

Sociology 4099: Victimology

Lecture Notes Week 2.1 : Defining Victims of Crime: Official Police Data

Last week we did a general overview of the field of victimology, discussed some of the major theoretical perspectives, practices, services and developments throughout its history. One item in particular we discussed were victimization surveys. This week we will discuss these in more depth, and delve more into methodological matters. First, we will review the official crime data available from police sources. Next, we will review victimization surveys. Following a review of the data from each, I will discuss the numerous methodological problems entailed by these approaches. Finally, we will discuss an innovative theoretical and methodological approach flowing out of the interactionist tradition, and explore whether it meets these criticisms.

(1) Official Police Data: An Overview:

Generally, officially gathered statistics on crime are calculated by dividing the number of times a particular event occurs in a certain time period by the population size for a particular geographical area, and then multiplying this figure by a constant (usually 100,000).

These official police statistics are interesting, and shed some light on patterns of victimization in Canada. Indeed they may help us to recognize and classify important properties of deviants, criminals, victims, and crime scenes. This can help clarify popular perceptions, evaluate changes in the risks involved with different locations and time periods, assist professionals in planning, implementing, and assessing programs set up to treat victims, rehabilitate or deter offenders, and aid in constructing sociological theories to explain why some are more prone to offender or be victimized than others.

Every year since 1962, Canada's police agencies have reported criminal incidents that come to their attention to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, which is forwarded to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics according to a nationally approved set of scoring rules and definitions.

See reading "Crime Statistics in Canada 2007" for the rest of this lecture