



ANDREW KARMEN

CRIME VICTIMS
an introduction to
VICTIMOLOGY

tenth edition



crime victims

AN INTRODUCTION TO VICTIMOLOGY

TENTH EDITION

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Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology,
Tenth Edition
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Preface

PREFACE TO THE 10TH EDITION

Victimology Faces Some Daunting Challenges

This 10th edition of *Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology* was written during the fall of 2017 and the spring of 2018.

Three problems posed challenges: Victimology was being stigmatized with a totally undeserved bad reputation; scientific investigations aimed to uncover what is really happening were under attack; and several previous sources of data were no longer available, even in an era of open access to big data.

“Bad-Mouthing” Victimology Is Becoming More Widespread

In June of 2018, a public opinion poll asked registered voters whether they thought the Democratic Party was focused on victimology. About half of the respondents answered, “yes.” Now, if only the Republican Party also showed a similar interest in victimology, that would be a positive development, wouldn’t it? If both liberals and conservatives focused on victimology, it would alleviate the plight of people whose homes were burglarized or whose cars were stolen and relieve the suffering of individuals who were robbed, or raped, or beaten, or shot, right?

Not really!

For years, the term “victimology” has been misused to refer to what is properly labeled “victimism”—an outlook in which members of a group emphasize how they have been oppressed and exploited throughout history and now demand an end to this mistreatment. These days, the scientific study of criminal victimization often is mixed up with the controversial political ideology of victimism. This misunderstanding of what victimology actually is all about has led some influential commentators who ought to know better to condemn what they brand as victimology when they actually intend to denounce victimism. The unfortunate result of this sloppy phrasing is that the entire discipline of victimology is being tarred with a completely unfair negative reputation.

There is reason to believe that this mixing up of victimology with victimism is intensifying because this disturbing confusion reached a new high (or worse yet, a new low) when pollsters asked respondents, “A Democratic gubernatorial candidate said this week about Democrats that ‘our party right now ... is pickled in identity politics and victimology....’ Do you agree or disagree?” Just about half of all respondents agreed (including nearly 45 percent of Democrats, as well as over 55 percent of Republicans). Only about 25 percent of the sample answered they were not sure (Rasmussen Reports, 2018). So, that means about 75 percent of the respondents felt they knew what the term “victimology” actually refers to—but do they really? I don’t think so.

Students might enter introductory college courses with a preexisting condition that must be confronted and remedied right at the outset: a hostility toward what they mistakenly have been told about victimology. If they believe that victimology is something to be rejected and condemned because it reflects bitterness and can be divisive, then those of us who teach courses in victimology certainly have to dispel any negative misimpressions about this branch of criminology on the first day of classes. An expanded discussion in Chapter 1 tackles this problem right away. It presents a table containing a slew of victimology-bashing quotes drawn from articles and speeches over the years so that students can spot the confusion whenever they come across it. That will enable them to get past this stumbling block and move on to the valuable and interesting insights that researchers have uncovered about the plight of persons harmed by criminals and the efforts that are underway to alleviate their suffering.

What Happened to Respect for Evidence and the Pursuit of Truth?

The United States currently is beset by intense political polarization and torn by acrimonious debate. Some partisans seem hostile to the concept of expertise, disregard established facts as inconvenient truths, and dismiss damaging revelations as fake news. Instead, vague impressions, baseless claims, raw prejudices, unfounded fears, uninformed opinions, atypical cases, exaggerated negative stereotypes, and half-truths taken out of context are touted as alternative facts and new realities. As data-driven and evidence-based decision making becomes downgraded as wonkish, policies that are ideologically driven and emotionally appealing become elevated.

To counter this drift away from fact-based insights about the social problems that currently burden us all, including interpersonal violence and theft, I have adopted a new format that emphasizes data, well-grounded estimates, and other statistical measurements, such as the results of victimization surveys. Throughout this 10th edition of *Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology*, the findings unearthed by researchers are highlighted by indenting them with “bullets.” This new way of accentuating information derived from investigations is meant to consistently remind students that assertions and generalizations must be backed up by empirical proof carefully derived from the application of

scientific methods. I want to dispel any notion students might harbor that victimology is merely a mix of personal opinions and common sense rather than the accumulation of knowledge derived from the findings of carefully designed research projects and thoroughly tested theories.

A Growing Absence of Information in the Age of Big Data

The third challenge I encountered while working on this 10th edition of the textbook is that several sources of data that were monitored and analyzed in previous editions have dried up. Ironically, in this age of collecting big data, the federal government's Bureau of Justice Statistics has phased out its State Court Processing Statistics (SCPS) program, which made it possible to monitor how often judges ordered offenders to pay restitution to their victims. Also, starting with the 2016 annual Uniform Crime Report, the FBI has stopped publishing as many tables of data as it did in the past (e.g., the table about victim-offender relationships that traditionally allowed victimologists to track the number of murders committed by husbands of their wives and by boyfriends of their girlfriends—and vice versa—is no longer being published). Also, it is no longer possible to discover how many murders started out as robberies.

I also have discovered that researchers have not recently tackled some of the most important issues that should be the focus of periodic victimological investigations. For example, no recent figures are available about whether most burglary or motor vehicle victims have insurance coverage and whether it is adequate to reimburse their needs; about whether or not car alarms and burglar alarms really work and are sound investments; whether victim compensation programs run out of money before the fiscal year ends, leaving victims who apply later in the year out of luck; and whether victim-offender programs are effectively handling a greater share of criminal cases per year. In sum, many classic studies carried out decades ago need to be replicated, and several discontinued monitoring systems generating useful data streams ought to be revived.

Browse the Items Posted to the Companion Website That Supplements This Textbook: www.crimevictimsupdates.com.

For the past six years, I have been maintaining a website to address the issue of new research findings replacing older, stale data. Check out my companion website www.crimevictimsupdates.com periodically, not only for the latest developments but also for links to news videos, radio interviews, government reports, court documents, studies issued by think tanks, and other sources of recently released data and analysis, as well as selections of ongoing media coverage that can enrich class discussions of the subjects, policy issues, and controversies examined in this 10th edition of the book. The items I post to the website are geared to illustrate and enhance the information found on specific pages of the 10th edition and to inspire class discussions about selected topics.

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS 10TH EDITION?

In revising this textbook once again, I have maintained a focus on all the groups of victims who appeared in the previous nine editions. Although nothing important has been cut out, I have changed the order of presentation of a few subjects, and I have paid greater attention to a number of timely issues. In response to feedback from reviewers, this edition has an additional number of concise real-life cases culled from high-profile news stories that put a human face on the many empirical generalizations and statistics that are cited in each chapter. These emotionally charged items help to promote students' engagement with the scholarly material that is the backbone of this textbook. These gripping excerpts spark discussions and debates about what happened to real individuals in actual cases, and in the process concretize abstract principles, hypotheticals, and criminal justice procedures. (As in all the past editions, I continue to respect the privacy of persons who have been harmed by criminals by withholding their names and locations. However, the references provide that specific information for those students who might want to delve more deeply into these cases.)

The most useful change in each of the 13 chapters is that I have bulleted all the numerical findings from research studies. By placing this stress on evidence, I am trying to reinforce the idea that victimology is a branch of social science and not just ideas derived from common sense and conventional wisdom, or merely a collection of personal opinions.

This 10th edition also contains learning objectives that have been reformulated to make them more focused and measurable. This should prove useful for professors engaged in outcomes assessment. The questions at the end of each chapter, which encourage discussion and debate as well as critical thinking, also can serve as performance measures. I provide ideas at the end of each chapter for hands-on research projects. These could form the basis for term papers that can serve as additional indicators of what students gained from taking this course.

In preparing this 10th edition, as always, I have thoroughly updated all the statistical evidence that is needed to back up my analyses and conclusions. For those instructors who relish evidence-based claims and sound policy recommendations, plenty of reliable empirical material from official sources of data appear in the many graphs, tables, and boxes.

As in the previous nine editions, I have sought out and highlighted the many controversies that involve victims as they interact with offenders, criminal justice officials and agencies, policy makers, the news media, social movements, and businesses selling security products and services. The pros and cons concerning contested issues make a college course more meaningful and relevant to the real world of competing interests and polarized politics. I strive to be fair and balanced by presenting the strongest arguments of both sides in each controversy. I do not personally endorse some of the points of view that I present or their implications for social policy. But I firmly believe that a textbook ought to call attention, whenever possible, to sharp clashes between well-meaning people with differing evidence-based views and divergent interpretations of the same data. An example of a controversy featured in this 10th edition centers

on whether individuals who believe they face grave risks would fare better if they were armed with handguns for self-protection.

Some highlights of the specific revisions, additions, and improvements I have made in each chapter of this 10th edition, which has grown by about 60 pages, follow.

COMPARING THIS 10TH EDITION TO THE 9TH EDITION

Throughout the Book

- In every chapter, the learning objectives are reworded to make them more focused and more measurable;
- In every chapter, the presentation of research findings is highlighted by presenting numerical evidence within bulleted items;
- In every chapter, the statistics from various government monitoring systems that are presented in tables and figures (graphs) are updated to the latest available year (usually 2016, sometimes 2015, or even 2017);
- In every chapter, real-life cases and research findings have been removed if they represent situations that are no longer relevant.

Chapter 1: What Is Victimology?

Chapter 1 was thoroughly revised to make the introduction to the subject more intriguing and to raise, clarify, and illustrate some major themes and issues that will be examined throughout the book.

- Greatly expanded a discussion about the importance of research;
- Identified different types of research studies in victimology;
- Illustrated how research findings can be surprising because they contradict common sense answers;
- Added some new real-life examples and injected new statistical evidence into existing discussions;
- Expanded the examination of how victims suffer;
- Clarified the discussion about the need for objectivity and impartiality when examining controversial cases and conflicts;
- Placed greater emphasis on analyzing victim–offender relationships;
- Clarified what victimology is, and what it isn't (by differentiating it from direct services provided by practitioners and criminal investigations carried out by police officers and detectives);
- Added a box showing how victimologists ask different questions than practitioners;
- Illustrated the confusion that may arise when examining conflicting claims about who is the real victim and who is actually the offender, especially in cases involving assertions about self-defense;

- Presented more examples and more data about offenders turning into murder victims and victims transforming into offenders;
- Clarified how victimology differs from the ideology of victimism, which is a political outlook some people mistakenly call “victimology” and then vehemently criticize it;
- Sharpened the section that compares and contrasts criminology and victimology;
- Improved the answers to the question, “Why study victimology?”;
- Added a brief discussion about how different disciplinary approaches (psychological, legal, historical, anthropological, economical) can be adopted when researching victim issues;
- Added a discussion about the different levels of research (exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and evaluative), and used victims of ransomware as an example;
- Provided a box outlining the questions to answer and issues to address when undertaking a victimological investigation;
- Updated the analysis of road rage as an example of a victimological investigation.

Chapter 2: The Rediscovery of Crime Victims

- Added some new items to the box about “Highlights in the History of Major Developments in Victimology and Victim Assistance”;
- Added an entire box illustrating “Examples of Pro-Victim Policies and Laws”;
- Added a new case to illustrate admirable resilience and elaborated on the discussion of survivorology;
- Added a brief discussion of the controversy surrounding Kate’s Law and federal efforts to draw attention to offenses committed by “criminal aliens;”
- Added some statistical findings about the victims of human trafficking.

Chapter 3: Victimization in the United States: An Overview

- Strengthened the discussion about the importance of statistical evidence;
- Added a brief discussion about the use of statistical evidence in the controversy surrounding victimization by criminal aliens;
- Added a surprising research finding that most of the victims of kidnappings were not children;
- Noted the most recent changes in the definitions of rapes and of sexual assaults;
- Updated FBI UCR statistics, FBI NIBRS statistics, and BJS NCVS survey findings to 2016 numbers and rates in all the tables and both graphs;
- Updated CDC calculations about the leading causes of death.

