

*Rapporteurs’
Reports*



Publication verbatim of the Rapporteurs' Reports has not been possible, but certain comments are summarised.

Dame Ann Ballin noted the enormous contrasts in the international position of victims and services available to them by referring to the lack of refuge services available to black women in South Africa compared with her own country of New Zealand. She was concerned at Brooks' account of violence between Aboriginal men and women, violence, it was argued, which was not present when their culture was untouched by European settlement. In the context of the destruction of Indigenous cultures, she was concerned about the erosion of basic values by the nature of the industrial and electronic revolution, which has isolated people, made them suspicious, angry and unable to control their anger. To reduce victimisation, we need to do a great deal more than think in terms of victimology, she argued. We have to think about spiritual values and the structure of our society in order to deal with the erosion of cultural identity.

John Dussich was worried that many papers lacked a theoretical framework with unstated objectives, research questions and hypotheses. There was a lack of concern for causality he argued, with the bulk of papers content with merely descriptive rather than explanatory research. An excess of anecdotal and case study information seemed to be aimed at generating sympathy for victims rather than concern for accurately representing a true picture of victims. On the other side of the ledger, he noted that many papers were current, dynamic and comprehensive, written by young researchers and practitioners who have embraced the field of victimology and victims services fully and who will ensure creative programs and new insights in the future. He concluded by cautioning against the shadow of nationalism, disciplinism and personal aggrandisement creeping into the work. A mature victimology needs to lower the banners of chauvinism, nationalism, academic parochialism and personal egoism and raise high the banner of objective scholarship. That is what will keep our scholarship respectable, provide quality information for policy innovation and reflect our commitment to improve victims rights, and to a more humane global community.

Helen Reeves observed that the concerns of victimology differ from country to country, noting Ota's paper on corporate crime and the prevalence of pyramid selling in Japan, a practice of which she was unaware in the UK and which is illegal in many other countries. The debate about fear of crime was also evident, including whether the acknowledged extensive fear of crime in large cities is rational or irrational in relation to the risk. Some research suggested that the fear was rational or justified for specific people in specific areas. The commercial exploitation of fear of crime was also raised. Does the crime prevention industry fuel the fear of particular groups, particularly women, in order to sell products which may not be needed? Whether fear of crime is actually a problem or a valuable commodity which helps crime prevention was also debated.

Criminal injuries compensation discussions raised fundamental questions of whether compensation for criminal injuries can be justified more than for accident or disease. The New Zealand system of universal coverage for injury

irrespective of the source was referred to. Whether criminal injuries should be paid only when other remedies have failed was discussed in the context of suggestions from Germany, for instance, that people are applying for criminal injuries compensation because it avoids having to take somebody to court. [It is worth noting that most criminal injuries compensation schemes require the injured party to exhaust all other remedies (including civil) before applying for compensation from the State. (Ed.)] The debate about whether it was a symbolic gesture by the State or full common law damages continued. **Freckelton** referred to the secondary victimisation from hearings and cross-examination in claims for compensation. Field on the other hand asserted that psychiatric referral had very important therapeutic consequences by providing assistance to people who might not have had the confidence to go to a psychiatrist.

Reeves concluded by reviewing the discussion on victim impact statements and the victim's role in the criminal justice system. While there is general support for the idea of empowering victims, increasing the accountability of the court and encouraging offender remorse, the question of whether this is actually achieved by VIS remains a lively one. Reeves traversed the arguments which are dealt with more specifically earlier in this volume and concluded that there is a valuable purpose being served, while acknowledging the need for debate on possible improvements and alternatives. Reeves described as a myth the view advanced by **Elias** that victims' service organisations always advocate tougher penalties as a means of achieving justice for victims. In Europe 'they will not take part in movements striving for a more oppressive criminal justice system' she said. While individual victims may feel very strongly about punishment and have a right to express their views, an organisation set up to represent them does not have that right but must look to research to find out where the truth lies. She was grateful to **van Dijk** for the international research which indicated that victims, at least in western countries, are not overly interested in long prison sentences for offenders but seem to be interested in restorative measures as a means to crime prevention. She concluded by noting that the attitude to punishment in developing countries seemed to be harsher, reminding delegates of the need to be aware of the social, cultural, and legal conditions in different countries and not attempting to apply everything we know from our own country wholesale.

Professor Richard Harding extracted six identifiable but intersecting themes from the Symposium. The first was humanistic versus scientific victimology. He found the scientific content very much in evidence, noting the growth in the measurement of victimisation through national surveys and more particularly the International Crime Surveys, which were reported on during the Symposium. He noted that real attempts were made to link abuse of power with traditional criminal victimisation, which was his second theme. He referred to three examples: the paper from Croatia which demonstrated what a potent criminogenic factor the social disruption of war is, particularly in relation to juvenile delinquency (**Nikolić-Ristanović**); the adverse affect on identity resulting from the incarceration of black young offenders in South Africa (Peacock); the never ending cycle of crime and victimisation through second and

third generations of Aboriginal Australians resulting from lack of self-esteem and the overwhelming identity crisis caused by the enforced removal of children from parents and dispossession of traditional lands (Lester). Papers confirmed that humanitarian victimology can be approached in a way that is not merely ideological but, to a degree, scientific.

In any case the change in circumstances whereby services for traditional victims have at least in the developed world now gained proper credence and yet where victimisation as a result of abuse of power, social upheaval and global contravention of basic human rights had exponentially increased means that we must focus in the future on humanitarian victimology.

His third theme was that of relativism versus universalism. The arrogance of defining victimisation experiences only in terms of western and Judeo-Christian morality was pointed out (Fattah). A striking example of this theme emerged at a Session on domestic violence in Aboriginal communities where it was argued that the responses of the criminal justice system should not necessarily be punitive towards male perpetrators (Lester).

If Aboriginal women were doubly disadvantaged by being both female and Aboriginal then Aboriginal men would be triply disadvantaged by their Aboriginality and their structural dispossession. In other words the sort of gender analysis of domestic violence which is so much in fashion with regard to non Aboriginal people is culturally inappropriate for Aborigines at the present time.

His fourth theme was punitiveness and the lack of it, characterising most but not all the mainstream victims' agencies. His fifth theme related to the legacy of Sigmund Freud whose theories lasted well into the 1970s in so far as our reactions to female assault are concerned, but which were debunked in two papers (**Gardner, Warner**). The sixth theme was crime prevention, where the link between crime prevention and victimisation prevention was stronger than it has been at previous conferences. 'There was a growing recognition that a mature victimology cannot be divorced from "offenderology" or more generally from criminology. That is a step forward I believe from some of the earlier assumptions and approaches in this area.' This has been a conference where the WSV has moved its agendas forward and certainly come of age, Harding concluded.