

# VU Research Portal

## Individuals' Victimization Patterns over Time

Averdijk, M.D.E.

2010

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

### **citation for published version (APA)**

Averdijk, M. D. E. (2010). *Individuals' Victimization Patterns over Time*.

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

### **E-mail address:**

[vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl](mailto:vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl)

In order to investigate longitudinal victimization patterns across long periods of individuals' life, we need longitudinal data on victimization. Such data sources are rare, especially when it comes to long-term longitudinal data. In order to overcome this difficulty, Chapter 2 investigated whether the short-term longitudinal data of the NCVS could be extended into long-term longitudinal data. Results indicated that they cannot. It was found that for all age-cohorts investigated, victimization reporting decreased over time, unlike the inverse U-shaped curves that typically result from cross-sectional age-victimization studies. The main potential explanations for this phenomenon included respondent fatigue, selective attrition, and the American crime drop.

The results from the second chapter painted a somewhat gloomy picture for the rest of the thesis. From a pessimistic point of view, the findings of this chapter would lead us to infer that the investigation of longitudinal victimization patterns is useless because the data are not suitable. Instead, this thesis concurs with a more optimistic view in which the difficulties of longitudinal self-report data are investigated and recognized and in which measures are taken to deal with these problems as best as possible. One particular measure was taken: In Chapters 3 and 4, I controlled for time-effects as best as possible by including a measure for time. Since the focus of these two chapters was not on age, this could be done for both chapters.<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that including a time effect effectively controls for any problems. As stated in the conclusions of Chapter 2, we cannot assume that time effects are similar across age cohorts. However, including a time effect is at this point the best measure we can take to control for time effects. By including it, I feel that I have controlled for time effects as best as possible.

Chapters 3 to 5 addressed the main theoretical issue of this dissertation. In these chapters, I investigated some of the mechanisms behind the finding that prior victimization directly increases future victimization. In particular, I investigated whether, how, and why prior victimization leads (or does not lead) victims to change behavioral routines and prevention practices. In Chapter 3, I focused on the role of personality traits, notably self-control, in the link between prior and future victimization with data from the PYS. I hypothesized that victims with high levels of self-control are more likely to change their behavior after victimization and thus have a lower likelihood of repeat victimization than victims with low levels of self-control. This hypothesis was confirmed, but only for victims of theft. For victims of violence, I found that those with high self-control did not have a lower risk of repeat victimization than those with low

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that in Chapter 4 age and time were not confounded because the data source consisted of many different age cohorts from the NCVS.

self-control. A potential explanation for this finding is that in some cases violent victimization, especially by known offenders, may require violent retaliation. Those with higher levels of self-control may be less likely to engage in (retaliatory) violence and thus they may in some cases be more likely to be re-victimized. In the conclusion of Chapter 3, I discussed that I assumed that victims with high self-control use prevention measures after victimization, which in turn decreases their risk of future victimization. However, I did not directly test whether victimization indeed leads to behavioral change or prevention measures. Therefore, I recommended that this assumption is directly tested with measures of routine activities. Chapter 4 proceeded by doing this.

In Chapter 4, I studied whether victimization leads to changes in three specific behavioral routines: going shopping, going away for the evening, and having household devices. In addition, I investigated whether changes in these behavioral routines lead to changes in the likelihood of victimization. I used data from the NCVS. Results showed that victimization leads to limited changes in behavioral routines. In addition, changes in behavioral routines lead to limited changes in the likelihood of victimization. Results were evaluated critically, with an emphasis on the limitations of the data used to indicate routine activities.

In order to better understand the mechanisms behind the results from the quantitative data used in Chapters 3 and 4, Chapter 5 was based on qualitative data from interviews with victims. The main results were that although many victims do change some aspects of their behavior after victimization, these changes remain limited. Exceptions are reserved for the most salient crimes. Although many crimes lead to behavioral adaptation, these measures usually remain situational. Although situational measures can be adequate in preventing future victimization for many victims, this is not likely to be the case for those victims whose high victimization risk is embedded in risky social environments. In these cases, the social environment has to be changed in order to reduce the risk of repeat victimization. Since victims are not very likely to be able or willing to change their social environment, the risk of repeat victimization is particularly high for these victims.

Besides the results on the relationship between victimization and behavioral change, results from Chapters 3 and 4 also revealed interesting findings on the link between lifestyle changes and victimization risk. It was found that several lifestyle changes, including changing student status, marital status, neighborhood residence, and possession of a car have an impact on victimization.