

Critical Victimology: International Perspectives

Perspectives on Victimology

Contributors: R.I. Mawby & S. Walklate
Book Title: Critical Victimology: International Perspectives
Chapter Title: "Perspectives on Victimology"
Pub. Date: 1994
Access Date: April 27, 2015
Publishing Company: SAGE Publications Ltd
City: London
Print ISBN: 9780803985124
Online ISBN: 9781446250587
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446250587.n1>
Print pages: 7-23

©1994 SAGE Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

This PDF has been generated from SAGE knowledge. Please note that the pagination of the online version will vary from the pagination of the print book.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446250587.n1>

[p. 7 ↓]

Chapter 1: Perspectives on Victimology

Books are very much a product of the time in which they are written. This particular text was conceived at a time in which the relatively young (sub)discipline of victimology, and the victim movements variously associated with victimological thinking, were increasingly making their presence felt on the criminal justice policies of England and Wales. That presence, however, was felt not only in England and Wales. Influenced to a certain extent by North American initiatives, it was being felt across Europe. The social circumstances affecting this particular project, then, stem from not only the political and social events of the 1980s in England and Wales, but also from the rapid changes to the political map of Europe, both East and West, that occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s. These changes have led to a re-evaluation of theory and praxis across the East–West European divide. This may prove to be as significant in the context of understanding the operation and processes of the various criminal justice and welfare systems as in the more overtly political arenas. These developments afford an opportunity of evaluating the potential contribution of the various strands of victimological thinking, towards both understanding and influencing the direction of these changes.

Given that much has already been written about victimology, the reader may well be wondering why it is necessary to review, once again, its origins and emergence. Most texts of recent origin, for example, have paid due attention to the work of Von Hentig and Mendelsohn and to the nature of the relationship of victimology to criminology. (Karmen, 1990; Mawby and Gill, 1987; Walklate, 1989). Little attention, however, has been paid to understanding the different strands within victimological thought, the different relationship that those strands have with so-called ‘victim movements’, and the relationship of those movements to wider processes of social change. An attempt will be made here to map some of these connections through the development of three victimological frameworks.

[p. 8 ↓]

Victimological Frameworks

Various attempts have been made to classify the different strands of victimological thought. This began with the work of Mendelsohn and Von Hentig. Their ideas, as Schneider (1991) amongst others suggests, set the victimological agenda in two different ways: the first directing attention to a victimology of human rights and thereby establishing victimology as an independent discipline; the second being more closely concerned with victims of crime and thus seeing victimology as a sub-discipline of criminology. These different directions can be traced in the debate which follows.

Initially it is important to be aware that efforts to set a framework for victimology face a number of difficulties. One of these difficulties is that of disentangling what Fattah (1989) has called 'humanistic victimology' from 'scientific victimology'. In making this distinction Fattah is attempting to explicate what he considers to be the uncomfortable relationship between the activist and the academic in their concern for the victim of crime. The connections between academic thinking and activist concerns cannot, however, be disentangled simply because that is seen to be a preferable state of affairs. These links are deeply embedded in the theory and practice of the discipline and need to be squarely addressed. To this end Karmen (1990) identifies three tendencies within the victimological debate: the conservative, the liberal, and the radical-critical. Each of these, he argues, defines the scope of the discipline differently and connects differentially with positions within the victims' movement. It is perhaps worth summarizing Karmen's argument before developing these issues a little more fully.

For Karmen (1990) the conservative tendency within victimology defines the discipline in four ways. First, it focuses on crime as a problem with particular attention being paid to victims of street crime; secondly, it is concerned to render people accountable for their actions; thirdly it encourages self-reliance; and finally, it focuses on notions of retributive justice. He argues that the liberal tendency extends this conservative focus by including 'crimes of the suites' in their analyses; by being concerned to 'make the victim whole again'; and by considering the value of restitution and reconciliation as appropriate penal strategies. The radical-critical tendency within victimology, according to Karmen, wishes to extend the focus of the discipline even further. This tendency

includes all forms of human suffering in the analysis and considers the criminal justice system to be as much a problem in constructing that suffering as the 'victimizing' event. Thus 'institutional wrongdoing that violates human rights' (Karmen, 1990: 12) is considered a legitimate area for study.

