Crime Statistics and Victimization

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The reliability and accuracy of crime data and statistics are vital in developing a deeper and critical understanding of offense and victimization. Crime data collection in the United States is primarily reliant on three different reporting systems, the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The NIBRS and the UCR are both utilized by the FBI to analyze crime patterns, however, the two systems differ in terms of focus. The NIBRS focusses on reporting different aspects of the crime such as the victim and offender characteristics, alongside the type of weapons, the crime location, the injuries sustained, and the number of arrests in connection to a particular incident. In effect, NIBRS data attempts to create a deeper understanding of the circumstances in which crimes occur. As a result, NIBRS Crime Statistics for the City and County of Denver provides data counts greater than the UCR Summary Reporting System (Denver Gov, 2019).

The UCR reporting system is commonly relied on for policy decisions, and generally reports serious offenses such as rape, murder, burglary, aggravated assault, and theft. It differs from the NIBRS system in terms of its focus towards completed crimes as opposed to reporting a combination of attempted and completed crimes. In case of multiple crimes reported within the same location or period of time, the UCR system conventionally reports the most serious type of offense reported, attempting to identify when and where a crime was committed beside the form it ultimately takes. In Denver, Colorado, Crime reporting was typically done under the UCR's Summary Reporting System; however, in recent years, the CBI (2018) has increasingly relied on the NIBRS system in order to divulge information on every type of crime committed within a particular incident as opposed to a summary of the most serious offense (CATPA, 2017; Denver Gov, 2019). Thus, the UCR often reports lesser counts of crime in Denver as opposed to the NIBRS system, which delivers a more detailed picture of the crimes that were committed.

The NCVS system of reporting supplements the UCR and the NIBRS by providing estimates of the annual number of victimizations besides victimization details for each incident. Information collected under the NCVS includes that of household property crimes, nonfatal personal crimes, regardless of whether they go unreported to law enforcement agencies. Although no particular NCVS data was available at the county level, however, the NCVS report on the state of Colorado remains a key source of information on the change estimates, annual levels, and nature of criminal victimization within the State and its major counties. The information includes responses from survey participants and their experiences of victimization, such as the victim-offender relationship, nature of the injury, economic consequences, and other characteristics of the crime (Lowden, et al., 2005). As opposed to the UCR and the NIBRS, the NCVS provided data on a large state-wide sample of citizens above the age of 12, providing important insights into the crimes that were left unreported in the country and State.

Analyzing the crime data from the three systems, and in particular the NCVS system, it can be inferred that a significant number of victims in the county experience repeat victimization, with some likely to experience chronic victimization under certain circumstances. Chronic victims are typically victims of three or more offenses within the same time period, and for whom victimization has become a routine. In the case of Denver County, NCVS data from 2005 reveals that young, black males disproportionately experience victimization, except in the case of sexual assault, and are more likely to suffer chronic victimization compared to the other population groups within the county and state (Lowden, et al., 2005). However, the victim’s motives, reactions, or intentions cannot be overlooked as a mediating factor.

The concept of shared responsibility implies that besides offenders, certain victims also share a responsibility in the crime, whether it occurs due to their own carelessness thereby facilitating the offender, or the victim significantly contributes to the crime through precipitation or provocation. At the very least, it implies that the victims did not act to limit their exposure to threatening circumstances or act to reduce the odds of harm (Karmen, 2012). The NCVS data from the state reveals that victims frequently engaged in infidelity, engage in substance abuse, or involve themselves confrontation with the offenders over insults, thereby sharing varying degrees of responsibility in the commission of the crime.

# References

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