Chapter 4: A Closer Look at the Victims of Interpersonal Crimes of Violence and Theft

- Updated the table showing “Murder Rates across the Globe: Selected Countries” along with the table listing “Murder Rates in Various Big Cities around the World”;
- Updated the map showing murder rates across the country;
- Added some findings about bystanders who intervened into a crime in progress and were murdered;
- Added a brief description and discussion of the mass murder of concertgoers in Las Vegas by a heavily armed gunman;
- Highlighted and clarified the discussion of differential risks;
- Updated the analysis of the diminishing differences in robbery risks faced by people falling into different demographic groups;
- Simplified the listings of the make, model, and years of the cars stolen by thieves;
- Updated the rankings of the most dangerous and the safest cities in which to park a car;
- Added a section about the theft of sailboats and motorboats, especially differential risks of losing a watercraft as well as the chances of recovering a stolen boat;
- Moved the discussion of identity theft to Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: The Ongoing Controversy over Shared Responsibility

- Replaced a complex table about the frequency of occurrence of identity theft with an easily understood graph;
- Added a discussion that examined the risks and consequences of identity theft more thoroughly and clarified the distinctions between victim-blaming, victim-defending, and system-blaming;
- Strengthened the analysis of victim facilitation in burglary by adding illustrations and research findings;
- Added new research findings to the discussion of the controversy surrounding victim facilitation as a contributing factor to the problem of motor vehicle theft;
- Strengthened the presentation of system-blaming arguments for murders, identity theft, burglary, and vehicle theft.

Chapter 6: Victims and the Police

- Expanded the discussion of the functionalist model versus the conflict model as applied to the role of victims in the criminal justice process;

- Added some new quotes from notable sources about shortcomings in the way the criminal justice system handles victims;
- Added some new research findings and some new real-life cases to expand the discussion of whether victims want punishment, treatment, or restitution from offenders;
- Added some new material to the discussion of reporting rates and police response times;
- Added some new cases about false claims of victimization;
- Updated the evidence about the decline in clearance rates;
- Added a table about the decline in stolen property recovery rates.

Chapter 7: Victims' Rights and the Criminal Justice System

- Added the founder of the #MeToo movement to the box about victim activism;
- Updated the compilation of victims' rights legislation introduced in Congress over the decades;
- Revised the review of the intimidation problem;
- Sharpened the discussion about double standards and the differential handling of cases, depending upon the victims' characteristics.

Chapter 8: Victimized Children

- Added some new material (latest legal developments, recent research findings) to the section on missing children;
- Introduced a typology of four different kinds of kidnappings and illustrated them with real-life cases;
- Updated the table analyzing Amber Alert statistics;
- Added a few new cases of extreme child abuse;
- Updated the research findings cited by maximalists and minimalists who debate the seriousness of the child abuse problem;
- Expanded the coverage of children sexually abused by respected and trusted figures in many different religious groups and also prestigious private schools;
- Noted the rise of a cottage industry handling investigations and civil lawsuits against religious and educational institutions.

Chapter 9: Victims of Violence by Lovers and Family Members

- Added a discussion about the controversy surrounding false allegations about intimate partner violence;
- Updated the research findings cited by maximalists and minimalists who debate the seriousness of the intimate partner violence problem;

- Focused more directly on how differing definitions determine the size of estimates of the rate of intimate partner violence;
- Updated research findings about dating violence;
- Updated the research findings cited by maximalists and minimalists who debate the seriousness of the elder abuse problem;
- Added some new research findings to the discussion of intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships.

Chapter 10: Victims of Rapes and Other Sexual Assaults

- Spelled out the various offenses that fall under the heading of “sexual assaults”;
- Added a discussion of the “#MeToo” movement against sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct;
- Added a real-life excerpt from a victim-impact statement that went viral, made public by a woman who was violated while unconscious, and added another real-life case in which the defendant was not convicted and punished because the young woman got herself too intoxicated;
- Sharpened the examination of what some people believe but what others consider to be rape myths;
- Updated the statistics cited by maximalists and minimalists as they debate the seriousness of the current problem of sexual assaults and rapes;
- Expanded the discussion of the controversy surrounding estimates of the frequency of false charges of rape, and presented two new, highly politicized and often-cited real-life cases;
- Presented two new cases in which detectives did not believe the accounts of women until they captured a serial rapist who used the same tactics over and over again, and cited some new research findings about entire departments routinely dismissing relatively high percentages of rape complaints as unfounded;
- Provided new documentation about the consistently low rate of reporting sex crimes to police departments;
- Cited the most recent developments in the problem of untested rape kits;
- Added two recent high-profile cases in which women were deliberately drugged in order to make them incapable of resisting the rapists’ advances;
- Thoroughly reviewed the latest developments in the maximalist versus minimalist controversy surrounding sexual assaults on campus;
- Added the latest research findings about sexual assaults in the military;
- Cited some recent developments in the efforts to reduce sexual violence behind bars.

Chapter 11: Additional Groups of Victims with Special Problems

- Moved the discussion about crimes against cruise ship passengers here from Chapter 7 and updated it with the latest statistics;
- Clarified the description of what specific behaviors are prohibited by antistalking legislation and presented the latest research findings about their occurrence;
- Updated the statistics from government-monitoring systems about outbreaks of violence in schools, including mass shootings of elementary, middle, and high school students;
- Updated the statistics about outbreaks of violence on university campuses, including mass shootings of college students;
- Injected the latest developments concerning hazing on college campuses;
- Added the latest findings from government monitoring systems about workplace violence, especially murders;
- Presented the latest findings about patterns, trends, and targets from FBI's annual report about hate crimes;
- Added some recent real-life examples of hate crimes and inmate-on-inmate violence;
- Updated statistics about murders of prisoners by other inmates behind bars;
- Expanded and updated the analysis of police officers murdered and injured in the line of duty;
- Replaced a graph about casualties from terrorism with a more detailed review of major attacks motivated by differing political ideologies within the United States.

Chapter 12: Repaying Victims

- Replaced older cases with new real-life high-profile cases that grabbed headlines and sparked controversies in recent years;
- Added information about the broader coverage now offered by compensation programs to victims in certain states;
- Added some recent research findings about the payment of restitution by offenders to victims and about the amount of reimbursement compensation programs are paying out to applicants;
- Inserted calls for victimologists to carry out much needed research at various junctures: whether civil lawsuits are productive, whether insurance coverage is adequate—the practical problems that are making it difficult for victims to collect restitution from their offenders—and whether compensation programs actually are meeting the needs of victims of violent offenses.

Chapter 13: Victims in the Twenty-First Century: Alternative Directions

- Thoroughly revised and reorganized the discussion of whether or not victims would be better off if they were armed when they come under attack and whether carrying around handguns for self-protection is a sound social reaction to the threat of victimization;
- Added many new real-life cases;
- Added some quotations from prominent figures in this controversy;
- Presented the latest statistics and research findings about defensive gun uses as well as gun violence, suicide by firearms, and accidental discharges resulting in woundings and deaths;
- Identified many specific research questions where data collected and analyzed by victimologists could make a contribution to a better understanding of the issues that divide the two sides in this fierce debate over arming for self-defense;
- Added two boxes: one about “guns on campus” and the other posing the questions about “defensive gun uses” that researchers should address;
- Updated the latest developments in the movement toward applying the principles of restorative justice to a greater share of criminal cases.

USING THIS TEXTBOOK

This 10th edition of *Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology* is intended to meet several distinct needs. The optimal situation is to use this textbook as the foundation for an undergraduate elective course on victimology that runs for an entire term. In fact, more than enough material is provided to sustain even a graduate-level course. A number of chapters of this book can be used to address victim-centered problems, such as violence in American society, that arise in either an advanced criminology class or as selected issues in criminal justice course.

Similarly, other chapters might fit neatly into courses that focus on policy analysis or research methods.

For classes that require a term paper or group project, this edition provides loads of up-to-date references, suggestions for short research projects at the end of each chapter, plenty of graphs and statistics, and numerous observations about problems of measurement and interpretation. For example, the extensive compilation of the types of victimization that recently have been recognized or are just waiting to be rediscovered (see the list at the end of Chapter 2) can serve as a launching pad for exploratory research and term projects. For courses that incorporate writing requirements via essay exams, each chapter has several questions for discussion and debate plus a few that stimulate critical thinking. An instructor’s manual and Test Bank is also available, as are Microsoft PowerPoint® visual aids.

MY GROWING “CREDENTIALS” AS A CRIME VICTIM

Each time I revise this textbook, my credentials (unfortunately) broaden and deepen. Direct experience often is the best teacher and a source of sensitivity and insight about life’s problems as well as the challenges imposed by misfortunes. In the preface of each previous editions, I have listed these credentials, which show that I am not only a criminologist and victimologist but also a victim of a wide assortment of interpersonal crimes of violence and theft.

Thankfully, none of these incidents were really serious. In fact, my very first experience was something to laugh at, in retrospect, although it was very aggravating at the time. After I graduated from college, I got my first car: a brand-new 1966 Ford Mustang. I drove it around upstate New York, where I was attending graduate school, for about a week before a thief stole its gleaming wire wheel covers—all four of them in a single night! Amazingly enough, crime was not yet a widespread problem, so my minor misfortune actually appeared in the police blotter of the local newspaper. This incident contributed to my life-long interest in law-breaking, victimization, and the quest for justice.

Before the first edition was written:

- I was held up twice (in one month!) by pairs of knife-wielding robbers. I handled both of these confrontations as “business transactions.” We “negotiated a deal,” I handed over the cash in my wallet, they let me keep a watch that I had won in a contest, and nobody got hurt.
- I lost a car to thieves. The police discovered it completely stripped, burned, and abandoned a few blocks away from my apartment.
- I experienced a series of thefts of car radios and batteries.
- I suffered a break-in that left my apartment in disarray.

By the time the second edition of this textbook came out, my already impressive résumé as a street crime victim had grown considerably:

- A thief stole the bicycle that I used to ride to the train station by cutting the fence to which it was chained.
- Someone ran off with a fishing rod I had left unattended for a few minutes on a pier while I was buying more bait. (It surely was not pulled over the railing by a big fish.)
- A teenager singled out my car in a crowded parking lot for some reason and smashed the rear window with a rock. An eyewitness pointed out the young man to the police, and his foster parents volunteered to pay my bills for the damage. (I minimized their expenses by going to a salvage yard to find a low-cost replacement window.)
- A thief broke into the trunk of my car and stole my wallet and my wife’s pocketbook while we spent an afternoon at the beach. Our wallets were later recovered from a nearby mailbox, emptied of our cash and credit cards.
- One hot summer night, an intruder entered our kitchen through an unlocked screen door. He ran off with a purse while we talked to guests in the living room.

- A car I was riding in was sideswiped by a vehicle driven by a fugitive who was being hotly pursued by a patrol car. No one was hurt, and the offender escaped.
- A thief smashed the side window of my car, which was parked at a meter a block away from the college where I teach. Sitting in the passenger seat, he began to pry out the radio. When the alarm went off, he fled, leaving behind his high-quality screwdriver (it continues to be my favorite tool).

By the third edition, I had a few more misfortunes to add to the list:

- My car was broken into two more times, on busy streets, during the day. One time, the alarm sounded and apparently scared off the thief, cutting short his depredations and minimizing my losses to a handful of quarters kept for tolls in an ashtray and some items in the glove compartment.

Shortly before the fourth edition was completed, my family was the victim of a con game that turned out to be a rather common scam:

- We picked a moving company out of the Yellow Pages because it advertised low rates and accepted credit cards. I should have been suspicious when they arrived in a rented truck, but I foolishly signed some papers authorizing them to charge me for packing materials. While we loaded computer components, valuables, and pets into our cars and shuttled them to our new house, they quickly used an enormous amount of shrink-wrap and cardboard boxes on our old furniture, cheap picture frames, and clothing. When their rented van arrived at our new home 10 miles away, they presented me with a bill that was inflated by about \$1,000 worth of unnecessary packaging. They demanded immediate payment in cash before they would unload our stuff that Saturday night, or else they would drive away with all our possessions and charge us for unloading and storage. I called the police, but they insisted it was a business dispute and said that they could not intervene. I had no choice but to visit several ATMs, to take out loans from all our credit cards and hand over the cash. On Monday, I contacted some colleagues at John Jay College of Criminal Justice who have close connections with law enforcement agencies. They made inquiries and warned me that this company was known to have mob ties. Because these gangsters literally knew where we lived, I regret to admit that a fear of reprisals intimidated me from pursuing my claims about fraud in civil court or through state regulatory agencies or consumer affairs bureaus. Years later, I read in the newspaper that some victims received protection as witnesses for the prosecution and that this moving scam crew eventually was put out of business and incarcerated.

