

The Impact of Victimization

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Purpose

The purpose of this material is to provide college students with a basic overview of the impact of criminal victimization. It is important for students to understand the essential elements of types of harm that can result from criminal acts and the reactions a victim may experience. It is also important for students to understand that impact may vary for different types of offenses and also from one victim to the next. The impact immediately following the crime and the long-term impact may also be different. So, for example, the impact of victimization at one stage of life may have a different impact on that same individual many years later. Or, symptoms may tend to recur at different developmental stages. Many victims have no symptoms or are "asymptomatic." But those who are asymptomatic may later become symptomatic.

Generally it is reported that there is no one dominant and consistent set of symptoms. Criminal victimization is more complicated because it produces multifaceted effects. Some of the factors that may affect the impact include characteristics and context of the offense (the violence, the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator, the length, location and other circumstances surrounding the crime), intelligence, coping skills, prior adjustment, the victim's past experiences, developmental stage, physical and mental health and the victims' understanding of the crime. In addition, family and social environment, and support systems as well as the actions taken by professionals in response to the crime may intervene and influence the impact.

Time elapsed since the crime occurred may mean that symptoms abate, or the passage of time may be associated with reoccurrence of symptoms, especially if another victimization occurs.

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It is also important for students to understand that crime not only affects its immediate victims, but also impacts secondary victims and society as a whole.

These materials may be supplemented by the curriculum kit *Providing Care and Support for Victims of Crime*, which is designed to provide college students with a foundation on how to be present for and provide resources to people in their lives who are victimized by crime, including those who share their campus environment. In addition, materials on the effects of child abuse are available in the curriculum kit: *Addressing the Needs of Crime Victims in Medical Practice*.

Learning Objectives

After completing this curriculum kit, students should be able to:

- List some physical, financial, emotional and psychological consequences for victims of crime.
- Describe the reality that there is no one dominant and consistent set of symptoms for all crimes or all crime victims.
- Define the term secondary victimization.
- Describe some of the impacts of crime on secondary victims.
- Describe the societal costs of crime.

Time Required

Completion of this material will take 60 minutes of class time.

Required Materials

- Equipment needed to use PowerPoint as an instructional tool.

Suggested Courses

This kit can be modified for use in courses of different disciplines, including but not limited to history, psychology, sociology, social work, and criminal justice. Reviewers who have used the materials suggest that the kit is a great fit for introductory criminology, introduction to criminal justice, victims/victimology, social problems, or introduction to sociology.

In addition this kit could be implemented in psychology or sociology courses focused on human development or families (e.g., child development, adolescent development, gender development, family psychology, family sociology, sex and gender roles). Moreover, the kit could be implemented at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Recognizing and addressing these issues within the college environment is also useful.

Directory of Materials

1. Faculty Materials
 - a. *Impact of Victimization* Faculty Guide
 - b. *The Impact of Victimization* PowerPoint presentation
2. Student Materials
 - a. Reading: “The Impact of Criminal Victimization”
 - b. National Resources for Victims of Crime Handout

Introduction and a Note to Faculty

This Faculty Guide includes suggestions for implementing the curriculum kit, including recommended talking points for the PowerPoint presentation. The curriculum kit may be expanded to include additional readings and discussion related to the nature and extent of crime victimization.

Please review all materials, including the *Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty*, located in the Faculty Involvement section.

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This curriculum kit was created as a part of the National-Scope Demonstration Project to Integrate Crime Victims' Issues into University and College Curricula. The project is funded by a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC, a component of the Office of Justice Programs within the U.S. Department of Justice) to achieve the project goals of increasing the numbers of students exposed to information about crime victims and interested in working with crime victims, and thereby improve the future provision of services to crime victims.

The statistics that are included in these resources were current when the material was developed; however, statistics can become quickly out-of-date. As you prepare to deliver a curriculum kit, be sure to review the material beforehand and include the most recent crime statistics.

There are two studies from the U.S. Department of Justice that measure the scope, magnitude, and impact of crime in the United States:

- The FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR)(www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr)
- Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) (<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245>)

A third source for crime statistics is:

- National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide (<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/>).

The most recent national statistics lag several years behind the calendar year. For example, in 2013, the latest official national statistics are those collected in 2011, which were published in 2012. This lag results from the amount of time and the number of resources required to collect, analyze, and publish information from nationwide reports and interviews about crime and victimization.

