Victims, Crime and Society

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Pamela Davies, Peter Francis and Chris Greer

Introduction

The phrase 'the rich get richer and the poor get prison' is an old cliché but one that goes to the very heart of this book. Our central organizing theme is the nature of victimization in relation to the intersecting and overlapping social divisions of class, race, age and gender. Within this rubric, the book explores the unequal distribution of victimization, the patterning and nature of risk, the experiences of crime victims as groups and individuals, and the social, political and criminal justice response to both crime victims and victimization. It foregrounds how the major social divisions in England and Wales – class, race, age and gender – provide a useful starting point for understanding the complex and dynamic nature of victimization in society. The book also explores the frequent tensions between social divisions, victimization, social harm and state policy and practice. Specifically, chapters within this book do the following:

- introduce the importance of social division – class, race, age, gender – in understanding crime victims and victimization;
- examine the importance of media representation in understanding social divisions, inequality and victimization;
- map the unequal distribution of victimization in relation to social divisions and inequalities, and examine how victimization impacts upon and is experienced differently by a range of groups and individuals;
- evaluate the various political and policy responses to crime victims and victimization and assess the role of the voluntary and community sectors in supporting victims of crime;
- explore the political, cultural and social context of victimization and review key theoretical, methodological and empirical approaches which are important in understanding victimization in contemporary society.

Our aim in the rest of this Introduction is to map out the core themes of the book, identify various 'golden threads' that run throughout its pages and, in so doing, introduce, contextualize and interconnect the various chapters that follow. First, we introduce the concept of social divisions as social categories and identify their constructed nature. Second, we examine the connectedness between social divisions, inequality and victimization. Third, we introduce the importance of media analysis to an understanding of victims, crime and society. Fourth, we outline the various social research methods that have been used to help understand the nature, extent and impact of victimization. Fifth, we discuss political and policy responses to victimization. Sixth, we situate victimization within a broader theoretical framework. And, finally, this chapter introduces the various pedagogic

features we have used within the book, and presents an outline of each chapter's structure.

Social divisions as social categories

Everyday social existence involves the definition and continual reassessment of 'who we are'. An important part of defining 'who we are' is determining who we are *not*. Our sense of 'self', therefore, our construction of 'who we are', is defined to a significant extent in contradistinction to conceptions of the 'other'. Notions of 'self' and 'other' can be isolated and highly individualized or shared and deeply embedded in culture. Sometimes they are institutionalized and become custom or law. Sometimes they remain marginal, and are considered quirky or eccentric. Sometimes their expression provokes censure and approbation. What is crucial is that constructions of 'self' and 'other' are intimately connected to the power relations that permeate the social and cultural world. We all live in a set of patterned and structured relations of unequal status and power – political, cultural or economic, for example. These relations can both free up and constrain our everyday lives. Having more money opens up certain opportunities which remain closed to those who have less. Having power and influence may open doors that would otherwise remain shut. These relations of power which help to shape our everyday experiences are bounded by social divisions.

Social divisions are social categories. Such categories can include race, gender, age, class, sexuality, disability, mental health and physical disability. Social categories are not static, but rather dynamic and change over time, space and place. As Best (2005: 324) states, 'Social categories are not simply given, they have to be established and maintained and the process through which they appear is known as *social division*.' They are situated historically, culturally, economically, and politically. Cultural and economic transformations in the past two decades, such as deindustrialization and globlization, have impacted upon the nature of social division. Best (2005: 2), for example, discusses how in recent years the concept of globlization has 'racialised our notions of citizenship, and led us to question the validity of the nation state as a political entity'. In one sense, social divisions are arbitrary. Yet they are also enduring. For Best, the most enduring social divisions are those we believe are rooted in nature. In this sense, the most enduring social divisions portray continuity. Being young and working class, for example, continues to represent disadvantage, marginalization and exclusion.

We are conscious of the problems relating to structuring the book according to what may appear, superficially at least, to be distinct and separate structural variables. From the outset we want to acknowledge that we recognize that the intersectionalties of class–race–age–gender or multiple inequalities (Daly, 1993) variously combine 'as intersecting, interlocking and contingent' (Daly, 1997: 33). Indeed, we could have stretched the content of the book to include chapters on sexuality, mental health and disability, and we discussed this. And we would have done so were it not for the fact that, in relation to victims of crime and victimization, these three areas remain under-researched.