By the time I completed the fifth edition, my credentials had “improved”:

- My daughter’s backpack was stolen by a thief who pried open the trunk of her automobile after watching her park the car and walk away.

- I received just an introductory taste of what it is like to be a victim of identity theft. The fraud detection unit of a credit card company called one morning and asked if anyone in my family had recently charged exactly \$400 at a department store and \$200 at a computer software store about 40 miles away. When I answered no, and wondered aloud how such round number amounts could be charged for merchandise that is taxed, they simply said, “Don’t worry, just fill out an affidavit.” When the paperwork finally arrived weeks later, I did what they asked and never heard anything about these peculiar financial transactions again.
- Like many other New Yorkers, I had visited the World Trade Center vicinity on September 9th, just a few days before it was attacked. I knew some victims of this murderous act of terrorism who barely escaped death by evacuating the burning buildings before the Twin Towers collapsed.

By the time the sixth edition came out, nothing much had happened, which probably reflected the nationwide drop in crime that has lowered virtually everyone’s risks of being victimized (see Chapter 3).

- I began to receive plenty of fraudulent e-mails (called “phishing”—see the discussion of identity theft in Chapter 5) warning me to immediately update my account at some bank or credit card company or eBay before it was frozen.

However, while preparing the seventh edition, my family was victimized twice—in other countries!

- My daughter’s car was broken into near a museum in Montreal, Canada, and her husband’s digital camera was stolen (and we paid a hefty bill for a new door lock and rear window for the damaged vehicle).
- In London’s theater district, a pickpocket deftly removed my wife’s wallet from her backpack (see Chapter 1 for an analysis of pickpocketing). Fortunately, although she lost some cash and her driver’s license, whoever ended up with her credit cards was not able to purchase anything or steal her identity.
- Meanwhile, back home, I suspected that someone entered our car one night while it was parked unlocked in our driveway because the glove compartment was open the next morning. As far as I could tell, nothing was taken. Sure enough, the next night the thief returned and stole the remote for our garage door opener from the car’s sun visor while we were eating dinner. Fortunately, just an hour later I discovered that the remote was missing due to my habitual carelessness about not locking my car’s doors (see Chapter 5), so I disconnected the garage door opener.
- I did not report these two minor matters to my local police department. The incidents in Montreal and London were reported to the authorities, but they never contacted us, so presumably the car thief and the pickpocket were never caught and our stolen property was not recovered (see Chapter about victims and the police).
- One other incident is worth recounting because it is humorous: I kept my canoe chained to a rack at the town beach during warm weather. I came

down one hot summer day to do some paddling and fishing and discovered that someone had stolen the chain and the padlock—but left the canoe behind, undamaged. Go figure!

After finishing the eighth edition, I had only one additional trivial incident to report.

- Someone stole a small anchor from my motorboat while it was moored in a nearby bay. I reported this petty larceny to the harbor patrol.

While I was working on the ninth edition, I was a victim of a minor act of identity theft once more.

- Someone used my credit card to purchase stuff I would never buy and enroll in various costly web-based services of no interest to me. The credit card company's security department flagged these peculiar transactions and notified me. I did not have to pay for the expensive goods and services this impostor charged in my name.

Now that this 10th edition is complete, I have just one more amusing incident of identity theft to share:

- A security officer at a credit card company contacted me and inquired about two transactions charged to my card in El Salvador: one was for a meal at a restaurant and the other later that evening was for a ticket to a movie theater. The grand total was under \$9! Who knew dinner and a show could be so inexpensive anywhere in the world these days? The company issued a new credit card to me and eliminated these fraudulent charges.

Obviously, victimization is rarely a laughing matter and nothing to scoff at. Others have suffered far more severely than I have. Some individuals endure devastating losses and struggle to cope with traumatic ordeals, as this book will point out repeatedly. But taken together, these many brushes with an odd assortment of offenders over five decades have sensitized me to the kinds of unexpected expenses, sudden emotional stresses, and physical injuries that taken together constitute the “victim’s plight.” I suspect that many victimologists and victim advocates have been drawn to this humanistic discipline largely because their own painful experiences inspired them to try to alleviate the suffering of others.

ANCILLARIES

To further enhance the teaching of victimology courses, the following supplements are available to qualified adopters. Please consult your local sales representative for details.

MindTap Criminal Justice

MindTap from Cengage Learning represents a new approach to a highly personalized, online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a student’s learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and

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The instructor’s manual contains a variety of resources to aid instructors in preparing and presenting text material in a manner that meets their personal preferences and course needs. It presents chapter-by-chapter suggestions and resources to enhance and facilitate learning.

The instructor’s manual includes learning objectives, key terms, a detailed lesson plan outline, lecture notes, discussion topics, student activities, and assignments. The learning objectives are correlated with the discussion topics, student activities, and media tools.

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Helping you make your lectures more engaging while effectively reaching your visually oriented students, these handy Microsoft PowerPoint® slides outline the chapters of the main text in a classroom-ready presentation. The PowerPoint® slides are updated to reflect the content and organization of the new edition of the text and feature some additional examples and discussion questions.

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What Is Victimology?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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Focusing on the Plight of Crime Victims
What Kinds of Studies Do Victimologists Carry Out?

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- L02** Define victimization.
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- L04** Describe the subjective approach to the plight of victims.
- L05** Define scientific objectivity.
- L06** Discuss why objectivity is critical when examining the plight of crime victims.
- L07** Differentiate victimology from victimism.
- L08** Compare and contrast victimology and criminology.
- L09** List intellectual and practical reasons for studying victimization.
- L10** Identify different types of research about victims.
- L11** Identify different disciplinary contributions to the study of victims.
- L12** List the steps for conducting a victim-centered analysis.

AN INTRODUCTION TO VICTIMOLOGY

The concept of a **victim** can be traced back to ancient societies. It was connected to the notion of sacrifice. In the original connotation of the term, a victim was a person or an animal put to death during a religious ceremony in order to appease some supernatural power or deity. Over the centuries, the word has picked up additional meanings. Now it commonly refers to individuals who suffer injuries, losses, or hardships for any reason. People can become victims of accidents, natural disasters, diseases, or social problems such as warfare, discrimination, political witch hunts, and other injustices. Crime victims are harmed by illegal acts.

Victimization is an asymmetrical interpersonal relationship that is abusive, painful, destructive, parasitical, and unfair. While a crime is in progress, offenders temporarily force their victims to play roles (almost as if following a script) that mimic the dynamics between predator and prey, winner and loser, victor and vanquished, and even master and slave. Many types of victimization have been outlawed over the centuries—specific oppressive and exploitative acts, like raping, robbing, and swindling. But not all types of hurtful relationships and deceitful practices are forbidden by law. It is permissible to overcharge a customer for an item that can be purchased for less elsewhere, or to underpay a worker who could receive higher wages for the same tasks from another employer, or to impose exorbitant interest rates and hidden fees on borrowers who use credit cards and take out mortgages, or to deny food and shelter to the hungry and the homeless who cannot pay the required amounts.

Studying Victimization Scientifically

Victimology is the scientific study of the physical, emotional, and financial harm people endure because of illegal activities. Victimologists first and foremost investigate the victims' plight: the impact of the injuries and losses inflicted by offenders on the persons they target. The overtures and responses by the people embroiled in a conflict are the second subjects of

scrutiny. Any prior relationships, exchanges, and dealings between offenders and their victims are of great interest. In addition, victimologists carry out research into the public's political, social, and economic reactions to the suffering of victims. Of particular importance is how victims are handled by officials and agencies within the criminal justice system, especially their interactions with police officers, detectives, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, jurors, probation and parole officers, and even members of parole boards.

Just like other social sciences, victimology must be evidence-based. That means that opinions and impressions cannot substitute for facts, carefully recorded observations, and reliably measured statistics. Unlike any other branch of social science, investigations in victimology are victim-focused. This orientation puts the injured parties under a microscope, or in the spotlight, rather than on the margins or in the shadows. What victims say, do, need, want, and actually experience is the center of attention, first and foremost, not as an afterthought.

Victimology almost always zooms in on the harm experienced by real flesh and blood people, rather than the damage done by criminals to vague collectivities like taxpayers, consumers, or the general public, or to abstractions like public safety, neighborhood property values, or the common good. The subjects of studies are the individuals and groups negatively impacted by acts of interpersonal violence and theft: victims of murders, rapes, robberies, shootings, stabbings, other types of assaults, burglaries, car thefts, identity thefts, swindles and frauds, other kinds of stealing, kidnappings, hate crimes, and terrorist attacks.

Focusing on the Plight of Crime Victims

The suffering of victims and of the people who are very close to them always has been a popular theme for artists and writers to interpret and for political and religious leaders to address. But this long and rich tradition embodies what might be categorized as the **subjective approach** to the plight of victims, since issues are approached from the standpoint of morality, ethics, philosophy, personalized

reactions, and intense emotions. Victimologists examine these same topics and incidents from a fresh, new angle: through a social science lens. This **objective approach** is the hallmark of any social scientific endeavor. Objectivity requires that researchers put aside their own views and transcend their personal feelings and experiences, and draw conclusions from solid evidence and verified facts.

What Criminals Do, and Ways of Responding to the Victim's Plight A subjective approach usually wells up whenever offenders show callous disregard and depraved indifference toward the human beings they have targeted as depersonalized objects. It is easy to be swept away by strong emotional currents. Consider how natural it is to identify with those on the receiving end of violent attacks, to feel sympathy toward them and their grieving families, and to bristle with hostility toward the aggressors, as in the following four real-life vicious murders of college students:

A 22-year-old student government president is carjacked and kidnapped by two armed young men, 21 and 17 years old, and forced to withdraw money from an ATM. Next, they drive their hostage to a remote location in the woods, molest her, and then decide to kill her since she could identify them. She pleads for her life and urges them to pray with her. Instead, one shoots her four times. But she still can move and talk, so he blasts her with a shotgun to finish her off. The two assailants are caught and convicted of murder. (Velliquette, 2011)

■■■

A sophomore attends a campus party and leaves alone around midnight. About 2 am, footage from a surveillance camera shows her walking in a downtown pedestrian mall followed by a man. After that she disappears, and her family, friends and volunteers undertake the largest hunt for a missing person in the state's history. Over a month later, her remains are discovered on an abandoned property about 8 miles away from the mall, and the police arrest the man in the video, who is linked by forensic evidence to other attacks. Students at her university organize a

memorial during homecoming weekend, and her parents thank the police and the volunteers who searched for her, but add, "We are devastated by the loss of our beautiful daughter." (Martinez, 2014)

■■■

A newly arrived 26 year old doctoral student from China just misses a bus to her campus so she accepts a lift from a 28 year old graduate student who recently completed his masters degree in physics. Unfortunately, he has been visiting a website with discussions about abduction fantasies, planning a kidnapping, and suggestions about ideal victims. She is never seen again and her remains are not found. Her parents travel to the United States and her father stands in front of the place where she had been staying before she disappeared nearly every day for over four months. He tells a reporter "It brings peace and comfort to my heart." Her mother says, "I don't know how to spend the rest of my life without my daughter." Based on intercepted conversations in which the physics major describes how she fought and resisted, he is arrested and charged with kidnapping resulting in death "in an especially heinous, cruel or depraved manner, in that it involved torture or serious physical abuse." (AP, 2017a)

■■■

A 19 year-old college sophomore returns home to visit his family during winter break. He rides around with a 20 year-old classmate from high school who suddenly brutally stabs him more than 20 times. He is missing for over a week before his body is discovered in a deserted park. It turns out that his classmate has become a staunch member of a neo-Nazi group that idolizes Adolph Hitler and Charles Manson, views itself as the radical vanguard of the white supremacist movement, and as the frontline soldiers of an imminent race war. Describing her son as small, Jewish, and openly gay, the victim's mother laments, "I was concerned sending him out into the big world. But at some point you have to let go and they leave the nest and fly. I couldn't protect him from everything." (Thompson, 2018)

Unavoidably, victimization is all about horror, suffering, loss, and pain. Approaching these problems

in a subjective manner leads to expressions of intense emotions, strong personal opinions, and assertions about the importance of common sense and a reliance on conventional wisdom. Subjective reactions to grisly murders such as these four would center on expressions of distress, disgust, and despair about the depths of human depravity; raise concerns about public safety and the threats posed by homicidal strangers; and perhaps even provoke strident demands to take drastic steps to hopefully avoid further outbreaks of such tragedies.

