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| **Victimisation**  **The UN defines victims as those who have suffered from harm (including mental, physical or emotional suffering, economic loss and impairment of basic rights) through acts or omissions that violate the laws of the state.**  **Christie (1986) takes a different approach, highlighting the notion that ‘victim’ is socially constructed. The stereotype of the ‘ideal’ victim favoured by the media, public and criminal justice system is a weak, innocent and blameless individual e.g. a small child or old woman who is the target of a stranger’s attack.** | | | |
| Positivist victimology | Critical victimology | Patterns of victimisation | The impact of victimisation |
| **Miers (1989)**   1. Aims to identify the factors that produce *patterns of victimisation* – especially those that make a person or group more likely to become a victim 2. Focuses on *interpersonal crimes of violence* 3. Aims to identify those victims who have contributed to *their own victimisation*  * Early positivist studies focused on *victim proneness;* seeking to identify the social and psychological characteristics of victims that make them different from and more vulnerable than non victims. * **Van Hentig (1948)** identified 13 characteristics of victims such as them being likely to be females, elderly or ‘mentally subnormal’. * The inference being that victims somehow ‘invite’ victimisation. Another example is those that ostentatiously displayed their wealth.   **Example study: Wolfgang (1958)** studied 588 homicides in Philadelphia. He found that 26% involved *victim precipitation* – the victim triggered the events leading to the homicide for example by starting the violence. E.g. when the victim was male and the perpetrator female.  ***Evaluation of positivist victimology***   * **Support** for the positivist victimisation approach comes from **Brookman (2005)** argues that Wolfgang shows the importance of the victim-offender relationship and the fact that in many homicides it is a matter of chance as to which person becomes the victim. * This approach identifies certain patterns of interpersonal victimisation, but ignores wider structural factors * It can easily tip over into victim blaming e.g. Amir’s (1971) claim that one in fave rapes are victim precipitated is not very different from saying that the victims ‘asked for it’ * It ignores situations where victims are unaware of their victimisation, as with some crimes against the environment, and where harm is done but no law broken | This approach is based on conflict theories such as Feminism and Marxism and has two elements;  **1. Structural factors** – such as patriarchy and poverty which places some powerless groups such as women and the poor at greater risk of victimisation. **Mawby and Walklate (1994)** argue that victimisation is a form of *structural powerlessness.*  **2. The state’s power to apply or deny the label of victim –** ‘victim’ can be considered a social construction (just like ‘crime’ and ‘criminal’) through the CJS the state applies the label of victim but withholds it from others. E.g. police decide not to prosecute a man who beats his wife, thus she is not a victim.  **Tombs and Whyte (2007)** safety crimes such as employer’s violation of laws lead to death or injury to worker’s, are often explained away as the fault of ‘accident prone’ workers. This is often the case with rape cases, where a woman seems to have to prove her innocence rather than (normally) the man’s guilt (blaming the woman for her fate i.e. ‘victim blame’)  **Tombs and Whyte (2007)** note the ideological function of this ‘failure to label’ or ‘de-labelling’. By concealing the true extent of victimisation and its real causes, it hides the crimes of the powerful and denies the powerless victims any redress. In the *hierarchy of victimisation,* therefore, the powerless are most likely to be victimised, yet least likely to have this acknowledged by the state.  **Evaluation of critical victimology**   * This approach has been criticised for disregarding the role victims play in bringing victimisation on themselves through their own choices (e.g. not making their home secure) or their own offending. * It is valuable in drawing attention to the way that ‘victim’ status is constructed by power and how this benefits the powerful at the expense of the powerless. | **Class**   * The poorest groups are more likely to be victimised. For example, crime rates are typically highest in areas of high unemployment and deprivation. * **Newburn and Rock (2006)** conducted a survey of 300 homeless people and found that they were 12 times more likely to have experienced violence than the general population; one in ten had been urinated on whilst sleeping rough. This shows that marginalised groups are most likely to become victims.   **Age**   * Younger people are more likely to be the victim of crime. Most at risk of murder are children under the age of 1, teenagers are more vulnerable than adults to be vulnerable to crimes such as assault, sexual harassment, theft and abuse. The old are also likely to be victims of abuse in care homes, where victimisation is often invisible.   **Ethnicity**   * Ethnic minorities are more likely to be victims of crime in general as well as racially motivated crime. Ethnic minorities are also more likely to feel under protected yet over controlled (in relation to the police)   **Gender**   * Males are at greater risk of becoming victims of violent attacks than women, especially by strangers. About 70% of homicide victims are male. Women are more likely to be victim of domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking and harassment, people trafficking and in times of war mass rape as a weapon of war.   **Repeat victimisation**   * If you have been a victim once, you are very likely to be one again. Accoridng to the British Crime Survey, around 60% of the population have not been victims of any kind in a given year, whereas a mere 4% of the population are victims of 44% of all crimes in that period.   **Evaluation**  BCS – Include some methodological evaluation of BCS because it is a questionnaire. | * Crime can have serious physical and emotional impacts on the victims. * For example a variety of effects have been cited such as disrupted sleep, feelings of helplessness, increased security consciousness and difficulties in social functioning, depending on the crime. * Crime may also create ‘indirect’ victims such as friends, relatives and witnesses. **Pynoos et al (1987)** found that child witnesses to a sniper attack continued to have grief related dreams and altered behaviour a year after the event. * Hate crimes against minorities can create ‘waves of harm’ that radiate out and affect others. These are ‘message crimes’ aimed at intimidating whole communities not just the primary victim.   **Secondary victimisation** is the idea that in addition to the impact of the crime itself, individuals may suffer further victimisation at the hands of the CJS. **Feminists** argue that rape victims are often so poorly treated by the courts and police it amounts to a double violation.  **Fear of victimisation** Crime may create fear of becoming a victim. Surveys often show this fear to be irrational. For example, women are often fearful of going out, but it is young men who are more likely to be victims of violence from strangers.  **Feminists** have attacked the emphasis on the ‘fear of crime’. They argue it focuses on women’s passivity when we should be focusing on their safety i.e. focus on the structural threat of patriarchal violence that they face. |
| Conclusions – Positivist criminology focuses on victim proneness and critical victimology emphasises structural factors. Whichever approach towards victimology one takes one thing is clear; that the poor, ethnic minorities and the young are at the greatest risk of crime. | | | |