[p. 9 ↓]

These tendencies are certainly present within victimology and they certainly draw attention to the question of the connections to be made between them and the different types of 'advocacy' position taken up within the victims' movement. A characterization of this sort, however, makes it difficult to locate a particular writer or a particular organization under one label, since the labels themselves are not mutually exclusive. In addition, what this characterization fails to unwrap more closely are the connections to be made between these labels and the presumed scientific status of the discipline they represent. Examining assumptions of this kind allows connections to be made between differing conceptions of victimology and the image of society implied by those conceptions. This provides one way of addressing the implications that these images of society have for understanding the role of the law and the role of the state in the victimization process. An attempt will be made to unwrap some of these issues and their value for understanding the development of victims' movements by identifying three 'types' of victimology: positivist, radical, and critical victimology.

Positivist Victimology

Miers (1989: 3) has usefully identified what can be considered the key characteristics of positivist victimology:

The identification of factors which contribute to a non-random pattern of victimization, a focus on interpersonal crimes of violence, and a concern to identify victims who may have contributed to their own victimization.

These characteristics dovetail with Karmen's (1990) identification of 'conservative victimology' and parallel Walklate's (1989) 'conventional victimology'. Indeed, one of the key features of this type of victimology is its focus on street crime to the exclusion

of other kinds of criminal victimization like violence, rape, and various forms of abuse, which more often occur behind closed doors. In this vein the work of Hindelang, Gottfredson and Garofalo (1978) constitutes a good example of the neglect of the 'private' as an arena for victimological analysis. By the same token such conservative/ conventional work largely neglects to consider victims of corporate crime. Miers (1989), however, does not fully outline what is meant by positivism in this context. This is a useful question to explore a little more fully at this point.

Keat and Urry (1975: 3) state:

For the positivist, there are no necessary connections in nature; there [p. 10 ↓] are only regularities, successions of phenomena which can be systematically represented in the universal laws of scientific theory. Any attempt to go beyond this plunges science into the unverifiable claims of metaphysics and religion, which are at best unscientific, and at worst meaningless.

This view of science facilitates a concern with patterns, regularities and precipitative characteristics of victimizing events and, consequently, the production of victim typologies. It is this view of science which has traditionally insisted upon the separation of the scientist from the humanist (the academic from the activist; see Fattah, 1989). This separation is, of course, highly problematic and constitutes a view of science which has been challenged by feminists amongst others, a challenge that gains particular significance in the context of victimology, as shall be seen. Here it is sufficient to observe that whilst humanists wear their hearts on their sleeve the scientist's commitments are frequently hidden behind notions of objectivity and value freedom; notions which in themselves have largely been couched in male terms, hidden by what Smith (1990) has called the 'regime of rationality'. That feminist work has largely been marginalized by victimology as a whole, and by positivistic victimology in particular, is not unconnected to the desire to separate activism from science.

The marginalization of feminism by victimology has been commented on elsewhere. Rock (1986) implies that this has occurred to a certain extent by choice in so far as the concept of victim precipitation came to be regarded as 'victim blaming' and victimology came to be seen as a 'weapon of ideological oppression'. Hostility towards such work

from within victimology and the potential for this work to be used politically as a way of further denying the pervasiveness of patriarchal structures on women's lives, alongside mainstream (malestream) analyses of those lives, is hardly surprising; a hostility which is more than justified given the deep roots such concepts seem to have. But the importance of reflecting on the challenge of feminism draws attention to more than just the political arena. It challenges the very conception of science to which not only positivistic victimologists adhere.

