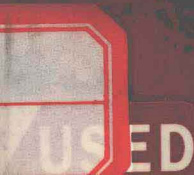



PRENTICE HALL'S CONTEMPORARY JUSTICE SERIES

Understanding **VIOLENCE** and **VICTIMIZATION**

Robert J. Meadows



UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AND VICTIMIZATION



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UNDERSTANDING
VIOLENCE
AND
VICTIMIZATION

PREFACE

We live in a violent society. People from all walks of life are subjected to many forms of violence. Some are victimized by strangers, others by family members and intimate partners. Violence occurs in our homes, workplaces, or in places we least expect it to happen. It is difficult to predict when or where it will occur. In writing this book, I have been interested in exploring selected types of violence, particularly the type that captures media and public attention because of its seriousness and callousness. Therefore, I choose not to write about nonviolent victimization, such as property crimes and frauds. It is not my intention to downplay the importance of these crimes, but to focus more on the crimes of violence that we fear most.

The book combines victimization theory with applied responses to victimization. It is written for the person studying victimization and violence, as well as for those employed in crime prevention and victim service programs. My purpose is to discuss offender-victim relationships, provide data, and explore situational factors and responses to victims. Throughout the book, there are case studies called *focuses* that enhance a point and can be used to generate discussion.

Chapter 1 addresses theories of victimization and measures of tabulating victim data. The chapter basically introduces criminal victimization, discussing how and why some people are victimized. Chapter 2 covers intimate victimizations, such as domestic violence, acquaintance rape, and stalking. My intent in this chapter is to address legal and social issues of intimate violence as well as preventive measures. I look at the identity of the offenders, why they do what they do, and what the victim can do to prevent these offenses. Chapter 3 addresses stranger violence. Two of the most prevalent types of stranger violence are murder and robbery. The chapter focuses on the situations in which persons become victims of violence by strangers and what can be done to prevent these occurrences. There is also a discussion of serial killers, their motives, and their victims. Chapter 4 focuses on workplace violence. It is an important topic because of recent attacks of co-workers by disgruntled employees or by third parties. Research conducted on the sources of and responses to workplace violence is covered. The purpose is to offer suggestions on what can be done to reduce the potential for violence.

Chapter 5 discusses proactive and reactive strategies to victimization. In this chapter I discuss personal defense measures, including the use of firearms. The section on the defensive use of handguns considers the research on firearms in preventing victimization. The chapter investigates other proactive crime control measures such as building design and community planning. The chapter concludes with presentation of measures to aid victims through victim compensation programs and laws. In some instances, victims seek relief from the courts in the form of personal damages from property owners. Victims criminally assaulted at work or on private property may have a civil case against a property owner or manager. Thus, litigation impacts organizational business policy and operations.

In closing, I would like to offer a disclaimer. Throughout the book, I refer to a number of legal cases and crime response procedures. They are offered as a general guide. I recognize that laws and procedures may change or may not apply in some situations. This is the problem of writing a book of this type. By the time it is published, new laws or amendments to existing ones take place, and new studies are published. The reader is advised to consult with local law enforcement or other authorities for information on changes or new programs relevant to victimology.

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Robert J. Meadows

UNDERSTANDING
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AND
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CHAPTER 1



VICTIMIZATION: THEORIES AND REPORTING MEASURES

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will

- Understand the difference between criminology and victimology.
- Become familiar with the early theorists on victimology.
- Understand victim precipitation theory.
- Become familiar with the research on victimology.
- Understand why some crimes are not officially reported.
- Understand the types of information provided by the *Uniform Crime Reports* and the *National Crime Victimization Survey*.
- Determine the relationship between the criminal justice system and victimization.
- Understand the financial and psychological impacts of victimization.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most neglected subjects in the study of crime is its victims. . . .

