

Lauritsen

Sat, Jun 03, 2023 7:26PM • 59:15

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

victimization, correlates, work, criminology, violence, criminologist, crime, study, years, people, offending, talking, research, learn, correlations, survey, reasons, point, young assistant professor, job

SPEAKERS

Jose Sanchez, Jenn Tostlebe, Janet Lauritsen

Jose Sanchez 00:14

Hi everyone. Welcome to episode 74 of The Criminology Academy podcast where we were criminally academic. My name is Jose Sanchez.

Jenn Tostlebe 00:22

In my name is Jenn Tostlebe.

Jose Sanchez 00:25

Today we have Dr. Janet Lauritsen on the podcast to talk with us about her career as a criminologist, her work on victimization and her thoughts on the field.

Jenn Tostlebe 00:34

Janet Lauritsen is Curator's Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Missouri St. Louis. Her research focuses on the causes and consequences of victimization, the social and historical context of crime and victimization, and quantitative research methodologies and data. Her research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Institute of Justice. Dr. Lauritsen served as chair of the panel on modernizing the nation's crime statistics for the committee on national statistics of the National Academies of Sciences. In 2013, she was named fellow of the American Society of Criminology. She served as Co-editor of the flagship journal criminology from 2018 to 2020. And as President of the American Society of Criminology in 2022. All right, thank you so much for joining us, Janet. We are excited to have you on the podcast today and get your perspectives on your career in victimization research.

Janet Lauritsen 01:39

Thank you for having me.

Jose Sanchez 01:40

All right. So anytime we record one of these episodes, we always like to go back to the beginning, because we always find it really interesting how people end up doing what they're doing. And something that Jenn and I have both enjoyed is that it seems a lot of us kind of tend to stumble into this. You know, Jenn and I both were kind of like wandering around. And then eventually we're like, you know what, let's become criminologist, or some kind of like the field finds us. So we know that you received your bachelor's, your master's and your PhD at the University of Illinois, Urbana. They're all in sociology. But I've also heard that actually wasn't how you started out. So can you kind of walk us through where you started? And then how you ended up in sociology, and then criminology?

Janet Lauritsen 02:28

No, sure. I think it's actually a really important question. I'm relieved to hear that members of the younger generation also feel like they're stumbling through, I thought it was just earlier, young, older people had those experiences. I never had a plan. I did not go to college. After high school, I went to work, first generation college student, after working, I've been working since I was 14, after working for a while, after high school graduation, I realized that I'm not going anywhere, I'm gonna be stuck at minimum wage, or slightly above. And so I decided to go to community college and went to community college for two and a half years, and then transferred to the University of Illinois. So by the time I was ready to transfer, I had two years of credit towards my degree. And so that made the transfer really easy. But when I went to the University of Illinois, I was a math and computer science major. And by about the middle of my junior year, I realized that that is becoming very abstract, very theoretical, and very weird. I couldn't see the application, it was another world. And so I had taken two sociology classes as an undergrad and I just decided I'm all in, those were the most interesting ones I ever took. I'm all in, switch my major and put in 45 hours of sociology classes in last three semesters, so of my undergrad degree, then when I was ready to graduate from undergraduate with a bachelor's degree in sociology, it was a recession. 1982 Or three, I think, and one of the professor's said, you know, we'd like to admit you to our graduate program, but we would need you to apply. And I had my question to him was, what is graduate school? Is it just like more school? How does it work? And I said, I can't afford to go to college anymore. I had loans, he said, well, we'll pay you and we're gonna give you a job. And I could not believe that possibilities. So of course, you take free education at a school that you really enjoyed in this area that you want. It just was, you know, if it wasn't for them reaching out to me, I don't know what would happen. So I studied sociology, and I loved all the areas of sociology, everything from demography, to social psychology to social movements. But at some point, you have to decide which area you're going to take your comprehensive exams and I decided that time was close call between demography and criminology. And I decided to go with criminology because I felt like I found it a little bit more interesting, more meat on the topic. And so I decided to study criminology at that point, or deviance and social control more broadly. So that's how I got into criminology. There was never a plan. I did not grow up thinking I wanted to be a criminologist. In fact, I don't like crime shows, crime books. I don't really I'm not interested in that as an entertainment for me either. So it was never a passion.

Jenn Tostlebe 05:37

Yeah, I watched some of those shows, but they wouldn't be my first choice either. I know Jose. Yeah.

Jose Sanchez 05:44

Yeah, I love other like more entrenched I become in the discipline, the more insufferable I become to my wife. But, I mean, yeah, I think Jenn can attest to this about like, yeah, we came into, we didn't have a plan, either. I remember. It was the spring semester of my senior year, almost halfway through the semester, when I like walked into a professor's office, like, hey so this research thing you keep talking about? Sounds kind of interesting. How do I do that?