Harding (1987, 1991) develops the feminist challenge to science and its associated features in a number of different ways. At its core, however, this is a debate which is concerned less with the techniques of doing research (though it may be argued that those techniques may be used more appropriately and/or more imaginatively) than to establish, at the level of methodology, the status not only of women as knowers but of what it is that is to be known. Thus part of the impact of feminist research lies in its concern to [p. 11 ↓] make visible what has been invisible and to name that which has gone without a name. In the context of victimology in general, and positivist victimology in particular, this renders its focus on the public rather than the private highly problematic. It also renders problematic the concern to separate the 'academic' from the 'activist', an issue to which we shall return.

The problems associated with the influence of positivism within victimology does not mean that such an influence has not yielded some important information for academic and activist alike. Thus Fattah (1989) berates the activist for not having taken note of some of these findings, and the development of the criminal victimization survey in particular was certainly very influential in placing the question of criminal victimization on the policy agenda. It is quite clear, of course, that such information has been used politically in one context to downplay the risk of crime (see Hough and Mayhew, 1983) and, in another, to emphasize the risk of crime (see President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, 1982).

So positivism has been very powerful in the development of victimology. Indeed, and whether or not work from within this framework has been appreciated by particular victims' movements, organizations, or academics, the patterns and regularities yielded by positivist victimology has been used expediently in the political arena. In a general way it was certainly implicated in the move from 'crime prevention' to 'victimization

prevention' (Karmen, 1990) which in the United Kingdom has been advocated by the Conservative Party as 'social responsibility' and 'active citizenship'; a move which has not been confined to the UK and North America (Van Dijk, 1991a; Bienkowska, 1991a). Overall political trends of this kind reflect more specific links with specific victims' movements.

Karmen (1990: 11), for example, connects his understanding of conservative victimology with victim movements in the following way:

Conservatives within victimology and the victims' rights movement see the criminal justice system as the guarantor of retributive justice – satisfying victims with the knowledge that offenders are being punished for their crimes.

It is possible to argue that their relationship is somewhat stronger, in that in some circumstances victims' movements have been involved in setting the pace for the return to and giving priority to retributive justice. This was the case with the 'Victims of Violence' organization in England and Wales in the early 1980s (Jonker, 1986), which is paralleled by some elements of the feminist movement, NOVA in the United States and to a lesser extent [p. 12 ↓] Die Weisser Ring in Germany (Maguire and Shapland, 1990). Traditional thinking, as reflected in the moves towards retribution, is also to be found in the way in which this kind of victimology views the nature of society. This view of society is most readily gleaned from the pre-eminence given to the construction of victim-typologies. This, of course, began with the work of Von Hentig and Mendelsohn.

As stated earlier. Von Hentig and Mendelsohn are considered the founding fathers of victimology. Each developed typological frameworks as means of generating an understanding of the victim/offender relationship. Von Hentig did this by considering the nature of victim-proneness. His typology has thirteen categories including the young, the old, the female and the mentally defective, and so on. Mendelsohn considered the extent to which the notion of culpability could inform an understanding of the victimizing event. He had six categories ranging from the 'completely innocent' to the 'most guilty victim'. The problems associated with each of these typologies has been discussed elsewhere (Walklate, 1989). The search for typologies, however, continues. One of the most recent, most sophisticated and wide-ranging typologies

to be produced is contained in the work of Landau and Freeman-Longo (1990). This highly imaginative and multidimensional model nevertheless shares a key weakness of such work: an inherently static and sociologically functionalist view of society. The themes of consensus, equilibrium and incremental change, which are embedded in functionalism, are also embedded in the production of typologies since they fail to capture (or challenge) the process of the social reproduction of (criminal) victimization. They provide a way of offering a picture of regularities, hence the connection with positivism, but cannot capture the social and historical reproduction of victimization through time and space.