The four social categories upon which this book primarily focuses – class, race, age, and gender – happen also to be the major social inequalities in our society. To be poor, to be black, to be young and to be female, simultaneously represents different distinct social categories with combined significance and relationship to relative disadvantage, exclusion, marginalization and powerlessness. We do not all start life equally. We come into it as unequal individuals. Advantage and disadvantage, therefore, are with us from the start, and the nature and impact of inequalities persist and change over time, place and space. Moreover, inequality is situated across and within generations. Our experiences in childhood may well affect our experiences later in life; and these will often affect our children's experiences as well. Who we fall in love with is often constrained by inequalities. And, importantly for this book, our experiences, fears and perceptions of crime and victimization are experienced through social divisions of inequality.

In the chapters that follow, Hazel Croall explores class (Chapters 3 and 4), Sandra Walklate and Pamela Davies explore gender (Chapters 6 and 7), Peter Francis explores race and age (Chapters 5 and 8), Azrini Wahidin and Jason Powell explore age (Chapter 9), and Chris Greer and Pamela Davies explore the connections between social divisions in the context of media representation (Chapter 2) and criminal injustice (Chapter 10) respectively.

For more on social divisions as social categories, read:

Best, S. (2005) *Understanding Social Divisions*, London: Sage.
Carrabine, E., Iganski, P., Lee, M., Plummer, K., and South, N. (2004) *Criminology: A Sociological Introduction*. London: Routledge.
Croall, H. (1998) *Crime and Society in Britain*. London: Longman.

Inequality, risk and victimization

Whereas social division is the central organizing theme of the book as a whole, individual chapters are connected by four 'golden threads'. These are: social inequality, risk and victimization; media representation and victims of crime; researching crime and victimization; and political and policy responses to victims of crime.

Since the mid-1990s, England and Wales have experienced a downturn in reported and recorded rates of crime and victimization. For example, the British Crime Survey (BCS) for 2005/06 reports that crime and victimization is stabilizing after long periods of reduction. In 2005/06, there were 10.9 million crimes committed against adults living in households in England and Wales (Walker et al., 2006). There were 5.6 million crimes recorded by the police for 2005/06. Since peaking in 1995, the BCS estimates that crime has reduced by 44 per cent, representing 8.4 million fewer crimes, with burglary (59 per cent) and vehicle crime (60 per cent) falling by more than half, and violent crime by 43 per cent. Indeed, the BCS suggests that 'The risk of becoming a victim of crime has fallen from 40% at its peak in 1995 to 23% according to BCS interviews in 2005/06, representing just over 6 million fewer victims. This is the lowest level recorded since the BCS began in 1981' (Walker et al., 2006: 13). Police data indicate that recorded rates for burglary and theft of and from vehicles have continued to fall over the same period. Furthermore, although police figures reveal an increase in recorded crime over the same period up until 2004 (largely as a result of the NCRS),[1] the figures for 2005/06 indicate a reduction from the previous year. In general terms, and without disaggregating the crime and victimization figures, England and Wales are probably a safer place in 2005/06 than they were in the mid-1990s.

However, it must be noted that such figures can also be misleading:

- They do take account of rates of reporting and recording by victims of crime both to BCS interviewers and police officers. Any increase or decrease may reflect the sensitivity in which incidents are subsequently recorded and classified by the police and/or may be the result of a victim's predisposition to report their victimization. Walker et al. (2006), for example, confirm findings from previous surveys that suggest there are fairly high rates of under-reporting and under-recording of crime and victimization, and that rates of both are contingent on a range of inter-related factors such as offence type, victim characteristics (young, old, black, white, male, female, straight, gay), previous experiences and, among other factors, perception of the police response.

- They mask variation in people's risk and vulnerability to crime and victimization. The BCS has, since its inception, provided evidence that crime and victimization are unevenly distributed across and between groups of individuals based upon their ethnicity, gender, age, class, lifestyle, relationships, and so on. The BCS 2005/06 indicates that geographic patterns and concentrations of offences varied by crime type. Variations differed across regions; in urban and rural areas; by Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)[2] area; and between most employment-deprived and least unemployment-deprived areas.
- They are unable to uncover the impact that crime and victimization have on individuals. After all, the impact that victimization has upon an individual is again dependent upon a range of factors, many of which are, to use Daly's phrase, intersecting, interlocking and contingent.