PowerPoint Presentation/Class Lecture



Slide 1.

Introduce the curriculum kit.

While the first slide is on display, faculty should introduce the purpose of this curriculum kit to the students: The purpose of this material is to provide college students with a basic overview of the impact of criminal victimization. It is important for students to understand the essential elements of types of harm that can result from criminal acts and the reactions a victim may experience. It is also important for students to understand that impact varies for different types of offenses and also from one victim to the next. The impact immediately following the crime and the long-term impact may also be different.

Faculty should be prepared to respond to disclosures from students regarding their own experience of victimization and the criminal court process (either personally or knowledge of a friend or family member's experience). While this curriculum kit does not specifically request the sharing of personal experiences, students may choose to share this information.

During this first slide, faculty should remind students to respect the opinions and experiences of others if shared during this lecture and remind them not to share this information outside of the classroom. For additional guidance, faculty should consult the *Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty*.



Slide 2.

The project is designed to:

- Broaden college and university students' awareness of crime victims' issues and knowledge of appropriate responses;
- Increase the number and diversity of students exposed to and educated in crime victims' issues;
- Give victim issues a new level of prominence in university and college curricula.

Note to Faculty:

Faculty should be aware of the appropriate professional resources for students who are victims of crime. In preparation for this lecture, faculty may find it helpful to develop a short list of campus and local community resources that can be used to refer students to, as well as including some national resources.

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Modify the resources on the next two slides and provide appropriate contact information for your campus. It is helpful to have these resources available to share with students who come to the office, as well as available for students to access without talking to faculty, such as including them in the syllabus and online via course and faculty Web pages. National resources are included on the National Resources for Crime Victims. Have enough copies to hand out to each student.

Student Resources



Slide 3.

Campus resources to list typically include:

- Counseling.
- Health services
- College chaplain/faith community.
- Dean of students.
- Women's center.
- Campus police.



Slide 4.

Local community resources to list typically include:

- Rape crisis center.
- Domestic violence shelter agency.
- Local or county victim-witness office (often a part of the prosecutor's office).



Slide 5.

A list of national resources for victims of crime appears at the end of this curriculum kit. Faculty should provide each student with this list; it is included in the Student Materials of this curriculum kit.



Slide 6.

Present an overview of what will be covered in class.



Slide 7.

Suggested Talking Points:

Crime victimization can impact victims as well as their friends, families and relatives.

Review statistics on the slide.



Slide 8.

Suggested Talking Points:

- Possible consequences of crime: Physical, financial, emotional, psychological, and spiritual.
- Violent crime victims may have a more difficult time coping than property crime victims
- Those with a history of mental health issues may have increased risk of severe psychological consequences.
- Effects of victimization can also be felt by society as a whole.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has a lot of great resources on this topic: www.nctsnet.org/

- When trauma is associated with a failure of those who should be protecting and nurturing the child, it may have far-reaching effects on nearly every aspect of the child's life.
- Children who have experienced intrafamilial trauma may suffer impairments in many areas of development and functioning, including:

Attachment. Traumatized children may feel that the world is uncertain and unpredictable. They can become socially isolated and can have difficulty relating to and empathizing with others.

Biology. Traumatized children may experience problems with movement and sensation, including hypersensitivity to physical contact and insensitivity to pain. They may exhibit unexplained physical symptoms and increased medical problems.

Mood regulation. Children exposed to trauma can have difficulty regulating their emotions as well as difficulty knowing and describing their feelings and internal states.

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Dissociation. Some traumatized children experience a feeling of detachment or depersonalization, as if they are “observing” something happening to them that is unreal.

Behavioral control. Traumatized children can show poor impulse control, self-destructive behavior, and aggression towards others.

Cognition. Traumatized children can have problems focusing on and completing tasks, or planning for and anticipating future events. Some exhibit learning difficulties and problems with language development.

Self-concept. Traumatized children frequently suffer from disturbed body image, low self-esteem, shame, and guilt.

While victims may experience fears, posttraumatic stress disorder, behavior problems, and poor self-esteem, no one symptom characterizes a majority of victims. Some symptoms are specific to certain ages but as many as 40 percent of victims have no symptoms.

 **Slide 9.**

Suggested Talking Points:

Victims are not always physically hurt, although they may suffer financial losses, and psychological, emotional, and spiritual effects. Society feels the impact of crime, too. Not only does crime have significant costs to society, it also has negative impacts on secondary victims.