Janet Lauritsen 06:17

Yeah. And I think the reason I got some attention from the faculty is that I was sociology students, or I had a strong math background. And I had that background because my father told me, you know, if you're going to do anything, be good at, study some math, you'll always have somebody will always need somebody with strong math skills. So study, math, I liked it. I liked numbers problems. I'm not opposed. Never go with crossword puzzles. But I love numbers problems. So I just did it. And at the time, because I studied computer science. This is the early 1980s, there were not personal computers, there was no internet, I was the only one I think, as an undergrad who could do the analyses that they like, I knew how to mount, I knew how to use a mainframe computer. And so they thought, well, this woman, this young woman has some skills that a lot of the faculty would like to take advantage of. And so I was in the right place at the right time with those skills. So I never had to worry about somebody wanting to hire me as a research assistant, just because I could do some things that other students couldn't do. So it was kind of luck of timing in that regard. But then I found out fast I loved research, and loved sitting at the computer, and I love numbers stuff. And so that's the kind of job I got. They had a computer lab and my first job in graduate school was to help all the other graduate students learn to use the computer. The mainframe. Yeah, there was a lot of people were frightened, and I teach faculty are frightened of it. So. Like you said, a whole new world, what they were learning. And then you asked, you know, so criminology and my dissertation wasn't in criminology, it was informed by criminological theories and social control and deviance, strain and social control theory. But it was about adolescent sexual behavior and early childbearing I was, that's the demography interest, I had found that very fascinating topic. And at the time, I just became drawn to it because it was so clear to me that when they explained why young girls were having sex, it was always in terms of their low self esteem, and there must be some sort of problem with them. And while they explained boys as well, if there's nothing to explain, boys want to have sex. Wait a minute. So clearly some kind of important gendered assumptions here that are going on that I found fascinating. And so I decided to test them see whether certain girls with low self esteem and boys with low self esteem, do a comparative analysis of that. So I really wasn't more broadly interested in crime and social control.

Jenn Tostlebe 09:00

So that kind of leads into our next question, which is really how did you go from, you know, your deviance interests and the demography interests into more of the victimology, some discipline in criminology, kind of how did you settle these research interests and steer that way?

Janet Lauritsen 09:20

Again, again, that was opportunity. So during one of my dissertation development years, we had just hired a young professor, assistant professor named Rob Sampson. He asked, students to apply to work with him on a project and I had the skills and I started working with him. And he was working at the time with the British Crime Survey data. And so he invited me to do some analysis and write a paper with

him on victimization. It was about the victim offender overlap. And of course, I was very excited to do that. And so that I became interested in victimization occurred me how little was known about victimization at that time compared to offending deviance, and is almost like just a byproduct of crime, not really given much too much serious thoughts, in my view. I did that work with him, but I also was doing other work at the time. And then I finished my dissertation, and it's time to go in the job market. But I kind of finished off cycle and missed the very small job market that there was, again, it was a recession, there weren't very many jobs. And so Rob happened to be working on a proposal to the National Institute of Justice and asked if I would want to perhaps serve as postdoc on this project, if he would get the grant. I had done poor planning. And I said, Well, sure. That sounds fun. And then, and he fortunately for me, he did get that grant. And I was able to do a postdoc for one year before I went out on the job market, and it was on victimization, and offending the link between the two. And that's how I met John Laub, as well. So it really was, again, luck, and being at the right place at the right time with the right skills and the right people are recognizing an opportunity that you can't pass up.

Jenn Tostlebe 11:15

Yes, you know, Jose mentioned that kind of in the top that we're starting to see these patterns come into play with these kinds of reflection episodes that we're doing. And I feel like most of the people we've had on have mentioned opportunity as kind of this major thing that's played a role in their careers, just having the right opportunity with the right people and the right skill sets. So yeah, it's kind of cool to see that, especially as Jose and I are going that way, and we kind of are feeling in the same boat. So to see these people that we admire and have done great work kind of follow a similar trajectory is really cool.

Janet Lauritsen 11:56

Yeah, I think I blame high school guidance counselors for pushing that. Just make up a plan and make it your passion. And it's all going to work out and I don't think most, how could you possibly know, as a young person, what's out there? First of all, it's changing. How does your counselor if you have to be prepared, and trust your instinct, and just keep learning and keep your eyes open for these opportunities, then hopefully, they'll come? Yeah, so once I did that postdoc with him, then I'm still doing other work had gone on the job market to get to begin an academic career. I'm still doing other work, adolescent sexual behaviors and methodology stuff. We were working on papers for about the victim offender overlap from that grant. And that took me basically through different types of research through about the tenure decision. And then the opportunity came up for working with the National Crime Victimization Survey, they geocoded confidential files, for the first time being released at the University of Pittsburgh, and through Al Blumstein's work with the National Consortium of Violence Research. Rob Sampson was a member of the steering committee for that. He and I had been studying contextual effects with the British Crime Survey on victimization and offending, we've taken that as far as we can. And so when, he said, you know, here's an opportunity I don't have time for but I think you'd be, this is right up your alley. And as I was able to take advantage of that, and I was hoping that was the beginning of all that victimization. Since then, so that was about 25 years ago.