In examining the relationship between inequality, risk and victimization, Mike Dixon and colleagues (2006) offer a useful introduction and overview of recent crime and social inequality data. Examining data drawn from the BCS alongside socio-economic data, they attempt to unmask the unequal impact of crime.
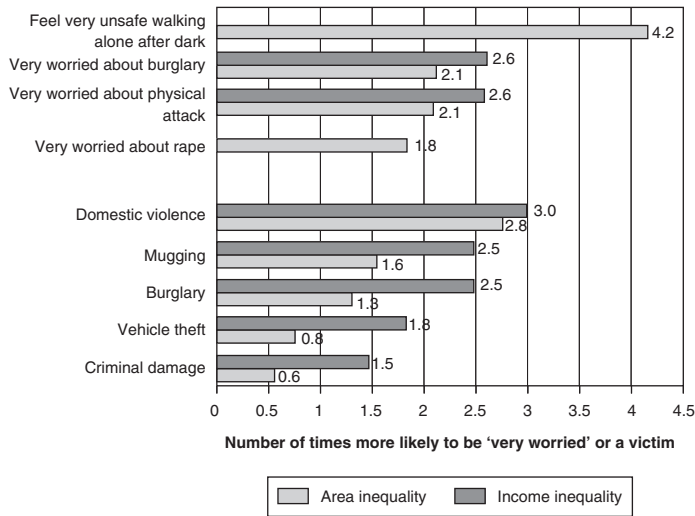
First, they point out that both crime and public perceptions of it differ by income and area. Those with incomes less that £10,000 and those residing in deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to experience acquisitive crime, and more likely to pronounce themselves very worried about being physically attacked (see Figure 1.1). Dixon et al. (2006: 13) highlight three specific findings in relation to income, victimization and concern. These are:

- Richer households are more likely to be victims of some crimes, such as vehicle crime and criminal damage.
- Poorer households are more likely to be victims of serious intrusive crime such as burglary, mugging and domestic violence.
- Poorer households are much more likely to report being very worried about specific types of crime and feeling unsafe when walking alone after dark. Importantly, the difference in concern is greater than the difference in victimization.

Obviously, there are broader issues at play here and they relate to an individual's ability to undertake avoidance behaviour and protect themselves and their household from crime and victimization, their willingness to report their victimization to an interviewer or the police, and their ability to deal with the cumulative physical and psychological effects of experiencing and worrying about victimization. Nevertheless, the broad finding remains the same – that those people most likely to be victimized by crime and to experience social harm in England and Wales are often the most marginalized social groups living in the poorest areas (Zedner, 2002). Vulnerability to crime, risk and fear of crime are exacerbated by social, economic, cultural and political exclusion.

Dixon et al. provide similar findings for ethnicity, age and gender. However, the differential risk rates associated with specific categories of

Feel very unsafe walking
alone after dark — 4.2

Very worried about burglary — 2.6 / 2.1

Very worried about physical
attack — 2.6 / 2.1

Very worried about rape — 1.8

Domestic violence — 3.0 / 2.8

Mugging — 2.5 / 1.6

Burglary — 2.5 / 1.3

Vehicle theft — 1.8 / 0.8

Criminal damage — 1.5 / 0.6

Number of times more likely to be 'very worried' or a victim

☐ Area inequality   ■ Income inequality

Figure 1.1   Inequality in concern and risk of victimization, by income and area

Source: Dixon et al. (2006), based on British Crime Survey, various years.

Note: Income inequality compares households with incomes of less than £10,000 per year to households with incomes of more than £30,000 per year. Area inequality compares households in 'hard-pressed' or 'striving' areas to households in 'wealthy achiever' or 'thriving areas (ACORN definitions). Income data from 2004/05, area data from 2003/04. Concern about crime data by area is from 2002/03.

social division are considered in detail in the different chapters in this book. What we want to stress here is that these categories should not be viewed as static and separate but as interconnecting and closely related. Thus, recent BCS reports suggest that black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be victims of crime, but this is because, on average, they are more likely to be younger (Dixon et al., 2006: 14). Once age is accounted for, risk and rates of vulnerability are minimal (Salisbury and Upson, 2004). There are also interesting points to be noted in relation to age and gender. Young people, for example, are often the most likely to be criminally victimized, and risk of victimization declines with age. But gender also affects the risk and vulnerability of younger and older people. Dixon et al. (2006: 16) point out that while women are less likely to be to be victims until they reach the age of 65, 'they are more likely to be victims of domestic violence at any age'.