This view of society and its implicit conception of social change as being gradual and incremental has a number of consequences. First, it makes it difficult to recognize and analyse the definitional problems associated with the term 'victim' itself. Positivist victimology takes the meaning of this term as being self-evident by the mere 'fact' of individual suffering on the one hand or by recourse to the legal framework on the other. There is little sense in which either the law itself or the state in the implementation of the law constructs our understanding of the victim. Secondly, there is no sense within this view of the way in which individuals may actively resist, campaign against or survive the label 'victim'. Finally there is little sense of those processes of social change which may be dramatic and unforeseen as opposed to gradual and incremental. Radical [p. 13 ↓] victimology can be considered to address some if not all of these issues.

Radical Victimology

The presence of a radical victimology can be traced back to the work of Mendelsohn, who argued for a victimology concerned with all victims. However, this radical strand takes on a more substantial form in the late 1960s and early 1970s and can be traced through to the 1980s. Its emergence has some parallels with the emergence of radical criminology and though Jones, MacLean and Young (1986) dispute Friedrichs's (1983) view that radical victimology had little influence on radical criminology there is some agreement that these ideas emerged at around the same time. Essentially a radical victimology concerns itself with:

victims of police force, the victims of war, the victims of the correctional system, the victims of state violence, the victims of oppression of any sort.

(Quinney, 1972: 315)

For Quinney all of these could be rendered visible by the development of an alternative perspective; and that alternative perspective would, rather as radical criminology did, call into question the role of the capitalist state, and the role of the law within capitalist societies in defining the social construction of both the offender and the victim. The elements of such a perspective were not only to be found in 'Western' criminology/victimology. Similar questions were being asked of socialist societies:

The activities of the powerful and the privileged are either beyond the criminal law (e.g. many sorts of political, religious, national or racial oppression) or even if they are criminalized, the criminals very seldom appear in court.

(Falandysz, 1982: 111)

This echoes what Reiman (1979) and Box (1983) document in drawing attention to the way in which the criminal justice system is implicated in constructing the crime (the victims) we 'see' and those we do not. Radical victimology, however, has another edge to it, and this connects more directly with the question of victims' movements.

There is a dimension to radical victimology which is concerned to establish the discipline as one in which the central concern is the question of human rights. Elias (1985: 17) states:

A victimology that encompasses human rights would not divert attention from crime victims and their rights, but rather would explore their inextricable relationship to more universal human rights concerns.

This broader remit for victimology echoes the work of Mendelsohn [p. 14 ↓] and, arguably, also permits the inclusion of some of the issues addressed by the feminist movement in the area of legal rights. The human rights perspective produces for Elias,

by definition, a consideration of the role of the state in the production of victims. He also argues that it is a perspective which has considerable scientific potential:

Human rights standards can provide victimology with boundaries that include not merely official victimological definitions, but more objective measures of actual victimization. By using international covenants, we can promote more universal, and less national, definitions of victimization. (Elias, 1985: 17)

In promoting the idea of 'objective measures' Elias (1986: 245) clearly sees victimology as concerned 'to relieve human suffering' and assumes that this suffering can be objectively agreed upon. In so doing he also assumes that the universal standards to which the discipline aspires are 'the progressive goals of democracy and social change' (Elias, 1986: 244). Whilst Elias displays a critical awareness of the implementation of such ideals in the United States, the question must be asked as to whether such ideals are innately progressive. This issue is considered elsewhere by Young-Rifai (1982). It is a question which is an important one for this perspective and is returned to below. The issue for the moment is whether this strand of radicalism can provide victimology with a more appropriate theoretical and empirical agenda.

Whilst the underlying spirit of these radical ideas within victimology is to be commended, there has for the most part been a very limited research agenda developed from them (Friedrichs, 1983), with perhaps the exception of that work emanating from within the feminist movement which shares some of these concerns. But, as observed earlier, there are obvious theoretical and ideological problems in constructing a 'feminist victimology'. In addition, whilst this radical perspective does challenge the strands of positivist victimology, it too slips into positivism by assuming the applicability of universal standards without articulating how those standards may be historically specific. This strand of victimology does not see society as innately consensual but recognizes the considerable power of the law and the state to oppress. These processes are thereby implicated both in creating the victims we see and also in creating and adding to that victimization process; from the creation of 'police property' (Lee, 1981) on the one hand to the implementation of state policies which violate human rights standards on the other. The concerns of organizations like Amnesty International are not that far removed from a victimology couched in these