Jose Sanchez 13:46

So you've mentioned Rob Sampson a couple of times, then now we've recorded an episode with Rob. And, you know, when you talked about him, a young assistant professor, I think these days, you know,

we kind of consider him one of the heavy hitters in the field. But there was also a couple other people in your department at the time that we would consider pretty heavy hitters in their own right, Michael Gottfredson was there. I'm guessing also as a young assistant professor, and I don't know how much overlap we had. But I believe Marcus Felson was also there. And we're just wondering, how did they influence and shape your career, you've talked about working with Rob on several projects, and how that kind of really started to cement your interest in victimization. But were wondering about maybe some of the other people in the department that might have had an influence on you and your work.

Janet Lauritsen 14:44

So Michael Gottfredson was there while I was an undergrad, but he left around the time that Rob came, so I only had one class that he was involved in, and it turns out it was what we call a research practicum where each graduate student had to do 42 phone interviews for survey and he really had to learn the ins and outs of survey research. And I learned, I had great respect for him. But I didn't have a personal relationship with him. I didn't take another class with him and he was gone. You mentioned Marcus Felson, I took a class with him, but I wasn't interested in in crime at that time. There were other criminologist there, too, Ken Land was there while I was an undergrad of Landon McCall and Landon Cantor and [inaudible]. But so there was a lot of coming and going of faculty there. And to your point that, you know, everybody sees scholars like Rob Samson, from the present view, especially young people, no, he was just a few years older, and no one knows how this is going to turn out for anyone. Same with John Laub, he was just a young assistant professor, they had gone to graduate school together. And we're only a few years apart. So I would say to you, that's like young people that there are young assistant professors that you probably know, that you know they're pretty smart, and you should hang out with them and try to learn from each other. And see, they could be the next, you know, they could have some really great trajectory of ideas and intellectual imagination that will help you. So I didn't know they were going to be who they were, I was sort of shocked too because I knew him from the beginning. I knew he did good work, but there were a lot of people who do good work. I didn't know what would happen. So yeah, they weren't who they are now, Stockholm prize winners. They were trying to get tenure. Yeah, that.

Jenn Tostlebe 16:48

Alright, so kind of our last question, kind of reflecting back on your career has to do with your career at UMSL. And something that we thought was interesting was when we think about a lot of professors that we know looking back on their careers, most of them move around, at least to one other university, if not more, but you went to the University of Missouri St. Louis, and you stayed there for your entire career. And so we just want to kind of know, you know, how did you end up at UMSL, how it changed over time? And what were your experiences like there?

Janet Lauritsen 17:28

Yeah, that's a good question. It was never my plan to stay there my whole career. I thought I'd give three years see how it works out. And there were many offers along the way that I turned down for one reason or another. I think the main question when I was younger is, Where can I find a better working environment? I never left or made a decision based on money. Because you could get an offer, if you have a good record, some other place. It's, you know, just assume that that's the case. Why would you go to another place? What is it that you're going to get from that place? And I had just the best

colleagues, they came and went, many of them are lifelong friends. And I learned so much from them. I hope that they learned some things from me, we would have great conversations from everything from qualitative work to time series work to different topics. And where else would I be able to find that kind of awesome collegiality, but just good, really smart people, we always hire really smart people and recognize talent. I think one thing that I do remember when I was young, one thing that like, Well, I don't want people that are too talented, because then I'm gonna lose my job, because they're gonna recognize what a fraud I am. But try to get over that. If you have those insecurities, like many of us do, it's like just just, you know, I just couldn't have imagined a better set of colleagues for the all those years I learned so much from and that's why I mainly stayed. There, then then life comes along, and you get married to someone who has a job at the same place. And then you have to find two now, that's those situations, my husband and I did get offers to go elsewhere. Rick Rosenfeld is my husband, some people know, but then we had to figure out how it's going to work for both of us. And then by then you have roots and you have children in the area, or you have family nearby and responsibilities. So it's harder to move as you get older. And then if you have a pension, you stay for the benefits. It's pretty simple in my case.

Jenn Tostlebe 19:39

Yeah. Yeah. And we've always heard great things about UMSL to from all different people and about, you know, the colleagues and just the general environment. It's always been, yeah, just every other [crosstalk]. Yeah, it was fun. And people that have left, we've heard that they miss it at times, and yeah.

Janet Lauritsen 19:59

go I hear that to remain. That's a real, real nice thing. And it's about people. Right. So it's people and respect for each other and picking your battles and not being afraid to disagree. It's fine to disagree. Disagree with my husband all the time on matters of education. Okay, win some lose some Yeah.

Jose Sanchez 20:21

All right. Yeah, absolutely. Okay, so we'd like to start moving into the article that you sent us that we're going to discuss today. So it's co-authored by our guest, Janet and her colleague, Mary Beth Rezey. It's titled "Victimization trends and correlate macro and micro influences and new directions for research" that was published in the Annual Review of Criminology in 2018, in this paper, Janet and Mary Beth, aim to take stock of the broad and diverse literature on victimization, they highlight some of the similarities and differences in the trends and correlates of victimization. They draw attention to the remaining gaps in the literature, offering scholars any new directions. And the paper discusses correlates at the individual, the household, family, community, and national and sub national levels. And so the first question we always like to ask when we're discussing papers or books is what was the motivation behind writing this piece? And like, What drove you to sort of structure it the way that you did?