Each chapter in this book focuses upon social inequality, risk and victimization and their connections with social categories of class, race, age and gender.

For more on inequality, risk and victimization, read:

Cook, D. (1997) *Poverty, Crime and Punishment*. **London: Child Poverty Action Group.**
Dixon, M., Reed, H., Rogers, B. and Stone, L. (2006) *Crime Share: The Unequal Impact of Crime*. **London: Institute for Public Policy Research.**
Walker, A., Kershaw, C. and Nichols, S. (2006) *Crime in England and Wales 2005/06*. **Home Office Statistical Bulletin. London: Home Office.**

Media representation and victims of crime

The front cover of this book presents an image of legs and feet of people walking along a pavement. We don't know who they are, what they look like, whether they are male or female, black, mixed race, Asian, young or old. The cover is reflective of the second golden thread that runs the length of the book. The role of news media in constructing and (mis)representing victims of crime and victimization. While the media do not necessarily tell us what to think, they can tell us what to think about. They are of fundamental importance to those who would promote a particular view of crime victims and victimization, or seek to challenge or change existing views. They are a key site where policy-makers seek to secure popular acceptance and legitimacy of new measures affecting victims of crime, and groups espousing competing values, interests and beliefs struggle to secure 'ownership' – and, with it, political power – of various victim-related issues and debates.

In the information age (Webster, 2005), where communications technologies occupy a central and increasingly important role in most people's lives, understanding complex social issues such as crime and victimization, control and social order requires engaging with the media. As one of us has argued elsewhere (Greer, 2005: 157):

The rapid and relentless development of information technologies over the past 100 years has shaped the modern era, transforming the relations between space, time and identity. Where once 'news' used to travel by ship, it now hurtles across the globe at light speed and is available 24 hours-a-day at the push of a button. Where once cultures used to be more or less distinguishable in national or geographical terms, they now mix, intermingle and converge in a constant global exchange of information. Where once a sense of community and belonging was derived primarily from established identities and local traditions, it may now also be found, and lost, in a virtual world of shared

> values, meanings and interpretations. In short, media are not only inseparable from contemporary social life; they are, for many, its defining characteristic.

The 'problem of crime', as many have pointed out, is a socially constructed problem. What we mean by this is that, since most people have little first-hand experience of crime and victimization, we are reliant on other sources of information for much of our knowledge about it. Few of these are more important than the media. Media representations influence what the issues of crime and victimization 'mean' to people. They help to socially construct these issues by presenting particular 'views of reality'. There is no necessary connection, however, between what is presented in the media and what is happening 'in the real world'. The issues of crime and victimization, then, are highly mediatized issues. On this basis, it is our contention that any comprehensive sociological exploration of crime victims and victimization must engage with the media and media repre-sentation. For a failure to engage with the media in analyses of this nature is a failure to acknowledge one of the key sources through which the con-cepts of crime, victim and victimization are given meaning in contempo-rary society.

One need only skim the chapter headings and index pages of the vast majority of victimology books to realize that media representations scarcely feature. This, for us, represents an important gap in the literature, and in this book we seek to contribute to filling that gap. It is not our inten-tion to suggest that victimization has no external reality, or that this reality is 'unknowable' in any meaningful, empirical way. Nor indeed would we suggest that the reality of crime, inasmuch as it can be known empirically or experientially, is of secondary significance to what people *believe to be* the reality of crime. On the contrary, aligned with a critical criminological approach, we are keen to point out that victimization tends to be dispro-portionately concentrated among some of the most vulnerable, marginal-ized and powerless sections of society. For these groups the pains of victimization are experienced not only most often, but also most acutely. What we would insist, however, is that popular understanding of this unequal distribution of pain and suffering, of the nature and extent of vic-timization, of the experiences of victimization and fears of being a crime victim, of the measures that might be taken to reduce victimization, of vic-tims' needs and victims' rights – all these issues are, to a greater or lesser extent, shaped in the media.