An objective approach to these cold-blooded murders also could and should start off with expressions of horror, empathy for the grieving families, and a commitment to “do something.” Objectivity doesn’t preclude compassion. But a scientific approach then would proceed to the next stage: analysis of the problem and an evaluation of the various remedies. That requires gathering the facts, in order to generate evidence-based decisions that could help to reduce the risks of such vicious attacks. To devise solutions and effective preventive measures, research projects must start off by addressing questions like these:

- How often are college students slain?
 - Is the murder rate for college students higher or lower than the rate for young adults who do not go to college?
 - Are the murders of college students becoming more or less frequent as time passes?
 - Under what circumstances or situations are college students slain?
 - Are college students killed for similar reasons or for different reasons than others of the same age range?
 - In what ways, if any, are college students unusually vulnerable to attack?
 - Are the murders of college students taken more seriously or less seriously than other murders by the authorities, the media, and the general public?
 - Are the killings of college students solved at the same rate, or at a higher or lower rate than other killings?
- Are male college students targeted as often, more often, or less often than female students?

In other words, the objective approach in victimology depends upon facts, evidence, data, and other forms of proof in order to develop useful insights, constructive remedies, countermeasures that really work, and forms of treatment and support that genuinely relieve suffering.

Researchers want to know whether and to what degree individuals who are on the receiving end of violence sustain physical wounds, experience economic hardships, and/or endure emotional turmoil. The immediate purpose of documenting the extent of harm and assessing their needs is to enable victims to make a case for reparations, so that they can recover their losses. And the larger goal of understanding how victims suffer is to help devise ways to alleviate their distress.

In some incidents, the crime can be so minor—such as an attempted break-in of a vehicle that is cut short by the wailing of a car alarm—that the harm is minimal, at least in terms of monetary expenses.

But at the other end of the spectrum, vicious violent outbursts can cause devastating losses and terrible anguish. For example, consider the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history, which drew a great deal of worldwide attention but led to no direct and immediate legislative reforms:

A 64 year-old high-stakes gambler, armed with an arsenal of automatic weapons, opens fire on a crowd of totally innocent people who were in the wrong place at the wrong time: enjoying a country music concert beneath the mass murderer’s hotel window. Fifty-eight people he never met perish, and another 161 strangers are struck by bullets before the mass murderer commits suicide. A reporter sums up how their lives were shattered both physically and emotionally, forcing them to undergo a process of deconstructing their old selves and reconstructing new ones: “The journey—as the survivors of so many other American mass shootings will say—is one full of chronic pain, fights with insurance companies, ruined marriages, lost jobs, anguished parents and children, and the injustice of being forced into a new identity: victim.” (Turkewitz, 2017)

Those who live through terrible ordeals may be saddened, depressed, frightened, terrorized, traumatized, infuriated, and embittered. Victimologists want to find out how effectively the injured parties are being assisted, supported, served, accommodated, rehabilitated, and educated to avoid further trouble.

Victimologists are equally curious to determine the extent to which their suffering is being totally ignored, largely neglected, belittled, manipulated, and commercially or politically exploited. Some individuals who experience severe injuries and devastating losses might be memorialized, honored, and even idolized, while others might be shunned, mocked, discredited, defamed, demeaned, socially stigmatized, and even condemned for bringing about their own misfortunes. Why is that?

Victimologists also examine how some severely injured parties find their horrific experiences life transforming, usually for the worst, but occasionally for the better (see the discussion of survivorology in Chapter 2). Some might react to their fear and fury by seeking out fellow sufferers, building alliances, and discovering ways to exercise their “agency”—to assess their options and make wise decisions, take advantage of opportunities, regain control of their lives, rebuild their self-confidence, and restore a sense of trust and security. Others become deeply alienated and withdraw from social relationships. They may become burdened by bouts of depression, sleep disorders, panic attacks, and stress-related illnesses. Healing requires overcoming feelings of helplessness, frustration, and self-blame. Why do people experience such a wide range of responses? Do personality factors or social support services primarily determine how a person responds and then recovers?

Direct or primary victims experience the criminal act and its consequences firsthand. **Indirect or secondary victims** (e.g., family members and loved ones) are not immediately involved or physically injured in confrontations. But they might be burdened, even devastated, as the following two examples illustrate:

A teenager who shot and killed a high school athlete is about to be sentenced to prison. The distraught father

of the murdered boy tells the judge, “We always hope our little guy will come through the door, and it will never be. We don’t have lives. We stay in every day. We can’t function.” (MacGowan, 2007)

■ ■ ■

As an argument with a stranger escalates and he pulls out a gun, a wife is wounded when she puts out her hand to try to shield her husband from the bullet that causes his death. She tells an interviewer, “I was just so excited and looking forward to spending the day with the love of my life.... And just to think that in the blink of an eye, my whole world just got shattered into a million pieces. And now I’m left trying to pick them all up and putting them back together.” (Gutman, 2014)

First responders and rescue workers who race to crime scenes (e.g., police officers, forensic evidence technicians, paramedics, and firefighters) are exposed to emergencies and trauma on such a routine basis that they also can be considered secondary or indirect victims who periodically might need emotional support themselves to prevent burnout (see Regehr and Bober, 2005; and Abel, 2013).

What Kinds of Studies Do Victimologists Carry Out?

Victimologists study the ways in which victims suffer from the harm criminals inflict upon them. They also examine the social reaction to this suffering. In particular, researchers explore how victims are handled by the legal system. And often, victimologists investigate the connections, if any, between injured parties and the offenders who attacked them.

In the aftermath of a crime, individuals who turn to the authorities for help invariably ask officers and detectives, “Why me? What—if anything—did I do to bring this on? Was it my appearance? Did I say something wrong? Was I belligerent? Too trusting? Careless? Or was I just unlucky to be at the wrong place at the wrong time?” In response to these concerns, police departments often promote lists of recommended steps

crime-conscious individuals should consider integrating into their lifestyles. These defensive measures are mostly a compilation of do's and don'ts that are gleaned from case files documenting other people's misfortunes. The intent of disseminating these tips and advice is to help people to avoid attracting would-be offenders on the prowl for an easy mark, to safeguard their valuables, and perhaps even to save their lives (see Bryan, 2017). But victimologists want to go beyond piecing together what happened to a particular individual, and why the incident took place. Victimologists want to discover why certain groups face much higher risks than others of experiencing interpersonal theft and violence. They want to develop theories that explain and predict why some people are targeted by criminals much more often than others.

The first criminologists who gained an interest in victims asked the same kinds of questions. They questioned the positive stereotypes that pictured victims as unsuspecting, unwitting, vulnerable, maybe even helpless persons who were pounced upon—through no fault of their own—by nasty, violence-prone persons. Perhaps some individuals who found themselves on the receiving end of vicious attacks were not simply “innocent lambs” preyed upon by “predatory wolves.” Maybe this totally innocent/completely guilty dichotomy doesn't always apply in real-life incidents.

Investigating the Interactions between Victims and Their Offenders

Right from the outset, studies have focused upon the initiatives and responses between offenders and victims, and their prior relationships and dealings, if any. Were they complete strangers, or did they know each other as casual acquaintances, coworkers, neighbors, trusted associates, friends, family members, intimates, or former lovers? Did their conflict that crossed a threshold into a violation of the law flare up all of a sudden, or was it the outgrowth of smoldering tensions and intensifying animosities? Researchers became intrigued by the possibility that in some instances, the victim might have done something that resulted in being targeted. Studies addressed these questions: Did the victim in any way make a thief's tasks

easier? Did the injured party attract the attacker's attention? And worst of all, did the person who got hurt—or killed—say or do anything that incited or provoked a violent response? (See Chapter 5 for a full discussion of these highly controversial lines of inquiry, which fall under the headings of “shared responsibility” and “victim blaming.”)

Some of the earliest inquiries into victim-offender relationships are still very informative and relevant, despite the passage of time. A selection of some of these insightful studies carried out decades ago appears in Box 1.1.

Why Objectivity Is Desirable Scientific objectivity requires that the observer try to be fair, dispassionate, and unbiased. Objectivity means not showing favoritism, not allowing personal prejudices to sidetrack analyses, not permitting emotion to cloud reasoning, and not letting the dominant views of the times dictate conclusions and recommendations. Prescriptions to remain disinterested and uninvolved are easier to abide by when the incidents under scrutiny happened long ago and far away. It is much harder to maintain social distance when investigating the plight of real people right here and right now. These scientific tenets are extremely difficult to live up to when the subject matter—the depredations inflicted by lawbreakers—connects to widely held beliefs about good and evil, right and wrong, and justice and unfairness.

Shouldn't victimologists consistently be “pro-victim”? Why should they strive to be open-minded and evenhanded and hence “objective?”

At first glance, the importance of reserving judgments, refraining from jumping to conclusions, and resisting the urge to side with those who are in pain might not be self-evident. But there is a simple and direct answer to the question “Why shouldn't victimologists be unabashedly pro-victim?” The reason is that in many situations this formula offers no real guidance.

Impartiality is called for when the injured parties turn out to be undeniable lawbreakers themselves. What could it possibly mean to be pro-victim in situations in which criminals hurt other criminals? The designations “victim” and “offender” are not

BOX 1.1 A Sampling of the Wide Range of Studies about the Interaction between Offenders and Victims

Identifying the Cues That Trigger a Mugger into Action

Pedestrians, through their body language, may signal to prowling robbers that they are “easy marks.” Men and women walking down a city street were secretly videotaped for several seconds, about the time it takes a criminally inclined person to size up a potential victim. The tapes were then shown to a panel of “experts”—prisoners convicted of assaulting strangers—who sorted out those who looked as if they would be easy to corner from those who might give them a hard time. Individuals who received high **muggability ratings** tended to move along awkwardly, unaware that their nonverbal communication might cause them trouble (Grayson and Stein, 1981).

Explaining Public Indifference toward Victims of Fraud and Con Games

People who have lost money to swindlers often are pictured as undeserving of sympathy in the media, and they may encounter callousness, suspicion, or contempt when they turn to the police or consumer affairs bureaus for help. This second-class treatment seems to be due to negative stereotypes and ambivalent attitudes that are widely held by the public as well as criminal justice officials. A number of aphorisms place blame on the “suckers” themselves—“fraud only befalls those of questionable character,” “an honest man can’t be cheated,” and “people must have larceny in their hearts to fall for a con game.”

For example, white-collar crime investigators picture even sophisticated investors who lose their money to scammers in Ponzi schemes as being so blinded by their greed for suspiciously high returns that they ignore the red flags that should have alerted them to the likelihood that they were being drawn into a too-good-to-be-true business arrangement (Goldstein, 2011).

Con artists count on exploiting the anticipated behavior of their “marks.” Their targets may get so preoccupied with some “convincer” (e.g., a large sum of money awaiting them) that they are too distracted to realize what is really going on. Marks could be socially compliant to someone impersonating an authority figure (e.g., they reveal their password in response to an e-mail allegedly from a bank’s security officer and subsequently are taken in by a “phishing” scheme). They may let their guard down and assume there is safety in numbers if it seems that lots of other people are willing to take a chance on some risky venture. They may be willing to do something illegal (e.g., to buy stolen goods) and end up too compromised to go to the police. They could be so trusting and naïve that they fall for tear-jerking emotional appeals for

financial help. And under pressure to “act now or it will be too late,” they could make impulsive decisions they later regret. In well-planned con games pulled off by professionals, nothing is what it seems to be (Stajano and Wilson, 2011).