Janet Lauritsen 21:30

Yeah. So there were two things going on at the time, this appeared in the first volume, the Annual Review of Criminology, and I've never been part of that editorial board. But they approached me. And I think they wanted a piece on victimization, a general piece, reviewing the state of the literature and victimization. And they gave me kind of these parameters to work with, they wanted to know about

trends and correlates. And at the time, the second impetus at the time, I had just begun working with a group of researchers and the Bureau of Justice Statistics on developing an assessment of the state of the literature on victimization correlates because of the planned redesign of the National Crime Victimization Survey, which is going to go into the field next year. And so what my job was with the Bureau of Justice Statistics was to work with David Cantor, who is been long affiliated with a survey longer than I. And our job was to summarize this literature and make recommendations to the Bureau of Justice, about what should be included or considered for inclusion in the survey, what kind of items should be in there, given what we've learned about the conversation over the past 30 years, and then whether they were feasible to include in the survey of this kind. And so I already was doing the review. And Mary Beth was a Research Assistant of mine, and she had helped me with that. And so she was natural to help me with this paper, summarizing literature. So we had gone quite, there had not been a state of the art assessment, kind of a general view of what we know at this point in time and victimization. And so what she and I have done is gone through all the national and international data sets and victimization anything in the US, that would be about victimization, like the Violence Against Women surveys, surveys of families, longitudinal survey of addhealth, et cetera, et cetera. We went through all these to try to find what the correlates are, which ones were robust, which ones do we have most competence, and just we use our own judgment for that we didn't do a meta analysis for this. But we use survey informed wisdom, David Cantor and I, for the survey, and then Mary Beth, for drawing our conclusions about what needed to be done. So that was the background, that paper. And we had to do it in a very strict in a number of pages for the annual review. So there were lots of things we couldn't talk about.

Jose Sanchez 21:31

Yeah, they're very strict with the requirements.

Jenn Tostlebe 24:13

All right. So during the paper, as we've mentioned, you looked at correlations of victimizations in levels and first differences and levels suggested common underlying trends. And the first differences suggested similar fluctuations in year to year changes. Exactly. So first, for those listeners, and maybe me and Jose too that maybe don't exactly know what a first difference is, can you just briefly describe what a first difference or first differences are?

Janet Lauritsen 24:49

Yeah, very briefly. So if you imagine you have a time trend and rates and the rates go from 10 to 15 to 10 to 5, what the first differences is that the actual level correlation would be studying the 10 to 15, and 5. But the first differences is simply the value of the difference between time at this point and time at the prior points. So to go from 10 to 15 is plus 5, and to go from 15 to 10 is minus 5, and to go from 10 to 5 is another minus five. And so instead of looking at the correlation in two trends in the rates, you're looking at those numbers instead. And what that tells you is whether what first difference correlations are, are used for as a starting stage in time trend analysis, is to instead of looking at the long term trend, the similarities in the long term view, you're looking for something with more causal string, and that can rule out a spurious correlation more easily, and that is are year to year changes following each other in a patterned way. If there are then it's less likely that that original correlation is spurious. And it's stronger evidence that the two are related, either because they kept causal influences on each other, or

because they share a common underlying factor. That's the short answer. But it's a common technique in time series, which doesn't happen very much in criminology trend analysis, but it's a common technique.

Jenn Tostlebe 26:32

Oh, perfect. And so then, kind of going back to these overall correlations, can you just tell us more about what you found generally?

Janet Lauritsen 26:44

Sure, so we do in the beginning, what we do in this paper is we try to make the point that the field of victimization has been bifurcated it's been highly specialized by type of violence, or characteristic of victims. And what we wanted to show or do for the first time, is just make the point that the crimes that criminologists tend to study with their police data or victimization survey data, that trends in those crimes have a lot of similarity to the trends and other types of crimes that are not normally considered in the field like child abuse, child homicide, intimate partner violence, family violence writ large. So we wanted to show or to at least take a look at and have people who work in these different areas of victimization, think about why should there be such similarities in these trends? What is driving both of them? In similar or different ways over time? I think it's to spark an intellectual imagination about the topic not to provide an answer. But the fact that we find strong correlations in levels. That's not surprising. It's easy to find a strong correlation with any kind of time trend. There's even websites about with funny examples, I used to use in class like number of drownings per year and number of films Nicolas Cage shows up in, they're highly correlated. I'm serious, that's an example you'll find on the web. Okay, but what we also show them in first differences and say it's these are still significant correlations, and they're actually quite, some of them are quite large. So why would you expect child homicide to be so strongly correlated in first differences with child abuse where you can think of why that would be the case. But why with serious non-lethal violence in the entire population at the same time, since children component is, unfortunately, very small event. What could be driving the similarities? And so we wanted to prompt both sides, the traditional criminological approach and other side of specialization to think about these shared possibilities over time, are the changes in social control over time, social control agents, formal and informal. Are they changes in motivations or propensities for violence over time, or they changes in exposure over time to motivated offenders? And what's going on here, but there are shared, there are significant shared patterns that create a new puzzle.