In addition to Chapter 2 by Chris Greer, which is dedicated to exploring media representations through an in-depth analysis of general issues and specific cases studies, each successive chapter acknowledges in some sense the key role that the media can play in defining, problematizing and

reshaping dominant conceptions and popular understandings of crime victims and criminal victimization.

For more on media representation and victims of crime, read:

Chermak, S. (1995) *Victims in the News: Crime and the American News Media.* **Boulder, CO: Westview Press.**
Greer, C. (2003) *Sex Crime and the Media: Sex Offending and the Press in a Divided Society.* **Cullumpton: Willan.**
Jewkes, Y. (2004) *Crime and the Media.* **London: Sage.**

Researching crime and victimization

The third golden thread that connects the chapters concerns the methodologies and the tools and techniques used to find out about crime victimization and victims of crime. Since the 1970s, the direct questioning of the victim has been central to the victimological enterprise, some of the features of which are generic to social surveys, whereas others are specific responses to the problems of studying victimization (Davies et al., 2003).

The belief that official recorded criminal statistics indicate more about the organizational processes involved in collation and collection than about levels of crime and criminal activity has had an enormous impact upon engaging criminologists in alternative and competing strategies of collecting data about crime, such as the utilization of data other than that from the police (Maguire, 2002). A further impetus to the development of victim surveys came from direct concerns for the victim within criminology and also within criminal justice policy. It was only with the growth in interest in victims of crime and criminal activity in the late 1970s in the United States and the 1980s in Britain, coupled with the enormous impact of feminist research and methodologies, that information about victims of crime and victimization slowly started to appear in the form of the crime survey (Goodey, 2005). Since then, surveying victims has for many criminologists become one of the most flexible and rewarding research methodologies, facilitating the generation of details about the circumstances of the offence, relationships between victims and their experiences of the various criminal justice agencies. In the early 2000s the Home Office moved from only presenting the BCS and police-recorded crime in separate reports to combining key findings of each and presenting these as an additional composite report (see, for example, Walker et al., 2006).

Davies et al. (2003) demonstrate how victimization surveys have played an important role in criminology and in policy-making by providing better

estimates of the extent of crime and victimizations than those provided by
police data, and also by giving insights into victims' experiences, perceptions
and worries of crime and of the criminal justice system. In a variety of ways,
surveys of victims have been concerned with differing dimensions of vic-
timization. These include crime measurement and reasons for under-report-
ing and under-recording; the correlates of victimization; the risk of
victimization; the fear of crime and its relationship to the probability of vic-
timization; the experience of crime from the viewpoint of victims; and the
treatment of victims in the criminal justice system. In particular, five broad
patterns in victim surveys are discernible. These are local cross-sectional
sample surveys, 'appreciative' surveys, national trend sample surveys, cross-
national surveys and police 'consumer' surveys (Davies et al., 2003; Spalek,
2006).

Victimization surveys, however, are not without their critics. These crit-
icisms range from the simple, e.g. they can often assume a level of literacy
or understanding among the sample population that may not be available,
to the more complex. In particular, they have been criticized for not being
able to go behind the mere appearance of things. What goes on behind
our backs constitutes the things we are not aware of (but which may still
result in our victimization) and these are much more difficult to capture by
survey method; for example, not being able to provide estimates of experi-
ences of incidents and harms, such as mass pollution affecting large popu-
lations, and not providing measures of crimes, such as fraud.

Moreover, victimization surveys are unable to situate and contextualize
victimization in the everyday lives and routine activities that we all engage
in. They are unable to situate our experiences of crime and victimization
within socio-economic, cultural and political contexts. In addition, surveys
can often reflect the agenda and priorities of those carrying out the research
or consultation rather than the participants involved as subjects. Victim
surveys are closely tied to the confines of the criminological and victimologi-
cal enterprises. Therefore, such surveys are often viewed as inappropriate
to questions raised by forms of thinking which view such enterprises as
constraining and instead seek to add a critical edge by locating victimiza-
tion in wider structural issues.

As a consequence, some victimologists have looked beyond the victim-
ization survey to more qualititative and ethnographic methods of research
and inquiry. Indeed, many have heeded the clarion call for triangulation to
pick and mix and match different methods for different areas of research.
Sandra Walklate (2003: 41), for example, has suggested that an exploration
of the complexity of human interaction through time and space demands
a research agenda which goes beyond the victimization survey. The kind of
framework supported by Walklate is one that locates victimization within

a socio-economic, cultural and political context and which examines the processes that go on behind people's backs which contribute to the victims (and the crimes) we see, as opposed to those we do not see. For Walklate, research may involve comparison, triangulation of method and longitudinal studies.

