**Criminology vs. Victimology?**

Criminology and victimology are similar fields, with victimology originating within the field of criminology. Let's start with defining criminology and victimology and understand the focus areas in each of them. It is important to be familiar with both the concepts to understand their differences and similarities.

Criminology is the study of the nature, extent, cause, and control of crime and criminal behavior. Victimology is the study of how crime impacts an individual. More specifically, it is the study of the nature and cause of victimization. The result of this research has many benefits such as figuring out how to best help crime victims, gain a better understanding of the nature and extent of victimization, and the further development of theories of the risk of victimization.

**Theories of Crime**

Crimes are not restricted to any particular area or specific region. Crime can occur anywhere at any time. Statisticians, criminologists, crime analysts, and other criminal justice professionals study how crime rates are impacted by climates and seasons. For example, in the summer it is a known fact that there are higher amounts of rape and sexual assault than during the winter months.

In order to try to figure out why this is so, researchers first develop a theory. What is a theory? A theory is simply an explanation of behavior. A criminologist observes people and develops an explanation for why they do what they do. Likewise, a victimologist observes people and develops an explanation for why they do what they do.

There is no one theory that can account for all types of behaviors that are exhibited by human beings. For example, there is no single theory that can explain the motivation for rape. Was the rape a crime of violence? Was the rape sexually motivated? Was the rape an issue of power and control? Each respective explanation has a different perspective from which the crime is viewed. The perspective will result in a different idea about the person’s behavior.

**Victims in Court**

Victims in court cases may include, along with the direct victim, a number of indirect victims such as family members. Many jurisdictions employ the services of a victimologist or psychologist who can testify to the psychological trauma caused to the victim. Although physical trauma is more obvious, it is often necessary for an expert to explain emotional trauma that may exist. This is especially common in the sentencing phase, where it is necessary to assess the damage that has been exacted on the victim by the offender, giving the judge and jury a better idea of the punishment that the offender should receive. These experts help to explain the long term effects of the crime on the individual as well as what type of rehabilitation and therapy the victim is likely to undergo.

The role of the victim advocate is to provide support to the victims during trial, keep them updated on the proceedings, and act as mediators between them and the prosecution. For instance, during a trial, the victim may need to go to work and not be able to be present for part, or all, of the trial. The victim's advocates who work in victim-witness programs would keep the victim apprised of the court proceedings. Victim advocates can be assigned to a victim through two primary agencies: law enforcement and/or the district attorney's office.