 **Slide 10.**

Suggested Talking Points:

- Injury: Some victims will suffer injuries that can disable them or negatively impact them for life.
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs): Possible consequence of sexual assault.
- Psychosomatic illness may be indirectly linked to victimizations. In these cases, people really are ill – what distinguishes psychosomatic illness is that there is not an external cause or identifiable pathogen – rather psychological stress is leading to real illness.

 **Slide 11.**

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Suggested Talking Points:

Approximately 18 percent of victims of personal crimes and 94 percent of victims of property crime incur costs.

- Healthcare: Many lack the insurance needed to cover these costs or encounter other prohibitions put on them by an abusive partner or family member.
- Victims may have to miss work to recover from injuries, mental health issues, or criminal justice (CJ) system appointments. This lost work time adds up to financial loss for both the victim and place of work. Even if victims are present, their productivity is likely to suffer.



Slide 12.

- The physical and mental health impacts of abuse also may have financial consequences. For example, interpersonal violence victims may experience:
 - ♦ Stress
 - ♦ Cognitive impairment, anxiety, anger, aggression, physical illness
 - ♦ Neurological changes
 - ♦ Brain damage – Victims average 2.8 concussions, 219.7 head blows, and 725.4 body blows in 5.9 years of a relationship (Monahan & O’Leary, 1999).
 - ♦ Physical illness: intimate partner violence victims are two times more likely to have common physical ailments (heartburn, headaches, back pain), cervical cancer, STDs, unwanted pregnancies and pelvic pain (Monahan & O’Leary 1999).



Slide 13.

Suggested Talking Points:

- Prior victimization has been shown to increase the likelihood of trauma symptoms experienced following a new crime.
- Research indicates personality traits may impact the level of emotional stress on the victim – more so than demographic characteristics including gender, race and age.
- Response to trauma: Influencing factors
 - ♦ Prior trauma
 - ♦ Personality

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- ♦ Stage of development
- ♦ Severity of abusive incident
- ♦ Strength and appropriateness of support system
- Buffers from trauma:
 - ♦ Temperament
 - ♦ Response of caregivers to traumatic event
 - ♦ Severity of event (life threatening)
 - ♦ Single event (as compared to compounded trauma)
- **It is important to be aware of cultural variations in reactions to crime and in response to and interventions designed to support crime victims**



Slide 14.

Suggested Talking Points:

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person. Common symptoms of crime victims include:

- Re-experiencing of the traumatic event
- Avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma
- Increased arousal or anxiety
- Stress and fear



Slide 15.

Suggested Talking Points:

- PTSD symptoms seem to be worse if they were triggered deliberately by another person, as in a mugging or rape.
- PTSD rates are higher with victims of violent crimes than other crimes.

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Almost all people who go through trauma have some symptoms as a result. Yet most people do not get PTSD. A certain pattern of symptoms is involved in PTSD. There are four major types of symptoms: re-experiencing, avoidance, numbing, and arousal. See <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/ptsd-measured.asp> OR <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/posttraumaticstressdisorder.html> OR <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/winter09/articles/winter09pg10-14.html> for more information.

Reference for the DSM V: American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. (5th ed.). Washington, D.C.: Author.

Also see: www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/diagnostic_criteria_dsm-5.asp



Slide 16.

Suggested Talking Points:

Note that depression and anxiety may co-occur with PTSD.

Fear can cause victims to make major lifestyle changes. Examples: relocating, not working, or seeking new employment.

Agoraphobia: intense fear of crowds and being alone in public places.

- Self-isolation
- Refusal to leave their home or travel far from home
- Avoid crowded places



Slide 17.

Suggested Talking Points:

- Victims may blame themselves for their victimization – or attribute the responsibility to themselves. This can severely damage their self-esteem and self-worth.
- Distraction and absenteeism can lead to low work productivity.
- Victims may distance themselves from their family or friends – or become extremely dependent upon the company of a loved one.
- As a preventative measure, victims may choose to carry weapons or “target harden” and become less likely to be targeted by changing their locks, for example.
- One possible outcome is substance use or abuse including use of alcohol or legal or street drugs to self-medicate to numb negative consequences of victimization.

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- While most crime victims do not go on to become offenders (and the causal ordering is unclear) there is evidence of an association between victimization and offending behaviors, particularly with child victims.