The President's Commission on Law Enforcement
and the Administration of Justice, 1967

Victimology is the study of crime victims and their relationship to offenders and the criminal justice system. Victimology is unlike criminology, which focuses on the dynamics of victimization; criminology concerns the etiology of crime and criminal behavior. Victimology attempts to address questions of how crime victims have been exploited, abused, neglected, harmed, and oppressed in public and private (workplace) settings. It is equally interested in how victims can be assisted, served, and educated about crime and violence. Victimologists are concerned with the demographics of victimization, particularly age, race, sex, location, and other situational factors. Researchers have always been interested in why some people are victimized more than others or why some are more fearful than others. The problems associated with being a crime victim are not restricted to physical injury resulting from the crime. Victims often find themselves scrutinized by the justice system, the public, and even their families. The justice system itself, in its attempt to serve and protect, is responsible for creating victims as a result of direct or indirect injustice. **Direct injustice**, for example, results from police use of excessive force. Such injustice causes pain and suffering, often resulting in costly litigation at the expense of taxpayers. **Indirect injustice** occurs when a citizen is victimized by a poorly supervised parolee or when a defendant in a criminal case is released on a legal technicality. When criminal justice professionals make mistakes, society suffers from the injustice.

Victims of crime experience economic losses, such as medical expenses and lost wages. A study by Cohen (1988: 547) reported that the average cost of crime to a victim of a rape was \$51,058. Victims also may believe that they are responsible for their victimization; thus, there is a degree of stress, anxiety, and blame associated with victimization referred to as *postcrime stress disorders* (Stanko & Hobdell, 1993: 400–415). This chapter reviews selected theory and data on victimization. An understanding of victimization requires an analysis of various perspectives on the nature and causes of victimization, as well as what strategies society can use to reduce the potentials for victimization. The chapter also reviews crime and victimization data and sources for such information. The chapter focuses on crime and victimization in schools.

VIOLENCE AND THE FEAR OF VIOLENT CRIME

We look forward to a world founded upon four essential freedoms. First is the freedom of speech and expression. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way. The third is freedom from want. . . . The fourth is freedom from fear.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

The violence that permeates our communities assaults the foundation on which this country was built. In many communities, the right to be free from fear has been replaced by the knowledge that most of us will be victims of violence at some time in our lives. As a nation, we rank first of all developed nations in the world in the number of homicides. Our homicides are increasing at six times the population rate, with little or no end in sight (American Psychological Association, 1993). The rate for murder in some of our cities is shocking. The murder rate per 100,000 people in New Orleans is 73, 63 in Washington, D.C., and 52 in St. Louis. These three cities were identified as having the three highest murder rates of all cities in the United States (Rechin, 1996). As indicated in Table 1-1, violent crime rates have actually dropped (Rechin, 1996). However, this data reflects only reported crime.

Despite this apparent decline in crime, however, other violent crimes are increasing. According to the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports*, nearly 8,000 hate crimes were reported in the United States in 1995, an increase from 5,852 crimes in 1994.

A number of theories explain the causes of violent behavior. A discussion of these theories is beyond the scope of this book. It can be said, however, that violence results from many factors, including but not limited to mental illness, racism, poverty, gangs, drugs, availability of guns, biomedical problems, media influences, and family relations (see Wilson

TABLE 1-1 VIOLENT CRIME

	Incidents	Rate*
1992	10,248,670	49.0
1993	10,848,100	51.3
1994	10,859,700	50.8
1995	9,866,200	45.7

*The rate of attacks per 1,000 people age 12 or older.

Source: Kevin Rechin, "Violent Crime Dips in Every Category," *USA Today*, 18 September 1996, 3A.

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& Petersilia, 1995). A number of groups have examined the violent crime problem and have concluded that a number of factors are associated with violent crime (Centers for Disease Control, 1991; Reiss & Roth, 1993). Violence in our society is prevalent and often unpredictable. According to data from the National Victim Center (1995), violent crimes increased 11 percent between 1990 and 1991; but it is estimated that only 49 percent of all violent victimizations were reported to law enforcement. Because of the fear of victimization, 60 percent of Americans limit where they go by themselves, almost 33 percent limit where they shop, and 22 percent limit where they work.