The stereotype of defrauded parties is that they disregarded the basic rules of sensible conduct regarding financial matters. They don’t read contracts before signing and don’t demand that guarantees be put in writing before making purchases. Their apparent foolishness, carelessness, or complicity undermines their appeals for redress and makes others reluctant to activate the machinery of the criminal justice system and regulatory agencies on their behalf. Their claims to be treated as authentic victims worthy of support may be rejected if they are scorned as money-hungry “dupes” who were merely outsmarted (Walsh and Schram, 1980; Moore and Mills, 1990; and Shichor, Sechrest, and Doocy, 2000).

Using a broad definition of fraudulent schemes (including various rip-offs such as dishonest home, auto, and appliance repairs and inspections; useless warranties; fake subscription, insurance, credit, and investment scams; phony charities, contests, and prizes; and expensive 900-number telephone ploys), a nationwide survey found victimization to be widespread. More than half the respondents had been caught up in some scam or an attempt at deception at least once in their lives, costing an average loss of more than \$200. Contrary to the prevailing negative stereotype, the elderly were not any more trusting and compliant; in fact, they were deceived less often than younger people (Titus, Heinzlmann, and Boyle, 1995).

Examining How Pickpockets View Their Targets

According to a sample of 20 “class cannons” (professional pickpockets) working the streets of Miami, Florida, their preferred marks (victims) are tourists who are relaxed, off guard, loaded with money, and lacking in clout with criminal justice officials. Some pickpockets choose “paps” (elderly men) because their reaction time is slower, but others favor “bates” (middle-aged men) because they tend to carry fatter wallets. A “moll buzzer” or “hanger binger” (sneak thief who preys on women) is looked down on in the underworld fraternity as a bottom feeder who acts without skill or courage. Interaction with victims is kept to a minimum. Although pickpockets may “trace a mark” (follow a potential target) for some time, they need just a few seconds to “beat him of his poke” (steal his wallet). This is done quietly and deftly, without a commotion or any jostling. They rarely “make a score” (steal a lot in a single incident). The class cannon

(Continued)

BOX 1.1 (Continued)

“passes” (hands over) “the loot” (wallet, wad of bills) to a member of his “mob” (an accomplice) and swiftly leaves the scene of the crime. Only about one time in a hundred do they get caught by the mark. And on those rare occasions when the theft is detected, they can usually persuade their victims not to call the police. They give back what they took (maybe more than they stole) and point out that pressing charges can ruin a vacation because of the need to surrender the wallet as evidence, plus waste precious time in court appearances. Cannons show no hatred or contempt for their marks. In general, they rationalize their crimes as impersonal acts directed at targets who can easily afford the losses or who would otherwise be fleeced by businesses or allow their money to be taken from them in other legally permissible ways (Inciardi, 1976).

Exploring the Bonds between Captives and Their Captors

Hostages (of suicidal terrorists, home-invading gunmen, kidnapers, bank robbers, or rebellious prisoners) are used by their captors to exert leverage on a third party—perhaps a wealthy family, the police, or a government agency. These captives could react in an unanticipated way to being trapped and held against their will. Instead of showing anger and seeking revenge, these pawns in a larger drama may emerge from a siege with positive feelings for, and attachments to, their keepers. Their outrage is likely to be directed at the authorities who rescued them for acting with apparent indifference to their well-being during the protracted negotiations. This surprising emotional realignment has been termed the **Stockholm syndrome** because it was first noted after a 1973 bank holdup in Sweden. Several psychological explanations for this “pathological transference” are plausible. The hostages could be identifying with the aggressor, and they might have become sympathetic to acts of defiance

aimed at the power structure. As survivors, they might harbor intense feelings of gratitude toward their keepers for sparing their lives. As helpless dependents, they might cling to the powerful figures who controlled their every action because of a primitive emotional response called “traumatical infantilism.” After the ordeal, terrorized hostages need to be welcomed back and reassured that they did nothing wrong during—and right after—their captivity. People in occupations that place them at high risk of being taken prisoner—ranging from convenience store clerks and bank tellers to airline personnel and diplomats—need to be trained about how to act, what to say, and what not to do if they are held and used as a bargaining chip during a stand-off. Law enforcement agencies need to set up and train hostage negotiation units as an alternative to solely relying on heavily armed SWAT teams whose military-style assaults endanger the lives of the captives they are trying to save. Crisis negotiators no longer consider the bonding that may occur between captives and captors to be detrimental. The development of the Stockholm syndrome actually can increase the hostages’ chances of surviving the ordeal. However, it could also mean that law enforcement cannot count on the victims’ cooperation in working for their own release and for later prosecuting their violent and dangerous kidnapers in court. In terms of frequency of occurrence, it is likely that this type of coping mechanism by captives has been overemphasized and inaccurately assumed in cases that were diagnosed by commentators in the media. Identifying with the aggressor and seeing rescuers as adversaries rarely takes place, according to an analysis of the narratives contained in the FBI’s Hostage/Barricade Database System (see Ochberg, 1978; Fattah, 1979; Symonds, 1980a; Turner, 1990; Loudon, 1998; Fuselier, 1999; and De Fabrique, Romano, Vecchi, and Van Hasselt, 2007).

always at opposite poles. Sometimes two people can be viewed as sharing responsibility for what happened between them. And sometimes, conflicts arise not only between victims and their offenders but also between injured parties and other groups that claim to be on their side.

Scrutinizing the Victim–Offender Relationship

Victimologists are quick to point out that the status of being a “legitimate victim” is socially defined. Why is it that only certain people who suffer physical, emotional, or economic harm are designated

and treated as full-fledged, bona fide, and officially recognized victims who are eligible for aid, and are encouraged to exercise their rights within the criminal justice process? Why in other cases are the injured parties condemned as wrongdoers and left to fend for themselves, or even arrested and prosecuted? One key question is, “Which aspects of the social standing (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, sex, and age) of each of the two parties are taken into account when government officials as well as members of the general public decide whether one person should get into legal trouble for what happened

and the other should be granted assistance and support?"

Clearly, the status of being an officially recognized victim of a crime is **socially constructed**. The determination of who is included and who is excluded from this privileged category is carried out by actors within the criminal justice process (police officers and detectives, prosecutors, judges, even juries) and is heavily influenced by legislators (who formulate criminal laws) and the media coverage that shapes public opinion about specific incidents.

Because being officially designated as a victim is socially constructed, researchers need to strive to be evenhanded and open-minded when examining incidents that don't have unambiguous and obvious totally innocent parties.

Sometimes It Is Difficult to Distinguish Victims from Villains

Real-life conflicts do not always involve simple, clear-cut cases that neatly fall into the dichotomies of good and evil, innocence and guilt. Not all victims were weak, defenseless, unsuspecting, and upstanding citizens who, through tragic or ironic circumstances or just plain bad luck, were pounced upon by cunning, vicious "predators." In some instances, observers may have reasonable doubts and honest disagreements over which party in a conflict should be labeled the victim and which should be stigmatized as the villain. These complicated situations dramatize the need for impartiality when untangling convoluted relationships in order to make a rational argument and a sound legal determination that one person should be arrested, prosecuted, and punished, and the other defended, supported, and assisted. Some messy incidents reported in the news and processed by the courts embody shades of gray. Clashes frequently take place between two people who, to varying degrees, are simultaneously both victims but also both wrongdoers. Consider the following two accounts of iconic, highly publicized incidents from past decades that illustrate just how difficult it can be to try to establish exactly who really is the victim and who actually is the offender:

A wealthy couple are at home in their mansion watching television and eating ice cream when someone shoots the man point-blank in the back of the head and

then blasts his wife with a shotgun a number of times in the face. The police search for the killers for six months before the couple's two sons, 21 and 18, concede that they did it. In a nationally televised trial for first-degree murder and facing possible execution, the sons give emotionally compelling (but uncorroborated) testimony describing how their father sexually molested and mentally abused them when they were little boys. The brothers contend they acted in self-defense, believing that their parents were about to murder them to keep the alleged incestuous acts a family secret. The prosecution argues that these boys killed their parents in order to get their hands on their \$14 million inheritance (they had quickly spent \$700,000 on luxury cars, condos, vacations, and fashionable clothing before they were arrested). The jurors become deadlocked over whether to find them guilty of murder or only of the lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter, and the judge declares a mistrial. In the second trial, the prosecution ridicules their "abuse excuse" defense. The jury convicts them of premeditated murder and sentences them to life in prison without parole. Soon afterwards, each brother gets married (the older one marries a model but divorces her and then has a second wedding behind bars) even though the prison system does not permit conjugal visits for lifers. One brother runs a support group for fellow inmates who have endured sexual abuse. The other works with prisoners who are physically challenged and terminally ill. (Berns, 1994; Mydans, 1994; Associated Press, 1996; Hubbard, 2012; and Menza, 2017)



An ex-Marine who works as a bouncer in a bar wakes up in his bed and discovers to his horror that his wife has sliced off his penis with a kitchen knife. Arrested for "malicious wounding," she tells the police that she mutilated him because earlier that evening in a drunken stupor he forced himself upon her. He is put on trial for marital sexual abuse but is acquitted by a jury that does not believe her testimony about a history of beatings, involuntary rough sex, and other humiliations. When she is indicted on felony charges (ironically, by the same prosecutor) for the bloody bedroom assault, many people rally

to her side. To her supporters, she is clearly a long suffering victim of domestic violence that culminated in marital rape. But then she undercut the debilitating stereotype of female passivity. Six calls to the police failed to deliver the necessary protection, so she literally took matters into her own hands and disarmed him with a single stroke and threw the symbol of male sexual dominance out the window. Her detractors picture her as a crazed and vengeful woman who has perpetrated every man's worst nightmare. She is portrayed as a master of manipulation, publicly playing the role of a sobbing battered wife deserving of sympathy to divert attention from her act of rage against a sleeping husband who had lost his sexual interest in her. A survey reveals that 60 percent of the American public was following the case. Facing up to 20 years in prison, she declines to plead guilty to a lesser charge and demands her day in court. The jury accepts her defense that she acted in a fit of temporary insanity—that she was traumatized, deeply depressed, beset by flashbacks, and susceptible to “irresistible impulses” because of years of cruelty and abuse—and finds her not guilty. After 45 days under observation in a mental hospital, she is released. Soon afterwards, the couple divorces, and then they each take financial advantage of all the international media coverage, sensationalism, titillation, voyeurism, and sexual politics surrounding their deeply troubled relationship. Over the years, he is arrested seven times, gets married three more times, stars in porn movies, and brags that about 70 women have been sexually attracted to him because of his ordeal and re-attachment surgery. She is arrested for punching her mother but then sets up a charitable organization that attempts to prevent domestic violence, and collects toys annually for children taking refuge with their mothers in shelters for battered women. (Margolick, 1994; Sachs, 1994; Moye, 2013; and Jeltsen, 2016a)

Both of these high-profile cases were resolved by the criminal justice system years ago in ways that caused quite an uproar and still provoke many heated discussions. In each trial, the persons officially designated as the victims by the police and prosecutors—the dead parents, the slashed husband—arguably

could be considered to be wrongdoers who “got what was coming to them.” Indeed, the reputedly abusive parents and the husband accused of repeated brutality against his wife were viewed just that way by substantial segments of the public and by some jurors. The defendants who got in trouble with the law—the shotgun-toting brothers, the knife-wielding wife—insisted that they should not be portrayed as criminals. On the contrary, they contended that they actually were the genuine victims who should not be punished: sons sexually molested by their father, a battered woman who was subjected to marital rape.