Jose Sanchez 29:31

Okay, so now going to the individual level correlates of victimization. And, you know, here we're talking about things like demographic characteristics, behaviors, or the situations that people may find themselves in. Can you give us a sense as to what were the strong or what correlates strongly with victimization at the individual level?

Janet Lauritsen 29:53

Sure. I think what most people would, criminologists wouldn't be surprised about is that age is one of the strongest correlates of violent victimization, younger people are more likely to be victimized. But also another strong one is marital status, particularly married people are much lower risk than other groups, especially than divorced or separated persons. So those kind of demographic characteristics

have been examined before, as long as the NCVS has been around. But some of those are persistent over time, like age and marital status, but others like sex are not the males for much of the past 50 years, almost now, I've had higher risk of [inaudible] violence, but that gap is closed, and it's gone now. And so the question is, why would that correlate, and individual victimization have changed so much? What is driving that that's some work, but I'm still currently doing with Karen Heimer and some colleagues have. Of all the other kind of personal characteristics, the one that has had some good results, but it's much weaker is low self control, for a variety of reasons. And it's a sensitive to control factors, some of these correlates, but then the really the largest correlates of whether or not one is going to be a victim of crime is whether in the current period is whether they were victims of crime in the past year or so. And whether or not they're involved in offending or deviant behaviors that put them at risk situation. Those are robust correlates. And one of the things, a point that John Laub and I made many years ago is that, you know, it's surprising in some ways that you take one of the largest correlates of offending and involvement in crime, it's so rarely, in the past been studied with offending, and that is victimization. We wouldn't ignore any other correlate that we had such a large effect. But there were lots of reasons why that got ignored. And one is that people didn't think about it. But the second is that feared that there was kind of a victim blaming, you'd be doing victim blaming, if you said, Well, if you're involved in gang life, or distributing narcotics in a corner, or if you're involved in prostitution or something like that, that you're doing, of course, your note doesn't deserve to be victimized, where there was simply making a point that those are very, you're being exposed to very dangerous situations, and offenders without social control, guardians near to help you. So the issue for those are so strong that they require, I think, the most serious attention, and that is that, what can we learn about the factors that might break that link? Why is it that in some neighborhoods, there has been some restriction in some neighborhoods, being a victim of a crime for an adolescent doesn't lead to retaliation and a cycle of violence? What is the mechanism? That's what I think is an important area at the individual.

Jenn Tostlebe 33:09

Okay, so moving into the section on household and family level correlates. Jose texted me about this while we were going through the outline, and he was like, questioning the section because he noticed that it was a lot shorter compared to the others. And he was like, Is this because it's reflection on the state of the evidence for these two correlates compared to the other information? Or what's going on here? So can you just provide some insight? Is it short, because there's just not as much information on household and family? Or is there some other reason?

Janet Lauritsen 33:49

Yeah, I think there's less attention to it, certainly, in the literature. I think one of the this is not the case, though, is much in areas of family violence. But in other forms of violence, there's been less attention paid to it. And part of that is that well, some researchers assume that, well, there can't be anything going on in the household, it's really more likely, perhaps just to be a compositional effect, that it's just spurious. It's just coincidence that these things are correlated with with risk, but in fact, they're not. So I've done some research earlier on, for example, if you look at single parent living with one parent or two parents with the US who lived in single parent families have higher risk for violent victimization. And part of that you would say as well, it's probably associated with economic status is not two incomes instead one, and therefore it's associated the neighborhood you live in and therefore you really have to

control for a lot of things to make sense of that correlate was able to do that though, I still found this effect of being in a single parent family. Now that was associated with higher risk, but it was not even, it was not just a regular effect, it was one that was exacerbated in the most disadvantaged areas, it didn't matter as much if you had one or two parents, if you lived in advantaged area, where there were probably more social controls around, but when you were in a disadvantaged area, living with just one parent seemed to put you at more risk. And we don't know exactly why that is, it couldn't be because of the nature of the kinds of situations that those kids are in, maybe they're unsupervised, more after school, or maybe there's problems with who is coming into the household, or we don't know what it is, but it is there. And I think it requires kind of a rethinking of what kind of data do we need to answer those questions, because those correlates are correlated with individual characteristics and community characteristics.

Jenn Tostlebe 35:56

More research.

Janet Lauritsen 35:57

More research, more thought out research plans too.