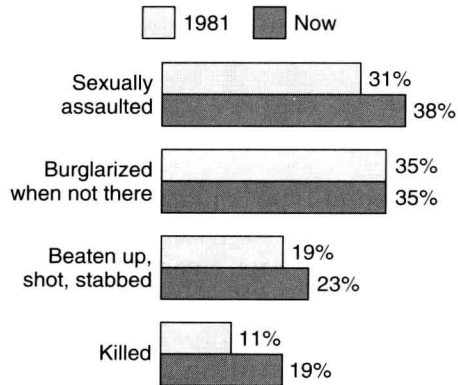
The shooting spree occurring in shopping malls and restaurants have fostered the perception that no place is really safe anymore. Crime is becoming random, vicious, and spontaneous. The targets include suburban and rural areas and people of all socioeconomic levels. The majority of the literature concerning the fear of violence focuses on those who are fearful in terms of their demographics or life situations. These fears result from past victimizations, media accounts of violent crime, and people who are knowledgeable about or have witnessed crime (Belyea & Zingraff, 1988). In 1994, a *Los Angeles Times* poll asked Americans whether their fear of crime was based on what they read or heard from the media, or what they had personally experienced. Sixty-five percent of the respondents reported that the media were responsible for their perceptions; 21 percent reported personal experiences (Russell, 1995). It is common to find reported acts of violence, such as gang attacks and robberies, in the news. These reports fuel the notion that crime is pervasive and thus ignite fears in the public.

Part of the reason for increased fears is the expansion of the middle-aged population. Citizens aged 31–50 (baby boomers) are more active in crime prevention. As a group, they are more likely to own a gun, install burglar alarms or special locks, and practice security procedures (Russell, 1995). Thus, baby boomers are concerned about their families' safety, a concern that is driven by media reports of violent crime. Research on victimization indicates that women are more fearful than men (LaGrange & Ferraro, 1989). In addition, the elderly (Jaycox, 1987), the poor, and minorities (Parker et al., 1993) are more fearful of victimization than are other groups. Those who are more fearful tend to be more likely to carry self-protection devices or participate in self-defense classes. Many people who are fearful really have no reason to be. This does not mean that they are acting irrationally, however; it suggests that people are more aware of the dangers of crime. Although studies have found that women and the elderly report higher levels of fear of crime than do men and younger persons, these two groups are much less likely to be victimized by crime. In other words, those who are most fearful actually report the fewest victimizations. This is referred to as the **fear-victimization paradox**. Thus, the reports of the high levels of crime in this country have been so widely

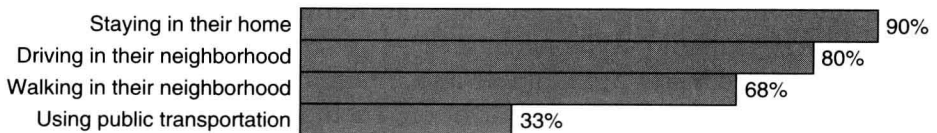
communicated that the public commonly accept them as the truth (La-Grange & Ferraro, 1989). A 1993 *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup poll reported that 38 percent of the people polled often worry about being sexually assaulted, 35 percent worry about being burglarized, and 90 percent of all respondents felt safe alone at night only when they stayed home. The poll indicated that respondents are taking increased security precautions, and nearly 33 percent have purchased guns. There is increased fear of using public transportation. Generally, the poll depicts an increased fear of victimization since 1991 (see Figure 1-1).

FIGURE 1-1 *USA TODAY*/CNN/GALLUP POLL

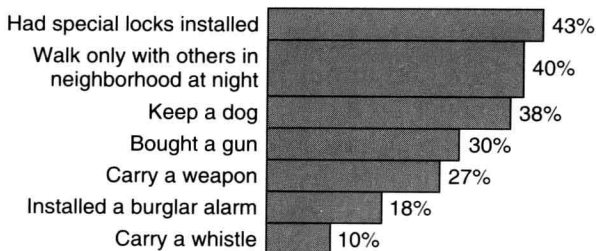
Percent Who Worry Often About Being . . .



Percent Who Feel Safe Alone At Night . . .



How People Are Protecting Themselves:



Source: A *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup national telephone poll of 1,244 adults, conducted October 13–18, 1993. Margin of error: ± 3 percent. Copyright 1993 *USA Today*. Reprinted with permission.