Now consider three confusing and controversial cases in recent years that made headlines and provoked heated public debates about who seriously misbehaved and who acted appropriately. The answer to the question “Which party is truly the victim?” depends upon one's interpretation of the doctrine of self-defense:

A 17-year-old boy wearing a hooded sweatshirt on a rainy night is on the phone with his girlfriend as he walks home from a store after buying a can of soda and some candy. A member of a neighborhood watch group on patrol in a gated community of townhouses that has recently suffered a rash of break-ins drives by, spots him, and calls the police, voicing his suspicions that, “He is up to no good...”. The 911 dispatcher tells the 28-year-old man, who had taken some criminal justice courses at a community college, not to follow and confront the youth. But he does, and after he gets out of his SUV, they exchange words and become embroiled in a fistfight. Neighbors hear someone screaming and pleading for help, and call 911. When officers arrive, they find the man bloodied and the teenager dead from a bullet to his heart. The man claims that he was the actual victim and that he had a right to fire his licensed handgun in self-defense. When the news spreads that the local police department has decided not to arrest the shooter, demonstrations erupt across the country, demanding his arrest as an overzealous police wannabe and vigilante who engaged in racial profiling because he trailed after the black teenager whom he stereotyped as a “suspicious outsider.” The local police chief steps down, the county prosecutor and the

Justice Department re-open the investigation, and President Obama identifies with the unarmed youth who was tragically and needlessly killed, telling journalists that, “If I had a son, he’d look like {the victim}.” A jury of six women acquits the defendant of charges of second degree murder, and even of the lesser charge of manslaughter. The jurors reject the prosecution’s version of the events: that the man had deliberately pursued the hoodie-clad black teenager and instigated the fight that led to the fatal shooting. The jury accepts the injured man’s contention that the teenager knocked him to the ground, punched him and repeatedly slammed his head against the sidewalk; and that he was justified in firing to protect himself because he feared grave bodily harm or death. The testimony and evidence at the trial does not clearly resolve key questions about what really happened that rainy night: who initiated the confrontation and started the fight by throwing the first punch, who screamed for help, and at what point was the handgun drawn? After the controversial “not guilty” verdict, the man has several brushes with the law because of his violent outbursts. But because of his notoriety, he is also punched in the face in a restaurant, and shot at in a road rage incident while driving. The ruling that the teenager’s death was a justifiable homicide is one of several controversial killings of unarmed persons that inspires activists to mobilize a “Black Lives Matter” movement. The boy’s parents write a book and take part in campaigns against gun violence. (Alvarez and Buckley, 2013; Jauregui, 2014; Hayden, 2016; Jacobo, 2016; and Pitts and James, 2017)

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At around 4:30 am, a 55-year-old white man hears loud pounding and shouting at his front door and then at his side door. He grabs a shotgun and fires a blast through his locked screen door into the face of a teenage black girl standing on his front porch, killing her instantly. He is arrested and put on trial. Although he initially told the police that his weapon discharged accidentally, he tells the jury that he thought his home was about to be invaded by several intruders and, fearing for his life, vowed that “I wasn’t going to cower in my house,

I didn’t want to be a victim.” The prosecution contends that he went to the door armed because he wanted to confront and frighten vandals who had defaced his vehicle with paintballs a few weeks earlier. The jury rejects his claim of firing in self-defense, and finds the man guilty of second degree murder as well as manslaughter. The young woman he killed turned out to be 19, unarmed, and intoxicated. Apparently she was making a commotion because she was seeking help after being involved in a car crash nearby, several hours earlier. The man in this “porch shooting” case begins serving a 15 to 30 year sentence but the state’s supreme court agrees to consider his appeal. (Abby-Lambertz, 2014 and Brand-Williams, 2017)

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A 29-year-old mother of 3 enters her home to gather her belongings so she can escape from her abusive estranged husband, whose periodic beatings have inflicted injuries that have sent her to a hospital. But he returns home unexpectedly, accompanied by two of her stepsons. The 10-year-old and 13-year-old watch in horror as he beats and strangles her. She runs into the garage to get into her car but finds herself trapped, so she grabs her licensed handgun and returns to their house. When he curses and charges towards her, she fires what she contends are three warning shots into the kitchen wall to ward him off. But he calls the police, and her shots are viewed as angry attempts to hurt or kill him and his son. She rejects a plea offer and is put on trial, and after the jury deliberates for a mere 12 minutes, she is convicted of three counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, which could keep her in prison for 20 years. A grassroots movement of supporters fights for her release and for the charges to be dropped, viewing her as a battered woman who used a weapon to defend herself from imminent bodily injury. When her conviction is overturned because of faulty jury instructions, the prosecution vows to retry her and to seek the stiffest possible sentence (Shepherd, 2014). So she accepts a plea agreement that sends her to prison for three years followed by two years of confinement within her house for committing an aggravated assault against her husband. Upon her

release, she works to pass laws that will aid victims of domestic violence. (Hauser, 2017)

In all three of these high-profile cases, considerable debate erupted in the courtroom and also in the court of public opinion, about who really was the victim and who actually was the offender. In each confrontation, an individual perceiving a threat of imminent bodily harm reached for a gun, triggering heated exchanges between advocates of armed self-defense and supporters of gun control legislation (the arguments of both sides of this controversy are presented in depth in Chapter 13). Sharply different points of view were aired in dinner table discussions, news media columnists' interpretations, courtroom proceedings, and even political rallies about the role of race in perceptions about dangerousness and about the value of lethal weapons for self-protection. These are exactly the kind of issues that victimologists need to study open-mindedly and evenhandedly.

(Note that when a bank robber is slain during a shoot-out with the police, he is not a murder victim but rather a dead offender. Similarly, an armed home invader who barges through the door and is shot by the resident in self-defense with a legally possessed firearm also is not a victim but rather a deceased criminal. Both of these situations would be categorized as justifiable homicides committed against offenders during a crime in progress. [For a more extensive examination of justifiable homicides, see Chapter 13].)

Whenever different interpretations of the facts lead to sharply divergent conclusions about who is actually the guilty party and who really is the injured party, knee-jerk pro-victim impulses provide no useful guidance for action. Simplistic labels of 100 percent culpable criminal and 100 percent innocent victim often don't apply. This complexity underscores the need for objectivity when trying to figure out who is primarily responsible for whatever lawbreaking took place. Clearly, the dynamics between victims and victimizers need to be sorted out in an impartial manner, not only by victimologists but also by journalists, police officers, prosecutors, judges, and juries.

In rare instances, even the authorities can't make up their minds, as this unresolved serious incident demonstrates:

A pizza parlor chef and a mob henchman become embroiled in a knife fight that spills out on to a city street. They stab and slash each other and wind up in different hospitals. The police arrest both of the injured parties on charges of attempted murder as well as other offenses. However, each of the combatants refuses to testify in front of a grand jury against his adversary, fearing self-incrimination if he has to explain his motives and actions. The district attorney's office declines to grant immunity from prosecution to either of the two parties because detectives cannot figure out who was the attacker and who fought back in self-defense. As a result, neither is indicted, and a judge dismisses all the charges pending from the melee. Both wounded men, and the lawyers representing them, walk out of court pleased with the outcome—that no one will get in trouble for an assault with a deadly weapon. (Robbins, 2011)

Most people would consider an individual to be an innocent victim only when the following conditions apply (what sociologists would call the **ideal type** or positive stereotype): The person who suffered harm was defenseless, or at least weaker in comparison to the aggressor, was engaged in conventional activities, and was not looking for trouble or breaking any laws; the wrongdoer was a complete stranger whose predatory behavior or violent outburst obviously was illegal and unprovoked. Using the language of sociology, the status of being a legitimate or bona fide victim deserving of assistance and empowerment within the criminal justice decision-making process is socially constructed and conferred only to those who meet the criteria listed earlier (see Christie, 1986; and Dignan, 2005).

Victims Can Be Victimiziers and Victimiziers Can Be Victims Too In many real-life cases, it is not so obvious who the innocent party is. Sometimes it is very challenging to sort out the victims from the villains. Frequently, criminals can wind up as victims. Sometimes victims turn out to be wounded or

murdered criminals. As the expression goes, “Hurt people hurt people.”

Obviously, some victims and criminals temporarily have switched roles. This has been termed the **victim–offender overlap** (see Mancini and Pickett, 2017). Researchers noted long ago (see Singer, 1981; and Fattah, 1990) that people who routinely engage in illegal activities are more likely to get hurt than their law-abiding counterparts. To put it bluntly, predators prey upon each other as well as upon unsuspecting members of the general public. Some of the bloodiest **assaults**, robberies, and slayings surely can be characterized as “criminal-on-criminal.” When an organized crime syndicate “puts out a contract” on a rival faction’s chieftain, the gangster who gets “whacked” in a “mob rubout” is not an upstanding citizen struck down by an act of randomly directed violence. Similarly, when a turf battle erupts between drug dealers and one vanquishes the other, it must be remembered that the loser aspired to be the victor. When youth gangs feud with each other by carrying out “drive-by” shootings, the young members who get gunned down are casualties of their own brand of retaliatory “street justice.” Hustlers, con men, high-stakes gamblers, pimps, prostitutes, fences, swindlers, smugglers, traffickers, and others living life in the fast lane of the underworld often get hurt because they enter into showdowns with volatile persons known to be armed and dangerous. Victimologists want to know, “Do large segments of the public feel that these victimized criminals are ‘reaping what they sow?’”

The following are some evidence dug up by researchers that illustrates how some of today’s targets of lethal violence might have been yesterday’s offenders.

- In New York City during the years 2003 through 2005, more than 90 percent of the accused killers had criminal records; and of those whom they murdered, more than half had been previously arrested, according to an analysis of NYPD files (McGinty, 2006).
- About half of all violent deaths in the nation’s two “gang capitals,” Chicago and Los

Angeles, were classified as “street gang related” during the period 2007–2012. For the entire United States, about 13 percent of all homicides were gang-related during that time span. However, in most (75 percent) small towns and rural areas, no murders were considered gang-related, according the federal government’s National Gang Center (2015). During 2016, when shootings and murders soared in Chicago, the police attributed 90 percent of the violence to beefs involving members of rival street gangs (Saul, 2016).

- In Newark New Jersey, about 85 percent of the 165 murder victims between 2009 and 2010 had been arrested at least once before they were killed; their average number of prior arrests was 10 times (O’Neill, 2011).
- An analysis of the nearly 345 people murdered in violence-plagued Baltimore during 2015 revealed that almost 90 percent were previously caught up in crime. Eighty percent had been arrested for a drug offense, over 60 percent had been apprehended for a violent crime, and about half had a prior gun charge. The average homicide victim had been arrested 13 times before, and over 25 percent were suspected street gang members, according to a report issued by the police department (Rector, 2016).
- In Baltimore during 2017, most homicides were characterized by police sources as acts of retaliation that were carried out by repeat offenders, as in previous years. The victims had been arrested on average 11 times; nearly half had been apprehended for violent crimes, and almost three-quarters for drug charges. Their suspected killers had similar rap sheets but tended to have fewer prior arrests (Williams, 2018).

These data make it clear that some proportion of current victims, especially those who died violently, formerly were engaged in serious lawbreaking themselves. They often were slain by people in their crime-oriented social networks, whom they knew and quarreled with repeatedly.

Next, consider the opposite time sequence: Some of today's offenders might have been yesterday's victims.

- A study of three cities with high crime rates revealed that more than half of the young men from poverty-stricken neighborhoods who were arrested for a gun-related crime had previously been a victim of a shooting (The Trace, 2016). In an earlier study, about half of all inmates in state prisons who were serving time for felonies told interviewers that they had been shot at during their past lives on the street, and more than a fifth had been wounded by gunfire (Harlow, 2001).
- Interviews with female prisoners revealed that about 90 percent considered themselves to be victims of physical or sexual abuse when they were children; and roughly 75 percent had endured violence from an intimate partner when they were adults (see Recktenwald and Currens, 2017).
- Similarly, as many as 80 percent of the teenage girls caught up in the juvenile justice system of several states for committing various offenses (including prostitution) had previously suffered physical or sexual abuse (Williams, 2015). Many prostitutes who are considered to be lawbreakers by criminal justice officials previously suffered from all sorts of victimizations that inflicted injuries, especially if they had drug habits (Finn, Muftic, and Marsh, 2015).

