

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.

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Examining the Issues

Victim Studies Courses: Learning through Academic Community Engagement

Academic Community Engagement (ACE), at Sam Houston State University and nationally, is a teaching method that combines community engagement with academic instruction. The ACE initiative allows students to use the skills and knowledge learned in the classroom to make a difference and improve life in our community by understanding their roles as community members. This can be particularly the case for the social sciences, including criminal justice, and we see our Victim Studies courses as prime candidates for an ACE component.

In 2011, SHSU was recognized as a Carnegie Community Engaged campus – a designation shared with only 311 institutions of higher education in the U.S. In order to help faculty members succeed in implementing ACE initiatives, the Engaged Scholars Committee was created to support faculty in their efforts to connect learning objectives and community participation. Dr. Victoria Titterington serves as the College of Criminal Justice representative on the Committee and is spearheading the effort to eventually “ACE” most of the required courses in our BA and BS in Victim Studies degree programs.

Unlike field internships, where students spend a semester working full-time in a criminal justice or social service agency, ACE courses are designed to provide nine or more hours of course time over the semester interacting with an agency or criminal justice department. That time is meant to be used in fulfillment of one or more specific course objectives, so it becomes the “lab” component of such courses. This helps to make concepts, theories and research much clearer, and relevant, for the student learner. Also, unlike traditional “volunteer” work, the expectation with ACE course hours is that they be spent in a way that is mutually beneficial for the agency and the student. Yet another advantage to the student is that these experiences are seen in a positive way by prospective employers upon graduation.

To date, Victim Studies courses that have carried the ACE designation include Child Abuse and Neglect, Victimology and Aging, Crime and Victimization. The first course to carry the ACE designation in the College of Criminal Justice was the Child Abuse and Neglect course taught by Dr. Raymond

Focus on:

Victoria Titterington,
LMSW, Ph.D.
Professor

Dr. Victoria Titterington has a Ph.D. in Sociology from Tulane University. She also holds Master's degrees in Social Work and Business Administration. While much of her work focuses upon lethal intimate partner violence, she has more recently turned her attention to the intersection of aging and crime, including elder homicide victimization and right-to-die legislation. Victoria's work has appeared in *Homicide Studies*, *Violence and Victims*, the *International Journal of Offender Therapy & Comparative Criminology* and the *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*. Among other subjects, she has developed and currently teaches an Aging, Crime & Victimization course.



Teske. In that course, students set up tables in front of stores and in shopping centers in Walker and Montgomery Counties. They distributed free gun locks and gun safety materials to decrease the possibility of guns getting into the hands of children or of injury to children from someone else's lack of safety precautions. Also, Dr. Kelly Knight has offered an ACE section of the Victimology course, wherein her students worked closely with SAAFE House on issues of domestic violence. These courses are in recognition of the fact that child abuse and domestic violence have long garnered public concern, and rightfully so. Yet another social problem that is only recently gaining attention is elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Presently, there are approximately 37 million persons over the age of 65 in the U.S. and, each day, 10,000 Baby Boomers are being added to these rolls. According to the Census Bureau, the elderly population will more than double between now and the year 2050, to 80 million. By that year, as many as 1 in 5 Americans could be elderly.

As it relates to elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, conservative estimates place the prevalence of elder abuse, neglect and abuse at 1 to 2 million cases. Further, it is estimated that for every one case of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect reported to authorities, about five more go unreported. In addition, though abuse in nursing homes is of great concern, the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that only about 7.4% of Americans aged 75 and older lived in nursing homes in 2006. Incidence and prevalence studies suggest that a much larger proportion of elder abuse happens to community-dwelling elders. This is often at the hands of their own family members or caretakers, and research suggests that elders are often reluctant to report such abuse for fear that

they will lose their independence or be institutionalized.

That said, some sections of Dr. Victoria Titterington's Aging, Crime & Victimization course also include an ACE component. In this course, the community engagement experiences are (1) to give students a much better appreciation of the aging process, tied directly to what they are learning about social gerontology in the course; (2) to spend time (in conversation or in formal interviews) with elders as a way of assessing both risk factors and protective factors that affect their possible crime victimization; and (3) creating an interesting and purposeful activity for community-dwelling elders in local senior centers and assisted living facilities. Future plans include some of these students spending time with Adult Protective Services specialists, as well as being trained by the Better Business Bureau to offer short courses to seniors on how to avoid financial exploitation. Students typically come away from their ACE experiences with a sense that whatever line of criminal justice or victim-related work they pursue, knowing so much about older persons will serve them well in their own awareness of possible elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, as well as in providing more effective official responses to these elder crime victims, in their communities.





Let's discuss it:

June 15, 2013 marked the eighth annual observance of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAA). This observance was originally launched by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations. The purpose of WEAAD is to provide an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older persons by raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic and demographic processes affecting elder abuse and neglect. At the national level in 2011, the Elder Justice Act was included in the passage of the Federal Affordable Care Act. But, to date, this is an unfunded mandate. There are many ways to become involved in the effort to protect the country's elders and among very useful websites to learn more are those of the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA, at <http://ncea.aoa.gov/> and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration on Aging, at http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/.

Please contact us at crimevictims@shsu.edu to share your thoughts about how the universities, victim service providers, the criminal justice system and others might work together to provide greater awareness of the elders in our families and communities, to reduce the likelihood of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

In the Works....

Look for upcoming publications from the Crime Victims' Institute on:

- Stalking Update
- Crime Victims Compensation Fund
- Perceptions of Sexual Assault among Campus Police
- Do the Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence Vary by Sexual Orientation?
- Sexual Orientation, Child Abuse, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization

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Upcoming Events



(TVSA) Advanced Victims' Assistance Academy Austin, TX	07/22-23/2013
College Sexual Assault Training: Title IX and Collaboration for an Effective Response Austin, TX	08/02/2013
Crimes Against Children Conference Dallas TX	08/12-15/2013
18th International Conference on Violence, Abuse & Trauma San Diego, CA	09/08-11/2013
2013 National Center for Victims of Crime National Conference Phoenix, AZ	09/09-11-2013

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

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2013



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