Class, race, age and gender all play their part in locating victimization in wider structural issues as do personal histories, habits and behaviours. Throughout the book, each chapter explores the ways in which victims of crime are rendered visible through documenting and cataloguing their experiences. The chapters examine how criminal victimization is measured and how unreported victimization remains an issue, and they trace the development of the ways in which the socially divided nature of victimization is increasingly appreciated and understood.

For more on researching victims and victimization, read:

Davies, P., Francis, P. and Jupp, V. (2003) *Victimisation Theory, Research and Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave
Goodey, J. (2005) *Victims and Victimology: Research, Policy and Practice*. London: Longman
Spalek, B. (2006) *Crime Victims: Theory. Policy and Practice*. London: Palgrave.

Political and policy responses to victims of crime

The final golden thread that connects each of the chapters concerns the political and policy response to victims of crime. Victims of crime who often appear in the public arena usually do so because they have made contact with the police (or the criminal justice system as a witness). These individuals are already a selective category of crime victims and a socially divided group. They have become separated from other victims of crime and social harm because they have become part of the political and policy process, and thus, in relative terms, are what we might call 'visible victims'. These are the people whose victimization has come to official notice. As far as public policy and practice for victims are concerned, these might be considered the lucky ones. Their experiences are officially known and they may qualify for assistance and support. Indeed, they might consider themselves the lucky ones.

However, even at this stage, this may not be the case. For example, they may experience secondary victimization. Secondary victimization occurs at

the hands of the criminal justice system staff or anyone else responding to an offence. It results from the insensitive treatment of victims of crime – often inadvertently – by the criminal justice system or by friends and acquaintances. For example, a child may have their experience questioned by a police officer or social worker casting doubt upon their truthfulness and integrity (Davies and Francis, forthcoming).

Very few victims of crime seek help and public support and assistance of their own accord. Of the vast majority of victims who are users of services provided by the criminal justice system or supportive provisions funded by the government, only a few will seek help voluntarily. Most will take up the offer of practical assistance and emotional support after having been referred by the police. For enormous numbers of people who are socially harmed or criminally victimized, it is difficult to access services, and some are even excluded from making use of some services or schemes because they have not come into the public arena of the criminal justice system or managed to make their victimization visible.

A range of supportive provisions and victim assistance schemes can be identified in most social systems across the world, all of which will have differing relationships to their respective criminal justice systems. Some victimagogic services are at arm's length or fully independent of the government and the criminal justice system, some are provided under statute, others by voluntary groups and charities. In England and Wales, particularly since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of different victimagogic activities blurring the boundaries of whether help and assistance is public, private or voluntary and whether it is offered as of right. For a discussion of the development of victim support and services, consult Williams (1999) and Davies et al. (2003). Landmark dates in the development of victim support and services are detailed in Table 1.1.

Various contributions to this volume consider the nature and impact of the political and the policy response to victims of crime, mostly in the context of England and Wales but comparisons with other jurisdictions are also used. There is one main unifying thread to this particular focal point, and connected to this there are several key victimological debates that impact upon the major social divides under scrutiny. Each of the contributions to this volume addresses a number of questions in relation to the connections between political and policy responses and victims of crime. These are:

• How appropriate are the various state responses to victimization and victims and witnesses?
• What has been the political and policy response to specific victims of crime?
• How do victims of different types of criminal victimization experience criminal justice systems and processes?