Of course, it is possible for people engaged in illicit activities to be genuine victims qualifying for protection and redress through the courts. For example, prostitutes who trade sexual favors for money are frequently beaten by sadistic johns, robbed of their earnings by exploitative pimps (see Boyer and James, 1983; and Brents and Hausbeck, 2005), and occasionally targeted by serial killers. The harms they suffer are far more serious than the "offenses" they commit (see Coston, 2004). Similarly, drug addicts who steal to pay for their habits merit assistance when they get beaten or robbed. Researchers need to determine whether the public believes that only innocent victims are worthy of deep sympathy and unqualified support,

and to what degree police and prosecutors take the victims' prior involvement in illegal activities into account when handling their cases.

Next, consider the possibility of the intergenerational transmission of using force abusively—a cycle of violence over time that transforms a victim into a victimizer (see Fagan, Piper, and Cheng, 1987). For example, a child subjected to periodic beatings might grow up to parent his sons in the same excessively punitive way he was raised.

- A study that tracked the fortunes of boys and girls known to have been physically and sexually abused over a follow-up period of several decades concluded that being harmed at an early age substantially increased the odds of future delinquency and violent criminality (Widom and Maxfield, 2001).
- Another longitudinal study of molested males estimated that although most did not become pedophiles, more than 10 percent grew up to become sexual aggressors and exploiters (Skuse et al., 2003).
- Similarly, the results of a survey of convicts revealed that they were much more likely to have been abused physically or sexually as children than their law-abiding counterparts (Harlow, 1999).

Even more dramatically, consider the situations of certain groups of people who continuously switch roles as they lead their deeply troubled daily lives. For instance, desperate heroin addicts are repeatedly subjected to consumer fraud (dealers constantly cheat them by selling heavily adulterated packets of this forbidden powder). Nevertheless, after being swindled over and over again by their suppliers, they routinely go out and steal other people's property to raise the cash that pays for their habits (see Kelly, 1983).

To further complicate matters, offenders can morph into victims right under the noses of the authorities, especially in jails and prisons, but also right on the meanest streets of big-city neighborhoods:

- For example, when delinquents are thrown in with older and tougher inmates in adult jails,

these teenagers face grave risks of being physically and sexually assaulted (“New study,” 2008).

- In penal institutions, convicts are entitled to press charges and to receive protection when they are assaulted, gang-raped, or robbed by other more vicious inmates (who seek to stifle any complaining and reporting by branding it as “snitching”).
- In Chicago, the police department has assembled a list of “at-risk” individuals who are likely to wind up killing someone or being killed. The secret “Strategic Subject List” is derived from an algorithm that generates scores based on prior involvement in shootings and deadly assaults as either a suspect or an injured person. This controversial pro-active “predictive policing” policy sends officers out to personally warn these high-risk individuals that they could lose their freedom (via incarceration) or their lives to violence, if they continue to behave recklessly (see Kunichoff and Sier, 2017).

Violence begets violence, to the extent that those who suffer today may inflict pain on others tomorrow. For example, a group of picked-upon students might band together to ambush their bullying tormentors; or a battered wife might launch a vengeful surprise attack against her brutal husband, wounding or killing him. What could it possibly mean to be “pro-victim” in these situations?

Victims Can Find Themselves at Odds with the “Good Guys” Striving for objectivity is important for yet another reason. Crime victims can and do become embroiled in conflicts with persons and groups besides the perpetrators who have directly inflicted physical wounds and economic losses. Injured parties might nurse grievances and lash out against journalists reporting about their cases; police officers and detectives investigating their complaints; prosecutors ostensibly representing them in court; defense attorneys working on behalf of the accused; juries and judges deciding how to resolve their cases; probation, parole, and corrections officers supervising convicts who harmed

them; lawyers handling their lawsuits in civil court; governmental agencies and legislative bodies shaping their legal rights; social movements either speaking on their behalf or opposing their wishes; and businesses viewing them as eager customers for security products and services. Impartiality helps social scientists to understand why friction can develop in these situations and how to find solutions if these relationships become antagonistic.

First, consider how victims of highly publicized crimes could be outraged by the way the news media portrays them. Rather than side with the injured parties or with the journalists covering their cases, shouldn’t a victimologist adopt the stance of a detached and disinterested observer who investigates these charges of insensitivity and inaccuracy perhaps by carrying out a fine-grained content analysis of press coverage in those high-profile cases?

Next, consider those situations in which well-intentioned criminal justice officials put forward competing policies that they claim are “pro-victim.” For instance, prosecutors’ offices have adopted one or the other of two alternative ways of responding to violence between intimate partners. One policy enables a battered woman to remain in control of “her” case and ultimately decide if she wants to press charges against her husband or lover whom she had arrested for assaulting her. Advocates of letting her choose whether to prosecute or not emphasize that this approach empowers her to weigh her alternatives and take her personal safety into account. The other policy mandates that the prosecution of the arrestee should go forward on the basis of the available evidence (police officer testimony, photos of bruises, eyewitness accounts, hospital records, and 911 recordings), even if the injured party wants to drop the charges (because she either fears reprisals or seeks rapprochement). Supporters of this policy believe that when batterers know they surely will be held responsible and punished, domestic violence will subside as a societal problem. In other words, her ability to determine what she wants to do about her individual situation must be sacrificed for the “greater good,” which is to use cases like hers to generally

deter would-be batterers from assaulting their partners. Only an impartial analysis of scientifically gathered evidence can determine which of these two ostensibly pro-victim approaches best serves the long-term interests of most domestic violence victims (see O'Sullivan, Davis, Farole, and Rempel, 2007; and Nichols, 2014).

The Pentagon has tried for several decades to reduce the number of sexual assaults inflicted by members of the marines, army, navy, air force, and even the coast guard upon their comrades in arms in service academies, barracks, military bases, and even foreign battlefields. After the U.S. Senate debated alternative ways to bring the problem under control, two competing bills, both claiming to be pro-victim, came up for a vote. Supporters of one proposal argued that soldiers, sailors, and marines who are sexually assaulted fear that if they dare to file a complaint, their superiors may not act in their behalf. So they urged legislation that would have stripped commanding officers of their ability to decide which cases reported to them should lead to a court martial and would have empowered military prosecutors to make that decision about pressing charges or not. But the majority voted against this proposal, and instead the Senate passed the Victims Protection Act of 2014 that provides complainants with special counsels to advise them about the pros and cons of pursuing their cases in the military as opposed to the civilian criminal justice system (Jordan, 2014). Which of these two competing approaches would have been better for victims of sexual assaults? Will the new reform bring about substantial improvements? Objectivity, not partisanship, is needed to answer these questions.

The previous examples underscore how important it is for researchers to remain neutral at the outset of a study. Now consider the dilemmas many everyday people face because of their competing loyalties: their desire to back crime victims in their struggle for justice versus remaining true to their other commitments. The following example illustrates how objectivity and impartiality are sorely needed whenever pro-victim impulses must be balanced against other priorities and allegiances—for instance, staunch support for the police.

The mission of police departments is to protect and serve the public, and most people respect and admire the courage of officers who risk their lives to rescue hostages taken by kidnappers. But who would a person who is pro-victim as well as pro-police side with when these well-intentioned officers accidentally kill by “friendly fire” a captive they are seeking to free from the clutches of a captor? Would they agree with the distraught relatives who launch civil lawsuits for damages that criticize the department for inadequate training and an overreliance on military-style SWAT tactics rather than hostage negotiation techniques? Or would they stand shoulder to shoulder with the police fraternal organizations that predictably insist that the courageous officer did nothing wrong? Clearly, objectivity is called for when examining the effectiveness of existing law enforcement strategies and departmental policies whenever tragedies surrounding failed attempts to rescue hostages seize the attention of the news media and the public (e.g., see Dewan, 2005; Rubin, 2008; Murphy, 2014; and Haake, 2014).

Sources of Bias That Thwart Objectivity To sum up the arguments presented in earlier sections, when choosing projects to research and when gathering and interpreting data, researchers must put aside their personal political orientations toward criminal justice policies (e.g., conservatism or liberalism); their allegiances to causes (e.g., preserving civil liberties or advancing women's rights or outlawing abortion); and any positive or negative feelings toward entire groups (e.g., being pro-police or hostile to gun owners). Advocacy, whether for or against some policy or practice, should be kept separate from assessing the facts or drawing conclusions based on the available data. Scientific skepticism in the face of claims (“Prove it! Where is the evidence?”)—not self-interest or preconceived notions—must prevail when evaluating whether victims' rights legislation, prevention strategies, antitheft hardware, and recovery programs genuinely work or are ineffective or even counterproductive in reaching their stated goals. Expert opinion, in reports, in court testimony, or in the classroom, must be based on facts, not faith. Research, policy analyses, and

program evaluations must tell the whole truth, no matter who is disappointed or insulted.

Three types of biases undermine the ability of any social scientists (not just victimologists) to achieve objectivity and draw conclusions based on solid evidence (see Myrdal, 1944). The first may arise from personal experiences, taking the form of individual preferences and prejudices. For example, researchers who have been personally harmed in some way (e.g., beaten by a lover, robbed, or raped) might become so sensitized to the plight of their fellow victims that they can see issues only from that point of view. Conversely, those who have never been through such an ordeal might be unable to truly grasp what the injured parties must endure. In either case, the victimologist may develop a bias, whether it be oversensitivity and overidentification or insensitivity and lack of identification.

A second type of bias derives from the legacy of the discipline itself. The language, concepts, theories, and research priorities can reflect the collective preferences and priorities of its founders and their followers. For instance, it is widely acknowledged that the pioneers in this field of study introduced a victim-blaming orientation into the new discipline, but over the decades the tide has decisively turned. Today, the vast majority of victimologists make no secret of their opposite commitments: not to find fault with those who are suffering but rather to devise more effective means of aid, support, and recovery.

Although subtle, a third type of bias can be traced back to the mood of the times. Victimologists, like all other members of a society, are influenced by their social environment. The events that shape public opinion during different periods of time can also affect scientific thought. During the 1960s and early 1970s, for example, many people demanded that the government devise ways to help victims get back on their feet financially, medically, and emotionally. This insistence about expanding the social safety net to cushion the blows inflicted not only by corporations laying off workers and hospitals and doctors charging exorbitant fees for medical treatments but also by criminals reflected the spirit of egalitarianism and mutual aid of this stage in American history. The belief that society—through

the instrument of the government—could and should do more to help out inspired a great deal of research and policy advocacy. But these ambitious goals have been voiced less often ever since the 1980s, when the themes of “strive for self-reliance,” “reduce social spending by government,” and “cut taxes” gained popularity. This emphasis on individuals taking responsibility for their own well-being as opposed to holding the socioeconomic system accountable for its shortcomings and failings (especially chronically high rates of unemployment and a growing gap between the super rich and the desperately poor) has become the dominant ideology since the financial meltdown of 2008 and the onset of the “Great Recession.” Consequently, research projects and proposals about government-funded victim assistance programs have shifted their focus to matters such as only providing seed money for demonstration projects, imposing “sunset provisions” (to phase out efforts that don’t rapidly produce results), stressing cost effectiveness, and exploring the feasibility of self-help, privately financed, or faith-based charitable alternatives.

Clearly, inquiries into how victims suffer at the hands of criminals as well as other groups such as journalists and criminal justice officials are unavoidably a value-laden pursuit that arouses intense passions and sharply dissenting views. As a result, some have argued that objectivity is an impossible and unrealistic goal that should be abandoned in favor of a forthright affirmation of values and allegiances. They say that victimologists (and other social scientists) should acknowledge their biases at the outset to alert their audiences to the slant that their analyses and policy recommendations will take. Others argue that objectivity is worth striving for because subjectivity thwarts attempts to accurately describe, understand, and explain what is happening, why it came about, and how conditions can be improved.