Jose Sanchez 36:01

Yes, yes. Okay, so now, moving on to the community level correlates, especially regarding violence. And, you know, especially given some of the work that I do with community violence, you know, some of the things that seem to be pretty robust findings is, you know, violence tends to be concentrated in urban areas, neighborhoods that are, you know, disadvantaged. However, one of the things that you point out in this piece is that there are some challenges with collecting data at the community level, you know, one of them being that the sample size has to be big enough, in order to generalize the findings. And so studies that are trying to conduct this type of research will tend to only focus on one city instead of multiple cities. And so we were wondering, how generalizable are the studies looking at community level, correlate for victimization? And I'm guessing that this kind of runs the spectrum.

Janet Lauritsen 37:03

It's an important question. The place level correlates of disadvantage are robust, I was able to use the NCVS, to look at places outside of urban areas, you know, much of the US doesn't live in a city, they live in the suburbs, or exurbs or rural areas, as well. And so any, if you think, what is a neighborhood? What are we even talking about here? What kind of processes are going on there that look at all like what it looks like in cities. So and we did find that the correlates, socio economic disadvantage is robust, but there's kind of different components of what makes up a disadvantage, that seem to be more relevant for some types of violence than others. So for example, we found [inaudible] and just kind of get this right that for violence against women, it seemed to be the case that there were slightly different correlates. And for stranger violence, particularly for women's violence, it was more about the presence of other things, the magnitude of other single parent families in the neighborhood, and the poverty levels, more so than the unemployment if you've tried to pull it apart. But it's definitely the case that violence problems are robustly correlated with spatial disadvantage, even across crime types, and there's just slight variations and vices. The mechanisms, though, the reasons why those correlations exist in urban areas versus suburban, rural, etc. I don't think that we know, for sure, because we just

don't have it, the data. And we know, from some comparative analyses, that there is variation in the correlations across cities in the US from the southwest to the northeast, to you know, the Midwest. But that is such a large scale kind of data collection to think of something like the PHDCN. project that they did in Chicago, to try to do that. And multiple cities, you know, just astronomical cost. So we got to figure out what two ways to do them. Even the descriptive work, right.

Jenn Tostlebe 39:18

Alright, so speaking of costs, in kind of difficult research, the final correlate you discuss are the final correlates are at the national and sub national level. And you mentioned that these studies are rare. And, you know, one of our questions for you is, why are these studies rare? I'm guessing some of us can take, you know, ponder at this. But why do you think these studies are rare?

Janet Lauritsen 39:46

Well, I think the easiest answer is that we didn't have enough time points, data points, enough years of data to be able to look at these national trends and things like poverty rates or inflation rates or incarceration rates and their relationship to victimization in a way that was causally robust. But now we are getting there. And it's still a challenge though, because if you look at, for example, the NCVS data for victimization, it's having its 50th anniversary this year, that means just we have an N of 50. If you're doing a strictly macro level analysis, you put a few factors in that are correlated, highly correlated each other and you've got already added degrees of freedom to make any strong statements. So that's been the challenge. Usually, the way criminologists have dealt with this in terms of offending is they do these longitudinal panel models of different places like they can do it for cities, 100 cities and look at them over the past 40-50 years, or whatever, and they get more power out of their analysis. So they can take a look at what's going on with much more efficient and insight. But NCVS doesn't allow for that kind of subnational work. So you've got this, for victimization purposes, you've got, we've kind of been hamstrung for a while now. It's not impossible. I'm working on some projects with Karen Heimer again. And what we're able to do, finally now, is that we're able to look at 50 years of data, with the NC...almost 50 years of data with the NCVS at the individual level, and then attach all these macro level correlates to it at the national level. So we can see is you know, what's happening during recessionary periods? What's happening when inflation is high in terms of victimization, which groups are in the US, not just in certain neighborhoods, but which groups are experiencing increases, say, in violence against women, intimate partner violence, in which groups or if any, are experiencing higher motor vehicle theft rates, or etc. The reason we think this is important is because most of criminology believes that it is, or tries to find ways to affect change in the crime rate, victimization, right, make people safer. And so one example might be like, what kind of social policy should we do during severe economic downturns or recessionary times? That might offset the expected increase, we expect to see because times have gotten very tough. So welfare benefits, for example, did welfare programs have an effect on moderating the increase we would have expected to see and victimization during the last recession? Those are the kinds of questions you can answer if you have a lot of data over time, you know, and then we're finally getting there. You know, it's like longitudinal research at the individual level. Yeah, for the first few years, he was talking about 12 year olds, you know, and it's like, but soon, if you're around long, they're adults, and now there's enough for us to talk about. Yeah, that's cool. Yeah, there's lots to learn still,

Jenn Tostlebe 39:54

yeah. Are you doing that using like, multi level modeling, then to do individual and then add in the national component? Yeah?

Janet Lauritsen 43:27

Yeah, that's what we're doing. It requires a different way of handling for quirky statistical reasons. Fortunately, we have a real statistician on our team, not a criminologist who's taken a lot of stats courses, we were really what we are doing is taking macro indicators of all sorts of things from the economy, but also, you know, welfare policies, trying to deal with things like incarceration rates, trying to measure gender inequalities, race and ethnic disparities, and then look at how these things might, whether that, for example, social policy might benefit men more than women or women and children more than adults. It's endless. Yeah. And it sounds like it endless set of questions. And that's good and bad, good or bad. It's more fun to not run out of questions than to hit dead ends. Yeah, absolutely.

