

Crime Victims' Institute



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Our Mission

The mission of the Crime Victims' Institute is to :

- Conduct research to examine the impact of crime on victims of all ages in order to promote a better understanding of victimization
- Improve services to victims
- Assist victims of crime by giving them a voice
- Inform victim-related policymaking at the state and local levels.

From the Director:

As the 2013 Texas Legislative Session nears, the work of the Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) at Sam Houston State University should be important in a number of issues that will be considered. While there is always concern over budgets and revenues and many state agencies are striving to maintain resources, the importance of victim services, programs, and policies cannot be understated. One of the major goals of CVI's work is to provide the research evidence to help guide policy-making related to victim issues. Much of the recent research conducted by the Institute has focused on the broad consequences of victimization. Described in further detail on the following pages, one line of research at the Institute assesses the costs of victimization to victims, family members, and to society more generally. One study soon to be published in a special issue of the journal, *Justice Quarterly*, highlights the numerous long-term physical and mental health consequences of experiencing childhood victimization.

The direct experiences of pain, injury, and suffering that crime victims face are

undeniable, but it is also important to recognize the numerous potential long-term consequences that may also occur. Victims may face chronic physical and mental health problems, as well as interruptions to their educational attainment and/or employment, reduced earnings, and subsequent public health issues like additional victimization and homelessness. Access to effective victim services is a crucial resource for victims not only in addressing the immediate trauma they have experienced, but also in ameliorating some of the longer-term and more widespread adverse effects to themselves and to society. The benefit that victim service agencies throughout the state provide to the citizens of Texas is invaluable. These agencies are dedicated to serving and representing some of the most vulnerable members of our communities, and in the long run, their work will have benefits not just for the victims they serve, but for all of us.

Leana A. Bouffard, Ph.D.
Director, Crime Victims' Institute



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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Did you know that 12.7 million people are physically abused, raped or stalked by their partners in one year? That's more than double the population of the five largest cities in Texas combined (Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, and Fort Worth). Now there's a new symbol that says NO MORE. Check out NOMORE.org on Facebook and at www.nomore.org. Join us at CVI and say NO MORE to domestic violence and sexual assault.

NO MORE | TOGETHER WE CAN END
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

Focus on:

Maria Koepfel

CVI Graduate Assistant

Maria is in her third year of the Ph.D. program at Sam Houston State University. She hails from Iowa where she received her Bachelor of Arts degrees in Criminal Justice and Spanish and her Master of Arts degree in Criminology. Her research areas of interest include sociological aspects, such as gender and sexual orientation, and victimization. Currently, she is working with the Crime Victims' Institute where she has worked on projects examining short- and long-term consequences of victimization. Recently, she represented CVI at the International Family Violence and Child Victimization Research Conference where she presented research on sexual orientation and the adverse effects of intimate partner violence. Maria will soon play a large role as the research assistant on a grant-funded project for CVI. The project, in collaboration with Lone Star Legal Aid and Texas A&M's Public Policy Research Institute and funded by Office of Victims of Crime (OVC), will assess the needs of crime victims for legal services and will develop a demonstration project to provide those services.



Examining the Issues

Consequences of Bullying Victimization

Adverse consequences associated with victimization vary significantly across individuals and impact not only the individual victim, but also their families, friends, and surrounding communities. Additionally, these consequences may be short- and/or long-term, and physical, emotional, and/or mental. Understanding these consequences is important not only for assessing the impact crime has on its victims and society, but also for determining how to respond more effectively to crime victims. Victimization research conducted by the Crime Victims' Institute during the past year has examined several forms of victimization and the associated consequences, including the long-term adverse effects of bullying victimization and how those negative consequences are issues of concern in a public health framework.

Our research has found that having experienced early victimization, especially repeated bullying, is associated with more negative perceptions of general health and mental health, higher rates of emotional/mental or behavior problems that interfere with school and/or work, and suffering from an eating disorder. Victims of bullying were also more likely to smoke and smoked more cigarettes per day than non-victims and were also more likely to experience subsequent violent victimization and homelessness. These results

indicate that victimization that occurs early in life, especially bullying victimization, may have significant and substantial physical and mental health consequences for the victims later in life.

In addition to understanding the consequences associated with victimization, especially being the victim of bullying, it is important to view these adverse effects from a broader public health perspective. For example, the effects of early victimization on subsequent experiences of victimization and homelessness later in life were significant. These experiences may serve as potential conduits to further adverse physical and mental health outcomes, including substance use, lack of health insurance, and mental health issues. Victimization is linked to increased tobacco and alcohol use, which may lead to mouth, lung, colon, or throat cancer, alcoholism, liver disease, and hypertension, among other physical health problems. Depression, anxiety, and suicide are also linked to these experiences. Although these may seem like individual problems, they are public health issues due to the cost to society and communities in the form of social welfare, lost employment and productivity, and increased expense of health care. Victim services that address both the short- and long-term consequences of victimization not only help the victims, but also have a beneficial impact on the wider community.



Upcoming Events

Share your ideas:

We welcome your input. Please send issues or topics you would like to see CVI conduct research on to : crimevictims@shsu.edu



American Society of Criminology 11/14-17/12
Chicago, IL

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault 03/04-07/12
Austin, TX

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences 03/19-23/13
Dallas, TX

October - Domestic Violence Awareness Month



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