Table 1.1 Some landmark dates in the development of victim support policy

Date	Procedure
1964	Establishment of statutory criminal injuries compensation arrangements
1972	First UK women's refuge set up
1975	Victim Support set up
1976	First UK rape crisis centre set up
1981	Creation of British Crime Survey
1982	Roger Graef's TV documentary on the treatment of women reporting rape
1985	UN declaration of the basic principles of justice for victims of crime and abuse of power
1986	Childline set up
1987	First national government funding for Victim Support
1990	Victims Charter
1991	Criminal Justice Act
1996	Victims Charter revised
1998	Crime and Disorder Act – reparation for victims of young offenders
1999	Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act – vulnerable witness provision
2004	Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act
2004	Victims Fund – to develop services for victims of sexual offending
2004	Establishment of the Victims Advisory Panel – giving victims a greater voice in policy-making
2005	*Rebuilding Lives: Supporting Victims* Green Paper – victim support to prioritize practical and emotional help, as well as financial compensation
2006	Code of Practice for Victims of Crime – creation of statutory obligations on the Criminal Justice System to provide minimum standard of service to victims
2006	Recruitment of a Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses

Source: Dixon et al. (2006: 7)

In this volume, there are sections that specifically address questions on anti-social experiences, unfairness and bias, injustice and inequality, discrimination and prejudice as pertaining to criminal justice systems generally or to different components of systems, i.e. the police, the courts, the CPS, the magistracy and judiciary, the prison and probation services.

However, in addition to addressing the questions above, there are several key victimological concerns and debates that repeatedly occur when reviewing the relationship between victims within the major social divisions under scrutiny in this volume and public policy and practice. Some of these discussions focus upon the absence of appropriate public policy and practices directed towards those who have been criminally victimised or socially harmed and which might aid their recovery. Other discussions focus upon the victim's representation or lack of representation and even neglect in criminal justice policy and practice. Another angle to these reviews and critiques focuses upon how public and criminal justice policy

and practice can actually result in social harm and criminal victimization. These sections of the volume effectively examine the ways in which people experience victimization as a result of criminal justice policy and practice and as a result of wider measures aimed at reducing crime and/or improving quality of life and well-being. Additionally, several of the chapters highlight recent developments in the provision of mediation and restorative justice programmes as such philosophies appear to be affecting the broader spectrum of criminal justice policy and practice generally.

From the above discussion it can be surmised that there have been numerous developments involving the victim of crime in state and charitable/ voluntary sector policy and practice over the past four decades. Indeed, criminal justice policies in respect of victims have gathered increasing momentum. Many have had a positive impact, especially in terms of changing the status of the victim in the criminal justice system. Some measures have significantly improved the victim's experiences in connection with helping achieve social justice while other developments in the past 40 years or so have been helpful in meeting victims, needs in the short, medium and longer term. Certain time periods can be identified with specific social groups achieving victimological recognition. The emergence of the feminist movement in the 1970s was enormously influential in the development of services for victims of rape, sexual assault and domestic violence well into the following decade in both the US and the UK. In England and Wales, developments in the 1990s were especially significant. This decade produced the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, acknowledged police institutional racism and inadequacies surrounding public policies associated with crime, victimization and criminal justice with respect to black people. The same decade also witnessed the rediscovery of popular punitiveness towards young offenders which youth victimology has since heavily criticized.

While there have been positive gains for some crime victims, there have also been some stalemate predicaments and even losses. In terms of stalemates, despite an array of victim-oriented activities and measures, there continues to be a lack of any coherent victims policy, and victims continue to occupy a position defined by their need rather than by a notion of rights. Another stalemate situation is that victims' 'lived experiences' of criminal justice and its agencies – namely, the police, the courts and the prosecution process – continue to be less positive than hoped. For example, much literature details the fragile nature of police – victim relations, especially when the victim represents a marginalized and oppressed group or individual, such as ethnic minorities, women, young people and those from low socio-economic backgrounds. And, finally, in terms of losses, some victims continue to be further traumatized and victimized by inappropriate treatment from public sector services, including the criminal justice

system and other official bodies and authorities. Victimologically, excluded citizens and consumers of services are those who fall short of the socially acceptable stereotype of the 'ideal victim', people divided by policies dominated by such assumptions continue to be the forgotten or lost victim.

For more on political and policy responses to victims of crime, read:

Davies, P. and Francis, P. (forthcoming) *Victims in the Criminal Justice System*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Dignan, J. (2005) *Understanding Victims and Restorative Justice.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.
Spalek, B. (2006) *Crime Victims: Theory, Policy and Practice*. London: Palgrave.

Political economy of criminal victimization

In the previous sections we have introduced the central organizing theme and the various golden threads that run throughout the various chapters. This penultimate section situates and locates the book within a broader theoretical and methodological framework – one that we hope is broadly critical in aim and approach. It is informed by the importance of delivering social justice.

