere in Europe (Groenhuijsen 1999; Gorgenyi 1999; Fattah 1999), the United States (Young 2001; US Department of Justice 1998), Japan, New Zealand (Taylor and Smith 1994; Bird 1994) and Australia (Victorian Community Council against Violence 1994; Paterson 1996; Hunt 1996; JSU 1999). The South Australian Victim Support Service (formerly the Victims of Crime Service) was the first broad-based, volunteer victim

service established in Australia. It continues to offer counselling, information, court support and support groups, provided by professionals assisted by volunteers.

On occasions, some 'volunteer' victim organisations have been hindered by the reluctance of government 'bureaucracies' to form alliances (Imbert 1994). Contrarily, Hunt (1996) and Paterson (1996) conclude that coherent intersectoral strategies have helped victims and victim support in South Australia. Some victim support organisations have been 'open to the influence of government' (Rock 1988). As a consequence the fate of these organisations rests largely in the hands of government and/or a public-sector agency. The demise of VOCAL in Victoria in the late-1990s is indicative of the risks that may confront a 'volunteer' victim organisation that develops an affinity with a public agency, but then refuses to accede to the agency's demands.

Government responses and services for victims – the second trend – for victims have expanded considerably since the 1960s. All Australian states and territories have government-funded compensation schemes, and have enacted an array of other legislative and administrative reforms. Governments also provide specialist services for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, as well as for child victims. The government of New South Wales has established a Victims of Crime Bureau; in Victoria the government has created a Victims Referral and Assistance Scheme; and the Victim Support Service in Western Australia is essentially a government agency. In South Australia the government provides a grant to the Victim Support Service for a generic victim service.

Clearly, in some countries victim services have prospered because of government intervention (Young 1996; Reeves 2001; Taylor and Smith 1994), whereas in other countries concern for victims of crime has been overshadowed by greater 'investment in attempts to treat, re-educate and restore offenders' (Singh Makkar and Lyallpuri 1994:2). India, according to several commentators (Singh Makkar and Lyallpuri 1994; Chockalingham 1999), is a prime example of where, despite a constitution intended to secure social justice, victims of crime and victims of abuse of power continue to endure many hardships.

Notwithstanding the ideals of the welfare state, prevailing economic and social conditions have been conducive in most Western democracies to the evolving emphasis on economic rationalism. Although rationalists tend to favour philanthropy as a means of 'cost-effective' self-help and reduced government expenditure, the politicisation of victims and their plight has ensured many victim services are provided at government expense or with government subsidy. As Rolph (1988:1887) aptly surmises, 'To abandon the victim, now, to his former status as mere witness and ad hoc assistant prosecutor would be political suicide for the party that tried it on'.

Both welfarists and rationalists, despite their ideological differences, have contributed to the growth of a professional social-welfare industry – the third trend in the development of victim services. Consistent with this, McFarlane (1996), a psychiatrist and academic, acknowledges the part played by political as well as social forces in increasing interest in the effects of victimisation.

Professionals are involved in a range of specialist victim services, as well as general health-and-welfare services that victims variously utilise. Professionals often staff government services for victims. Doctors, nurses and other medical/hospital personnel attend to the physical harm suffered by many victims. Psychologists, psychiatrists and other mental-health personnel attend to the emotional and psychological harm suffered by many victims. Social workers are employed widely as service-providers for victims.

The involvement of professionals with victims, however, has not necessarily led to improvements in victim services. Roberts (1996), for instance, refers to various studies showing that detection rates for victims of domestic violence by doctors in hospital emergency departments are very low. She attributes the low rates to, among other things, attitudes held by doctors and nurses. Her statistical analysis of doctors' and nurses' responses, controlling for gender, show that 'attitudes towards domestic violence are a function of profession rather than gender'.

Likewise, Taylor (1994) describes how the New Zealand Police used to treat domestic violence in an 'ad hoc' manner, often culminating in attempts to mediate rather than employ the rigour shown towards violence in public places. Now New Zealand Police have an affirmative arrest policy, but the effectiveness of that policy, he concludes, is largely dependent on a 'significant change in attitude ... for police officers'. Hunt (1996) also concedes that indifferent attitudes by police may compound a victim's feelings of inferiority, shame, and even guilt.

Echoing Weber, Paterson (1996) addresses the 're-culturalisation' of public welfare and police bureaucracies. Based on his experiences in South Australia, he asserts that there is a danger in relying solely on legislative reforms and administrative decrees to ensure that policy is translated into practice. Instead, welfare officers and police need to be convinced 'that their professions ... are best served by expanding and changing' to better attend to victims' needs.

Across Australia, victim services are provided by a blend of government and non-government agencies and organisations. Services for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence tend to be the most advanced (Victim Support Working Party 1998). Arguably, victims who do not fall within the ambit of these specialist victim services do not have the same degree of support and assistance as those who do. Generic victim services such as the

Victim Support Service have evolved to fill the service gap, although this is a realm within which government intervention has grown.

Other challenges have also emerged. A number of studies have pointed out that helpers' biases and misconceptions can seriously undermine the therapeutic value of victim-oriented interventions (Winkel and Renssen 1998). Furthermore, unskilled support workers can cause secondary victimisation (Winkel, Blaauw and Wiseman 1999). The results of Davis's study (1987) and others showed that improvement on measures of psychological distress were similar for victims who received counselling and victims who did not. Davis queried whether victim support programs were providing all the services victims needed. Another study (Skogan, Davis and Lurigio 1994), conducted in the late 1980s in four cities in the United States, did show a significant mismatch between victims reported needs and the services provided by victim assistance programs.

## Conclusion

Victimology is both a social science and a social movement. While there are distinct differences between the two, both have made significant contributions to our understanding of the impact of crime on victims and the appropriateness of responses to victims of crime. Victimologists have, for example, identified the importance of the responses of public officials (especially the police and other criminal justice agencies) in helping victims to recover and to prevent further victimisation.

Research in the effects of crime has tended to focus on victims of sexual crimes (for example, rape) and other unlawful acts of violence. Recently, however, attention has turned to non-conventional crimes such as environmental crime and white-collar crimes. Consistently, the research shows that all victims experience some disruption and that each victim responds in his or her own way.

An examination of victim services shows that many of the early services began as philanthropic organizations, often victims to trying to deal with their plight and to bring about improvements for others. Over time some of these organisations have become increasingly reliant on government funding, especially as their services have shifted from a volunteer base to the employment of professionals. Despite the growth in victim services there are gaps in coverage and availability, and how best to fill these remains a challenge for victimologists as social scientists and social reformers.

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