Jose Sanchez 44:25

All right. So just to kind of close out the paper portion of our discussion. So I can mention one of the goals that you have for this paper was to sort of outline what you thought were the future directions that researchers needed to go in. And so can you give us a brief rundown of the future directions and some of these gaps in the literature that you identified, that you think need to be addressed?

Janet Lauritsen 44:50

Yeah, I think we make a few points, some of which I touched on already. But you know, one of the points is, you know, I really would like to see and hope that someone who has more years left ahead in their career would take a look at how changes in violence in the home, which is we know is an important part of the life course, may have had down later down the road cohort effects reductions in violence and victimization in the future. Now, how much of the decline in violence may have been related to improvements in women's lives 10-15 years before, that would be one kind of way to link the violence. That's an that's we know, it's important to outcomes that we are no important later on in life. Second, I do think there's more, much more that can be done to try to take a closer look at the victim-offender victimization-offending overlap, and figure out how to break that you know, how to learn. And I don't think this can be done with quantitative research. I think this is going to require qualitative for someone to kind of design but just how is it that youth, especially in kids cope with what we know is, are important experiences being exposed to violence and seeing violence and maybe experiencing themselves? How can they come out of that more resilient and not go down into both dangerous paths of behavior, but also for their own mental health reasons. So it's the consequences of those victimization. So there's a lot of attention now to trauma informed criminology, but it's sometimes a negative event in one's life has a positive outcome. In terms of saying this, I'm never doing that, again, I've got to change or a family might make a decision like this is too much, we got to do whatever we got to do to get out of here. Not that that we would like to make that those options, more equal, right, possible for other people to do take advantage of it shouldn't just require something that's for the rich, but I think that's where I really like to see, so that we don't give up on people who had a life of victimization of one form or another due to the types of places they live in, or types of families they grew up in. But I think also trying to understand more about the mechanisms about social economic disadvantage across different types of places, particularly, somebody needs to step into the rural and

urban differences and suburban differences, you know, in my own city in St. Louis, lots of people are, you know, yes, we know that crime is concentrated. But we also know that I don't have the exact figure in my head, but a good proportion, somewhere close to half of the people who get arrested for committing crimes in some neighborhoods don't live in the city, these borders are permeable, people come to places to commit crimes, that exposes people there to high levels of victimization, and then they leave. Yet we only think of the mechanisms at disadvantage in terms of motivations for offending, not exposure, by drawing people to the area and exposure to the conversation, or so I think more needs to be thought about there. Simply by, let's take a look how much of this claim is actually coming here and victimizing people here. And not because of the people who live here as much as it is from outsiders coming in. And then we do make some reference to new forms of victimization, think I'll leave that for another day. I'm talking about violence, mostly, but they are coming and some of them are placeless. They are not about where you live. They are about what you're connected to where your computer is, and when WiFi around or something that's so that there's a whole field emerging. What if we don't even consider space, then what are the correlates of risk for these new forms of crime? They're emerging, increasing forms of crime. So those are kind of the basic points. And I think there's much to be done. Lots of projects in here. I think part of the reason that, I will say, one of the things that attracted me to victimization first place was, I mentioned, not a lot was known, but also that left it open for me to step in and make, you know, contributions here and there, which is a lot easier to do if you're studying something that few other people are studying, rather than trying to study the same thing everybody's interested in right now, because it's the hottest topic, and I've been around long enough to see hot topics come and go. It's just easier if you pick out something that's got a long term trajectory of importance. So I would encourage everybody to please get interested in victimization. It is crime,, you know, it is crime. It's just from another perspective,

Jenn Tostlebe 50:04

I think more people, or at least I feel like I'm seeing more research within victimology, you know, come up. So it's there. But I feel like there's still a lot that's open with it. You have now given, as Jose likes to say, everyone marching orders, so everyone listening to this can get to it.

Janet Lauritsen 50:25

Good, good. It's not going to be easy. I'm not going to lie to you. I learned something new every day, from the NCVS. Working with it open after all these years. That's just that data set. I think you just got to stick with it. And most researchers, you know, one question leads to the next. And the best thing is to kind of be surprised by your own findings, to be wrong every once in a while is more exciting than to prove yourself right. Because it leads to new insights. So we're not lawyers here. We're not trying to make a case. We're scientists. We're trying to find out what's going on. And then ask others who might be doing qualitative research on what they think about this pattern. What do they think's going on, because I can't figure it out with my method, maybe they have some insights from the way they've been approaching problems.

Jenn Tostlebe 51:23

Alright, so that actually kind of leads us to the last, I don't know, 5-10 minutes, which is kind of wrapping up your career and talking about the field of criminology. And so we want to start off with what

accomplishment or accomplishments are you most proud of either as a researcher or a professor or a mentor, however you want to take it?