terms. [p. 15 ↓] This particular strand of victimology may have had more of a rhetorical impact than one that can be documented in research terms. There is, however, another version of 'radical' victimology whose impact has been a little more substantial. On a par with some of these ideas within victimology, ideas within criminology emerged which were concerned to address the question of the victim of crime. The emergence of 'radical left realism', which has had an impact both theoretically and empirically on work done in the UK and to a lesser extent in Canada and Australia, has been determined to take the victim of crime 'seriously'. Young (1986: 23–4) states that the radical perspective which argued for a political economy of crime in the early 1970s for the most part neglected the real victim of crime. The emergence of 'radical left realism' within criminology sought to rectify this omission with a call for an 'accurate victimology' starting from 'problems as people experience them' through a recognition of the geographically and socially focused distribution of criminal victimization. More recently, left realism has argued that this position has also embraced the concerns of feminism (Young, 1988).

Detailed criticisms and evaluations of this move towards radical left realism have been rehearsed elsewhere. The issues of relevance here concern the understanding of realism associated with these developments. At best they reflect a partial reading of what is meant by realism resulting in theoretical difficulties in defining what constitutes social reality and methodological difficulties in translating the theoretical concerns into an empirical agenda. The cumulative effect of this is a slippage into positivism (see Smart, 1990), reflected in the way in which research emanating from this perspective employs the criminal victimization survey. It has nevertheless successfully offered a much more detailed documentation of who the victims of crime are at a local level, and has done much to challenge the view that crime is a rare occurrence. For particular sections of society this is certainly not the case. More recent work from this camp has also attempted to look at the question of the extent to which those same sections of society who are victims of 'conventional' crime are also disproportionately victimized as a result of 'commercial crime' (Pearce, 1990). This version of radicalism also connects with victims' movements but in a politically much more general fashion.

Radical left realism is committed to a clear political agenda which demands an 'engaged' criminology. In England this has been reflected in the association between radical left realism and Labour-controlled local authorities. This political project has

been particularly concerned to criticize the policy agenda established by [p. 16 ↓] Home-Office-based 'administrative criminology' and its associated concern with patterns of criminal victimization (see above). It is perhaps similar in spirit, though not so clear in substance, to the position adopted by Elias, though left realism was more specifically designed to recapture the political terrain of law and order which right-wing radicals made their own during the 1980s in the UK. These comparisons are worth developing a little further.

The commitment to a human rights perspective for radical victimology is a very important one. Yet this political as well as conceptual question has remained analytically speaking relatively underdeveloped for both radical victimology and radical left realism within criminology. The definition of human rights which seems to be implied from within radical victimology is a very broad one. It concerns itself not just with 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' but also with 'the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for [the individual's] dignity and free development of his personality' (United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Article 22), and a 'standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services' (ibid., Article 25). Victims' rights are thus not the exclusive property of a right-wing law and order lobby. Radical left realism entered the debate concerning rights and citizenship, albeit briefly, by arguing for a socialist view of citizenship which concentrates on both rights and obligations. This position, like that of Elias (1986), presumes a harnessing of the democratic process to achieve such goals, and, echoing some of the ideas of Plant (1988), Corrigan, Jones and Young (1989, 17) argue that: 'it would be impossible to defend the social individualism of a person who was registered as looking for work but refused both work and training'.

This social individualism, whilst perhaps usefully tempering a claim to rights which does not consider the question of obligations, fails to lose the taint of traditional liberal principles. Thus neither radical victimology nor radical left realism in entering this debate address the question of how a collective and pluralistic notion of rights and citizenship might be achieved (Mouffe, 1988). Smart (1989) outlines some of the problems facing the feminist movement and its association with the question of women's rights and how some of the 'gains' made from this position have resulted in the simultaneous extension of power for men. Such complexities face this radical strand within victimology.