Slide 18.

Suggested Talking Points:

The criminal justice system is designed to process offenders and victims may feel the system to be less focused on addressing their needs. Victims often find the process and procedures confusing, and that their preferences and perspective are not considered. In addition, with case backlogs that typify almost all courts, victims sometimes find that little time is given to their case, and that their needs are not addressed.



Slide 19.

Suggested Talking Points:

The victim's reactions to victimization will impact those who interact with them, and often have a spillover effect.



Slide 20.

Suggested Talking Points:

Children's exposure to crime and violence can have many negative impacts. Some children when they reach adulthood may be involved in criminal activity themselves or may experience further victimization. It is important to note, however, that many children who witness violence are resilient and do not experience the continuation of violence as adults.



Slide 21.

Suggested Talking Points:

There are many different ways to calculate the costs of crime to society. In 2007, the economic cost of crime was estimated at over 17 billion dollars. Often these measurements do not take into account the societal cost of the psychological impact on crime victims.

Suggested Talking Points:

Homicides are substantially more costly (on an individual crime-by-crime basis) than other violent crimes.

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Data source: Heaton, P. (2009). *Hidden in Plain Sight: What Cost of Crime Research Can Tell Us about Investing in Police*. Washington, D.C.: Rand Corporation.

See also Kathryn E. McCollister, Michael T. French, Hai Fang, “The cost of crime to society: New crime-specific estimates for policy and program evaluation,” *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Volume 108, Issues 1–2, 1 April 2010, Pages 98-109, ISSN 0376-8716, 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2009.12.2002. and Miller, T. R., Cohen, M. A., & Wiersma, B. (1996). *Victim Costs and Consequences: A New Look* (NCJ 155282). Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.



Slide 22.

Suggested Talking Points:

- Criminal victimization has both immediate and long-term consequences.
- Victims of crime can experience physical, financial, emotional and psychological consequences.
- Victims can be re-victimized by the response of others and the criminal justice system.
- Witnesses and those close to the victim can experience similar symptoms as “secondary victims”.
- Crime is both financially and psychologically costly to society.



Slide 23.

Suggested Talking Points:

Community fear due to awareness of crime in their neighborhood or region

- People who live in the same neighborhood as the victim are just as likely to relocate as the victim.
- Victimization also can force victims to relocate or become homeless, increasing the need for society to provide services.



Slide 24.

Suggested Talking Points:

Every victim of crime has a different experience and thus may have a different response and degree of impact.

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These materials may be supplemented by the curriculum kit *Providing Care and Support for Victims of Crime* which is designed to provide college students with a foundation on how to be present for and provide resources to people in their lives who are victimized by crime, including those who share their campus environment (Eckstein, R. P.: 2012).

References

Department of Criminal Justice (2013). "The impact of victimization." Lowell, MA: University of Massachusetts Lowell.

National Resources for Crime Victims

Crime victims and those who know them or work with them can face a number of issues for which support can be helpful. Listed below are a number of national resources. Other places to look for support can be Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) at work, campus resources for college students, and state victim assistance programs.

Victims of Crime

The National Center for Victims of Crime

www.victimsofcrime.org/help-for-crime-victims

National Organization for Victim Assistance

800-TRY-NOVA

www.trynova.org/

Office for Victims of Crime Directory of Crime Victims Services

<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices/>

Child Abuse

Stop It Now! (sexual abuse)

888-PREVENT

www.stopitnow.org/

Clery Center for Security on Campus

Office: (484) 580-8754

www.clerycenter.org/

Drunk Driving

MADD Victim/Survivor Helpline

877-MADD-HELP (623-3435)

www.madd.org/victim-services/

Elder Abuse

National Center on Elder Abuse
800-677-1116 (M-F, 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.)
www.ncea.aoa.gov

Homicide

National Organization of Parents Of Murdered Children
888-818-POMC
www.pomc.com/

Identity Theft

Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft Hotline
877-ID-THEFT (438-4338)
www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0014-identity-theft

Identity Theft Resource Center Victim Assistance Center
888-400-5530
www.idtheftcenter.org/v_resources/v_intro.shtml

Intimate Partner Violence and Family Violence

National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-SAFE (7233)
www.ndvh.org/

Sexual Violence

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline
800-656-HOPE (4673)
[.http://online.rainn.org/](http://online.rainn.org/) (online hotline)