Janet Lauritsen 51:47

I think, I'm not sure I use the word pride, [inaudible] one of the seven deadly sins, I just prefer to say which ones I found most satisfying, how about that? I think I really, really enjoyed my opportunity after I've been working with this federal survey to go and spend time as a research fellow at the Bureau of Justice Statistics, on and off for many, many years, I learned more about how data get developed, methodology, just by talking to people who do this and who don't publish, that's not their job is to publish their reports, but they had more interesting things in their file cabinets than I've seen in journals many times. So I really am just so grateful to have gotten to meet and work with people I've a great deal respect for those who have to deal with the pressures of politics, in prime world with asked questions by government officials all the time, you need to turn around an answer. Not in six months after you've done your lit review but by Friday, close a business. So I'm really proud that I didn't screw that up. And then they kept inviting me back. So that was because I was probably the refreshed my mind for teaching. And I think I helped them some because I had freedoms and time to study the research that they didn't have other job tasks to handle. So that was I think my most favorite part.

Jose Sanchez 53:25

Sounds interesting. Oh, yeah. So what would you consider to be the greatest lesson you've learned throughout your career?

Janet Lauritsen 53:33

And I know you wrote that down for me, I'm sorry, I don't have a quick quick answer for that. I think I could say that, you know, be prepared for anything. Keep an active intellectual imagination. The more I read outside the field, the more interesting things I find to do inside the field, if you are worried in terms of the future criminology and becoming too hyper specialized and talking only to ourselves. But political scientists, historians, sociologists, economists, they all have a lot of really interesting insights about problems that aren't the same, but they're actually very similar in structure and content. So keep an open mind and keep reading outside the field. If you can find find a way to create a structure imagine intellectual imagination.

Jenn Tostlebe 54:22

Yeah, absolutely. All right. So our last main question for you is just what do you think about the current state of criminology and criminal justice and where would you like to see the field or the discipline move going forward?

Janet Lauritsen 54:41

Well, you probably, right, know that I just did a presidential address, crime data. I focused on that because I thought it would be productive. I don't want to see us give up the facts of the field that we study, and trying to do the best, the most transparent job of producing those facts, just have to have faith that that's going to matter in the future. I worry that it's not, we're that we're under so many political threats. And now that'll be aided by technology, and misinformation, those are external threats that I think are, I'm hoping that people elsewhere have really good ideas on how to manage that. But the

other thing I'd like to see is this going to sound more of a critique of academia, is less infighting among some factions in the field, I think we forget what we share in terms of our goals. And the reasons why we study this. Our approaches may be different, or politics may be different. I hope we can agree on science and the value of an open mind. And the role of advocacy as being different from the role of science. Because if we can't, then I fear that we're going to lose control, not control. But respect. If we turn into a political, mostly political advocacy field, why ask a criminologist if you can ask if you have more confidence in an economist, for example. So I would like to see just where those problems exist, that they'd be carefully considered, you know, thoughtfully addressed. Yeah, we can agree to disagree. I hope all over the field, as I said before, yeah, that's important. Okay. It's okay to disagree. Absolutely.

Jose Sanchez 56:35

All right. Well, those are all the questions that we have for you today. Did you have any last thoughts, anything that we didn't maybe get to that you'd like to touch on?

Janet Lauritsen 56:45

Probably, but I can't think of them right. Now, you know, we can have these kinds of conversations. For a long time, I just want to thank you guys for inviting me. It's been, first of all, I hadn't reread this paper I wrote in a couple of years. So I appreciate going back to check that out again, because I forgot about that. But just thanks a lot. I appreciate it. It's fun. And I think it's a great thing. It's unique, and I think, important to kind of keep lines of communication open with all sorts of scholars, whether they're young or older. You know, I wish we had that when I was in grad school in very small worlds. Yeah.

Jenn Tostlebe 57:28

Yeah, thank you, to you for coming on as well and sharing with us this event, a lot of fun to do, and to talk to people and learn. And we're glad that people find it useful and important and helpful. So.

Janet Lauritsen 57:42

God should be in a class, it should be required every week in some seminars. Learn a lot.

Jose Sanchez 57:52

If people would like to get a hold of you, where can people find you?

Janet Lauritsen 57:57

Yeah, I still have an emeritus status. So I have my um, so email address, I'm still on the website and have access to all of that. So the best way is email these days. I don't have a personal website. I don't have social media or Twitter presence, some old school. So.

Jose Sanchez 58:13

You know, some would argue it's better that way.

Janet Lauritsen 58:16

Yeah. I don't know how you find the time. I don't know how some people find it.

Jose Sanchez 58:21

Well, thank you again, we really do appreciate it. It was great speaking with you.

Janet Lauritsen 58:26

And good luck with your studies in graduate school.

Jose Sanchez 58:29

And thank you,

Jenn Tostlebe 58:30

thank you. Hey, thanks for listening.

Jose Sanchez 58:32

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Jenn Tostlebe 58:42

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Jose Sanchez 58:53

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