So radical victimology problematizes the state, but has historically failed to consider features of the process of victimization other than class (for example gender, race and age) and has also [p. 17 ↓] traditionally failed to consider the way in which 'not all law is directed towards specific capitalist objectives' (Friedrichs, 1983: 111). In addition, Friedrichs also criticizes the radicals because 'the perceived insensitivity of radical criminology with regard to the immediate suffering of victims of conventional, predatory crime probably diminishes the effects of its ultimately humanistic message' (ibid.). Radical left realism attempts to overcome this last criticism and also attempts to embrace the variables of age, gender and race alongside the question of social class in measuring the extent of criminal victimization. At a theoretical level it is a perspective which also acknowledges the role of the state in 'the square of crime' (Young, 1991). But although this is acknowledged, it is an issue which is subsequently neglected. This results in a partial and distorted picture of the processes of criminal victimization (Jefferson *et al.*, 1991).

Radicalism within victimology moves us from a framework which sees victimology as being primarily concerned with victims of crime as defined by a conventional understanding of the law, to a framework which recognizes the importance of problematizing the law and the state. This recognition, however, has for the most part led to a simplistic reading of the relationship between the law and social class (Friedrichs, 1983; Sumner, 1990) and consequently a simplistic reading of the role of the state. Perhaps as a result, it has failed to develop a coherent research agenda which can usefully explore these issues. In many ways, the agenda which has been set under this radical umbrella has also failed to break away from the hold of positivism. A resolution of some of these issues may be found within the construction of what might be termed a critical perspective, a version of which, as will be seen below, argues for, amongst other things, a different interpretation of a realist scientific agenda.

Critical Victimology

The term critical has been used in a number of different ways in order to develop an agenda for victimology. Miers articulates one understanding of this version of victimology as a resolution of some of the difficulties he associates with positivism: 'Many groups and individuals may claim the label, but the key questions for a critical

victimology are who has the power to apply the label and what considerations are significant in that determination' (Miers, 1990: 224).

Miers is here drawing primarily on social psychology and symbolic interactionism (as popularized in the sociology of deviance [p. 18 ↓] in the 1960s) in attempting to redress the balance of positivism within victimology. These theoretical perspectives can certainly cast some light on the way in which conceptions of the 'ideal victim' (Christie, 1986) are present in day-to-day interpretations and understandings of the social world. But such understandings reveal little about the underlying structural formations of those definitions. This is largely a result of the liberal democratic tendencies associated with such perspectives. Symbolic interactionists may claim to have been concerned with the political processes underlying the process of labelling. Nevertheless:

it is equally problematic that 'labelling theorists' (1) never specified in detail the ideological constitution of the moral and criminal categories, (2) never fully explored the links between these categories and the social structure, and (3) only dealt with the relationship between moral/legal condemnation and 'interest' in an instrumental way.

(Sumner, 1990: 23)

These same questions pertain to a victimology which concerns itself with the labels but not with the constitution of those labels. This partly explains why the scope of victimology offered by Miers's (1990) understanding of the term 'critical' leaves victimology within the confines of the law, with the law itself remaining unchallenged. In addition his use of the term 'critical' does not facilitate the establishment of an effective and alternative scientific agenda which would connect the description of such labelling processes to the wider social structure.

The sense in which Walklate (1989, 1990) has attempted to develop an understanding of critical victimology has been concerned in the first instance to establish an understanding of the relationship between epistemology, methodology and the political agenda. This view has largely emerged from a critical understanding of the achievements of radical left realism in criminology, a Bhaskarian understanding of

scientific realism, and the way in which Cain (1990) has developed some of these ideas from a feminist critique of criminology.

This view of victimology takes seriously the need for the development of an empirically based, rational and objective science, but as Keat and Urry (1975: 5) point out, for the realist: 'this will mean postulating the existence of types of unobservable entities and processes that are unfamiliar to us: but it is only by doing this that we get beyond the "mere appearance" of things, to their natures and essences'.