As noted at various stages already, the contributors to this volume are concerned not only to explore and explain the nature and extent of victimization in contemporary society, but also to understand the unequal distribution and experience of that victimization through reference to social division and inequality. Inequality is understood as being a necessary by-product of the current political-economic and social-cultural arrangements of late modern society. Crime, victimization, social division and inequality all simultaneously derive from and feed into wider structures of inclusion and exclusion, power and subordination, containment and control. As such, they are defining features of the contemporary social and criminal justice landscape.

A central contention of this book is that victimization is felt most often and most acutely by the most marginalized and powerless sections of society. At the same time, prevailing definitions of crime victim and victimization – in terms of who can or cannot legitimately claim victim status, who is or is not deserving of social support or media attention – do much to reify dominant white, male, middle-class, heterosexual discourses on crime and control. They reinforce rather than challenge existing structures of

power. In so doing, they help to maintain the social, political and economic conditions under which much victimization takes place. It is within this critical criminological framework, sensitized in particular to the issues of inequality, social justice, and inclusion and exclusion, that all the contributions in this book are located. For these reasons, this book is a political book.

Critical criminology has a long and varied history within the academy. Partly in response to the a–theoretical, a–historical, situationally-oriented approaches of the administrative criminologies resulting from the Home Office 'what works' mantra since the 1990s, critical criminology has undergone something of a recent resurgence. One of its central aims is to reinforce and tighten the links between criminology and its theoretical and political moorings, at a time when mainstream criminology risks casting it adrift from both. While administrative criminologists pay at best secondary attention to the causes of crime, critical criminologists consider an appreciation of aetiology to be fundamental, not least because many of the sources of criminal behaviour, and thus criminal victimization, can be found in the political and economic structures of late capitalist societies. Whilst administrative criminologists retain a narrow definition of crime – in many ways, reflecting tabloid representations of street violence, burglary, car theft and vandalism – critical criminologists are keen to convey that much suffering through criminal victimization results from the activities of the powerful. Corporate and white-collar offending, state crimes, deaths in custody, everyday experiences of racial and sexual violence and prejudice, and social exclusion can all be understood in terms of political and economic power and the unequal distribution of social justice in society.

Thus, a critical criminological approach is shared in each of the contributions in this volume. Whether discussing race, age, gender, class or media constructions of these social categories and their connection to images of crime and victimization, analysis is informed by an appreciation of the political economy of crime and victimization, and a desire to highlight victimization caused by the powerful as a pressing and ongoing concern.

For more on the political economy of criminal victimization, read:

Cook, D. (2005) *Criminal and Social Justice*, London: Sage.
Hillyard, P., Pantazis, C., Tombs, S. and Gordon, D. (eds) (2004) *Beyond Criminology: Taking Harm Seriously*. London: Pluto Press.
Mawby, R. and Walklate, S. (1994) *Critical Victimology*. London: Sage.

The structure of the book

To ensure consistency across all chapters in terms of the presentation of theory, research, policy and practice, and to secure a thorough review of all aspects of the academic and scholarly research literature, we were keen to identify from the outset a common format or component listing for each chapter that we hoped individual chapter authors would cover. Each chapters includes the following:

- a critical review of the theoretical and research literature on the area of study;
- an assessment of the development of any policy and legislative responses;
- a discussion of key developments/issues in the area of study;
- a discussion of any future research directions;
- a concise summary.

In addition, each of the chapters provides:

- a glossary of key terms used within the body of the chapter;
- questions for reflection and discussion;
- an annotated bibliography.

In outlining this format for each chapter, we were particularly keen to balance the authors' wish to explore and discuss what they wanted to, in relation to the particular substantive area that they were writing on, and the needs of the reader, new to the discipline of victimology and the study of victimization and victims of crime. In doing so, we think that the format strengthens the student-centred nature of the book and allows cross-referencing to be made within and between chapters.

Notes

1 The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was introduced in April 2002 to ensure better consistency of crime recording across force areas and offence categories. Visit http://homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk/rdscountrules.html for a more detailed discussion of the nature and detail of the NCRS.
2 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended by the Police Reform Act 2002, introduced a statutory responsibility on the police and local authorities to work together and with other relevant agencies and organizations within their area to prevent and reduce crime and disorder. As a result, there are, at the time of writing, 354 CDRPs in England and 22 CDRPs in Wales.

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