Key to this process for the development of an empirical science seems to be the question of what constitutes the real. This question demands that any empirical investigation must take account of a [p. 19 ↓] number of processes which contribute to the construction of everyday reality: people's conscious activity, their 'unconscious' activity (that is, routine activities people engage in which serve to sustain, and sometimes change, the conditions in which they act), the generative mechanisms (unobservable and unobserved) which underpin daily life, and finally, both the intended and the unintended consequences of action which feed back into people's knowledge.

A conceptual framework of this kind enables victimology to address a number of important issues. In the first instance, put in a rather simplistic fashion, it postulates the importance of understanding the processes that 'go on behind our backs' which contribute to the victims (and the crime) we 'see' as opposed to that which we do not 'see'. Thus the concerns of the radical victimologists are placed on the agenda. The concern with those processes which are seen and those which remain hidden has also been a key concern for the feminist movement. Feminist work has forced the recognition of women as occupiers of both the public and the private domain and has argued that this recognition enhances the objectivity of a discipline; rendering visible and naming processes and experiences which were once unspoken and hidden. In addition feminist work has been keen to document women's strategies of surviving and resisting the dominant social structural framework. This in turn results in an understanding of human subjectivity (conscious as well as 'unconscious' action) as a central feature of day-to-day life to be taken seriously.

Whilst these questions demand a critical rethinking of the relationship between theory and method (concepts and techniques) they do not necessarily imply the

abandonment of the criminal victimization survey. What is required is a recognition that such techniques cannot capture both the generalities of victimization and the 'lived realities' (Crawford *et al.*, 1990) of human beings (see also Genn, 1988; Mawby, 1992a). Cain (1990) has suggested some general guidelines on setting realist research agendas, Pawson (1989) has examined the implications of realism for doing empirical work in general and quantitative work in particular, and Walklate (1990) has suggested how it might be possible to research the fear of crime by employing these ideas. The questions of more general relevance here are how do these ideas better inform the kinds of analysis offered within victimology, and victims' movements? And what implications do these ideas have in terms of the relationship between academic and humanist victimologists?

There are some clear indications above as to how realism might better inform the general analyses offered from within victimology. [p. 20 ↓] A critical victimology informed by these ideas problematizes both the law and the role of the state, and places both conceptual and empirical questions raised by the feminist movement at the centre of the agenda. It does this, however, not in a simple or straightforward manner; for these ideas demand that account is taken of the recursive relationship between agency and structure (Giddens, 1984). It is important to document those changing relationships through an appreciation and understanding of historical and cultural processes. At an empirical level this constitutes a call for imaginative comparative and longitudinal studies. At a theoretical level it requires postulating and testing the existence of generative mechanisms which may underpin specific individual action at specific moments. In the context of documenting the emergence and development of victims' movements it demands not only an understanding of the cultural variations in style and content of policy implementation processes relating to such movements, but also connecting these to the socioeconomic framework in which such initiatives develop. Some of those broader pictures are beginning to be painted.

Jefferson and Shapland (1990) document the way in which trends within criminal justice research are clearly connected with wider political and economic concerns. One of those trends is the increasing concern with the 'consumer' of the criminal justice system, who is assumed primarily to be the victim of crime, not the perpetrator. This rising concern has developed relatively unchallenged:

Distinctions of this order – between ‘consumerism’ and the free market idea itself – do not attract much attention in the language of free market theorists themselves, and they do not excite much commentary in current public, political debate as a whole. That they do not is some measure of the extraordinary success of free market theorists and politicians in western societies in mobilizing a grossly generalized and popular political language, focused around the ideas of ‘freedom’ and of ‘choice’.

(Taylor, 1990: 5)

Whilst the rise of this popular political language seems to have penetrated both ‘public’ and ‘private’ institutions from the police service through to higher education, it reflects important socioeconomic processes which form the backcloth to the phenomenal rise of Victim Support in England and Wales; similar developments – though with variations in organization and scale – are seen across Europe (see [Chapter 5](#)). Such developments have gone alongside changes in criminal justice systems and the emergence of state compensation schemes encouraged by recommendations from the Council of Europe (see [Chapter 6](#)).

[p. 21 ↓]

Alongside the development of this consumer orientation, provisions for women, and their experiences of the criminal justice process, have also undergone some marked changes. Not only have networks emerged to support women as ‘victims’ of specifically sexual crime but agencies within the criminal justice system have responded to complaints about their treatment of women (and children) as victims of crime. Again, whilst these developments may vary depending upon the specific cultural and legal context in which they occur, they nevertheless represent changes that need to be connected with wider socioeconomic and political circumstances. Although women may well still be censured (Sumner, 1990) the moment of that censure may have changed. This broader picture of social change facilitates a move away from the partial analyses offered to date by victimology both politically and academically, and towards examining the underlying thesis of the relationship of such movements to wider social changes.

Critical victimology as conceived in this text constitutes an attempt to examine the wider social context in which some versions of victimology have become more dominant than others and also to understand how those versions of victimology are interwoven with questions of policy response and service delivery to victims of crime. It constitutes an attempt to appreciate how the generative mechanisms of capitalism and patriarchy set the material conditions in which different victims' movements have flourished. These notions provide the critical edge in understanding the particular impact that research agendas and policy initiatives may or may not have.

Conclusion

This work is an attempt to document some of the changes that have occurred in response to the issues of criminal victimization and to connect them, theoretically, to changes occurring in spheres outside the criminal justice system.

It is conceived within a framework which posits a particular relationship between the academic endeavour and the humanistic endeavour it is concerned to examine. This view does not rest on a claim to scientific status which is dependent upon the maintenance of the 'facts/values' distinction with which this chapter began and which is implicit in the positivist project. The view of science suggested here places the academic and the activist on the same critical plane (Cain, 1990). They are a part of social reality in which as knowledgeable actors both have the capacity to influence the processes of social change. They have much to learn from each [p. 22 ↓] other. It is hoped that the process of documentation engaged in here will lead others into more specifically empirical explorations of the issues addressed. The text will explore a number of issues.

First, it will examine, critically, the idea of a 'golden age' of the victim and the notion of the 'rediscovery' of the crime victim. Secondly, it will attempt to document those initiatives which appear in the literature as 'turning points' in the life and development of victims' movements. It will examine these 'turning points' not just in the context of the criminal justice system, or in relation to the characteristics of the movements themselves, but by locating them in the broader context of changing notions of welfare.

Finally it will attempt to build on this by engaging in a cross-cultural analysis of the ways in which different societies currently approach the question of the crime victim.

As these issues are addressed it will become clear to the reader that whilst this chapter has presented three victimological frameworks, one of these frameworks and its associated concepts – positivist victimology – has been by far the most influential in terms of nationally funded research and in setting the agenda for centrally funded policy initiatives. This influence is self-evident in the summary of findings presented in [Chapter 2](#) concerning the extent and impact of criminal victimization. Whilst the persistence of this influence has to be recognized the view will also be developed that the changes which have occurred and are recurring across Europe constitute a significant moment for a re-evaluation of the relevance of a victimology couched in these terms.

The challenge to understanding these changes and their impact on the processes of criminal victimization is as vital in victimology as in other academic disciplines. To disregard the potential relationship between the process of marketization, crime, fear of crime, and the development of particular kinds of victim services is to miss a vital link in the chain of understanding and explanation. The limitations inherent in positivist and radical victimology cannot unravel these changes in and of themselves. This text will also document policy initiatives taking place in Eastern Europe as a means of further evaluating the usefulness of some of the concepts discussed here. It is hoped that the case can be made in this book for a critical victimology informed by realism, which may not only facilitate a better understanding of these processes but may more clearly outline the policy possibilities for both victims and survivors of crime.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446250587.n1>