For the purposes of a textbook, the best course of action is to present all sides of controversial issues. Nevertheless, space limitations impose hard choices. This book focuses almost entirely on victims of interpersonal violence and theft (street crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, assault, kidnapping, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft). There are many other categories of lawbreaking: crimes in the

suites involving a betrayal of trust and an abuse of power by high government officials against their rivals or to the detriment of the general public, and by corporate executives who can illegally inflict massive losses and injuries upon their company's workers, customers, stock owners, or competitors. White-collar crimes such as embezzlement by employees against their employers or fraud by citizens against government programs also impose much greater financial costs than street crimes. Organized rackets run by mobsters (drug smuggling, gun trafficking, counterfeiting of documents and currency, gambling, extortion) generate millions of dollars, undermine everyday life, and stimulate official corruption (bribes to look the other way). Crimes without complainants—victimless activities to some, vice to others—are controversial because the social reaction and criminal justice response might be worse than the original deviant behavior involving transactions between consenting adults (e.g., prostitution, illegal wagering, and street-level drug selling and buying). Clearly, these other categories of crimes are as serious and merit attention from scholars, law enforcement agencies, and concerned citizens. But they are not the types of lawless deeds that come to mind when people talk about “the crime problem” or express fears about being harmed. Street crime scares the public, preoccupies the media, keeps police departments busy, and captures the notice of politicians. These conventional, ordinary, depressingly familiar, and all-too-common predatory acts have tangible, visible, and readily identifiable victims who are directly affected and immediately aware of their injuries and losses.

In contrast, in the other categories of crime, especially white-collar crime and crime in the suites, the deleterious consequences are experienced by abstractions (e.g., “a competitive economy” or “national security”), impersonal entities (e.g., the U.S. Treasury or multinational corporations), or vaguely defined collectivities (e.g., voters, taxpayers, investors, shareholders, or consumers). It is difficult to grasp precisely who has suffered in these cases, and it is nearly impossible to describe or measure the background characteristics or reactions of the injured parties. It is extremely tough to establish in court specifically

who the flesh-and-blood victims are in cases of drug smuggling, money laundering, insurance scams, false advertising, bribe taking, software piracy, counterfeiting of trademarked goods, dumping of toxic wastes, insider trading, electoral fraud, illegal campaign contributions, and income tax evasion. But individuals hurt by assailants, robbers, and rapists can be easily identified, observed, contacted, interviewed, studied, counseled, assisted legally, and treated medically. As a result, a wealth of statistical data has accumulated about their wounds, losses, and emotional reactions. For these reasons, victims of interpersonal violence and theft will be the primary focus of attention and concern throughout this text, even though many of the illegal activities cited previously inflict much more severe social and economic damage (see Naim, 2005). But note that this decision immediately introduces a bias into this introduction to the field of victimology, one that reflects the experiences of authors of articles and textbooks, the collective priorities of the discipline's founders and most prolific researchers, and the mood of the times!

WHAT VICTIMOLOGY ISN'T

Now that it is becoming clear what victimology is, it is time to discuss what it is not.

Detectives are not scientifically studying victims when they perform what they call a “victimology” as part of an effort to track down a killer.

People in the helping professions are not “victimologists carrying out research into the victims' plight” when they provide direct assistance to injured persons.

And when political pundits and commentators declare that they despise “victimology,” surely they are referring to something else, and are mixing that up with what is really victimology: researchers objectively examining the plight of persons who have been hurt by criminals.

Victimology versus Detective Work

In police work, the term *victimology* can mean something much narrower and more specific than “the

BOX 1.2 What the Police Mean by the Term *Victimology*

Homicide squad detectives undertake a “victimology” by studying the life of the deceased person in order to discover who may have had a motive and an opportunity to commit the murder. Police investigators want to find out as much as possible about the individual who was slain via interviews with the next of kin and eyewitnesses. They scrutinize e-mail messages, diaries, banking deposits and withdrawals, computer files, and records of telephone calls. Detectives look into the victim’s associates (including friends, family members, acquaintances, rivals, and enemies); social background (occupation, education, marital status); lifestyle (how time and money was spent); criminal history (any prior record of arrests, convictions, and incarcerations, plus any cases in which the departed served as a complainant, plaintiff, or witness against others); financial situation (sources of income, debts owed, investments, and heirs in line to inherit any property); and health issues (drinking habits, substance abuse, and other problems). Autopsy findings shed light on the final meal, the presence of any traces of recent drinking

and drug taking, the cause of death, and the approximate time interval when the fatal confrontation took place.

For example, if a drug dealer is found shot to death in an alley, detectives would construct a timeline of his last known whereabouts and activities. What were his known hangouts (bars, clubs, parks, etc.)? Investigators would seek clues to determine whether he was killed by someone above him in the hierarchy of drug trafficking or someone below who worked for him or bought controlled substances from him. Was he recently embroiled in any disputes or court cases, and did he secretly serve as a confidential informant? Who had an incentive and a chance to slay him? (NYPD homicide detectives, 2008).

“Forensic victimology” in this very pragmatic and immediate sense is undertaken to increase the odds of solving a case, apprehending a suspect, and presenting solid evidence in court on behalf of a person who is no longer able to cooperate with the investigation and pursue justice on his or her own (see Petherick and Turvey, 2008).

scientific study of victims.” When officers use the term, they are referring to a type of background investigation. When homicide detectives engage in victimology, it is the process of reconstructing events and learning as much as possible about the person who is no longer able to cooperate with the investigators in order to figure out who carried out the killing (see Box 1.2).

Clearly, victimologists don’t try to solve crimes; that is what detectives do.

Next, two other misconceptions need to be dispelled. First of all, victimology is not about ministering to injured parties to help them recover. And second, victimology is not about convincing people that they should see themselves as part of a group that has been oppressed and exploited in the past, and right up to the present.

Victimology versus Victim Services

Some people might be disappointed to learn that victimology is not the same as victim assistance. Victimologists are social scientists who follow strict guidelines about gathering evidence in order to study the

plight of crime victims. They might attend meetings, conferences, and strategy sessions side by side with practitioners about improving victim assistance efforts and alleviating suffering. But victimologists generally do not work with individuals who were harmed by offenders, one at a time. Victimologists are producers of new knowledge when they collect and analyze data, and investigators and testers of claims when they analyze evidence and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policies. Practitioners are consumers of knowledge imparted to them during their training. Drawing upon their training and their direct experiences, they are dedicated persons who directly assist injured parties to recover from their ordeals, and often become advocates on their behalf.

Doctors, nurses, and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) riding in ambulances attend to physical injuries as they work hard to save victims’ lives. Psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, counselors, social workers, and members of the clergy try to ease mental anguish and lingering emotional distress. Caseworkers and well-intentioned volunteers help connect victims to social service agencies and programs that offer benefits and support. Police

BOX 1.3 Victimologists Ask Different Questions than Practitioners

Doctors, nurses, emergency medical technicians ask pragmatic questions like,

- "What physical injuries has this wounded robbery victim sustained?"

Victimologists pose research questions like,

- "How often are victims wounded by robbers?"
- "What proportion of wounded robbery victims need to be hospitalized?"
- "What is the average out-of-pocket medical bill that robbery victims must pay?"

Psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, counselors, social workers, and members of the clergy ask pragmatic questions like,

- "What can be done to ease the anguish of this individual who was traumatized by the experience of being seriously wounded by an armed robber?"

Victimologists pose research questions like,

- "What proportion of robbery victims who are seriously wounded also experience emotional trauma?"
- "Which kinds of therapeutic interventions provided to traumatized persons attacked by robbers work best to relieve distress?"

Police officers, detectives, and prosecutors ask pragmatic questions like,

- "What weapon did the robber wield to wound this victim?"

Victimologists pose research questions like,

- "What proportion of victims are accosted by a robber armed with a handgun?"
- "Which victims are the most likely to be seriously injured: those confronted by robbers armed with guns, or knives, or no weapon at all?"
- "How often are seriously wounded victims called upon to testify against their assailants in court?"

Lawyers and advocates ask pragmatic questions like,

- "Does this victim have a good chance of winning a lawsuit in civil court against the robber, or perhaps against the landlord of the luxury apartment building where the robbery in the elevator took place?"

Victimologists pose research questions like,

- "How often do victims who press charges against robbers also hire attorneys to try to sue their attackers in civil court?"
- "How frequently do these civil lawsuits succeed?"

officers, detectives, and prosecutors work with victims to identify, apprehend, and convict the offenders who attacked them. Lawyers launch lawsuits in civil court and advocates provide practical guidance and specific advice (see Williams, 2002). All these practitioners are kept busy addressing the needs of their patients and clients, so they usually are not engaged in conducting research or in teaching about them as academics. Victimologists are committed to reducing suffering through their research and teaching, but they are not necessarily former, current, or future practitioners. Practitioners work hands-on with one victim at a time. Victimologists study entire groups of victims.

The most striking difference between the two groups concerns the kinds of questions each asks. Examples of these distinctions in cases of brutal robberies are illustrated in Box 1.3.

Even though the two groups are distinct, both can learn from each other. Victimologists who don't have a lot of direct hands-on experience ministering to individuals who have suffered harm from illegal acts can gain a great many insights from veteran practitioners. These insights can be used to round out assessments of victims' needs, to guide the development of programs to address these needs, and to evaluate the effectiveness of these practitioners' efforts to assist victims to recover. Conversely, people whose job it is to comfort those in distress can glean valuable feedback and pick up useful suggestions from the findings of studies of large numbers of victims carried out by researchers about unmet needs and unproductive or even counterproductive efforts intended to benefit them.

Now that the relationship between victimology and victim assistance has been clarified, another

distinction needs to be explored. Despite some confusion and misunderstandings, victimology is certainly not the same as the controversial political ideology of “victimism.”

Victimology versus Victimism: A Political Point of View

Shortly after the term entered mainstream culture, *victimology* became a “dirty word” (undeservedly!). Some prominent people who ought to know better misuse “victimology” as an epithet, which they spit out through clenched teeth. This disturbing development emerged during the 1990s and unfortunately is becoming even more entrenched and pronounced during the twenty-first century. For example, in an article condemning a speech delivered by President Obama, an editor of a conservative political journal used the term *victimology* in a negative way four times (e.g., “Obama has now put the presidential imprimatur on the crudest kind of racial victimology...”) (MacDonald, 2013). Similarly, Jeb Bush, a candidate in the Republican presidential primary criticized harsh words uttered by Donald Trump against Hillary Clinton, declaring, “She’s great at being the victim. You know, this will enhance her victimology status” (Sullivan, 2015). Most often, those who denounce “victimology” are conservative politically. On occasion, those on the liberal side of the political spectrum misuse the term as well. A commentator asserted, “Donald Trump is a professional white victimologist” in an article entitled, “Donald Trump’s ‘blame the liberals’ talk belongs to a long right-wing tradition of white victimology and conspiracy theory” (Devega, 2017).

Some dramatic illustrations of how victimology has been bad-mouthed in the media over the years as muddled thinking or even as a point of view worthy of contempt appear in Box 1.4. This chart identifies the topic and then presents the statement castigating “victimology.”

What were these commentators thinking when they issued these sweeping denunciations of what they branded as “victimology”? Why is this relatively new academic discipline being singled out for such harsh criticisms?

The suffix “ology” means the “scientific study of,” as in criminology, suicidology, or traumatology. If the phrase “the scientific study of crime victims” is substituted for “victimology” in the excerpts quoted in Box 1.4, the sentences make no sense. Evidently, those who condemn what they label “victimology” are railing against something other than scientific research focused on people harmed by criminals. The mistake these commentators are making is parallel to the improper usage of the phrase “sociological forces” rather than “social forces,” and “psychological problems” instead of “mental problems.” Victimology, criminology, sociology, and psychology are disciplines that adopt an open-minded and evenhanded approach toward people’s thoughts and behaviors and apply certain methods of evidence collection and of analysis. They do not impose a rigid partisan point of view or yield a set of predictably biased conclusions and interpretations.

It appears that what these strident denunciations are deriding is a victimization-centered orientation that can be categorized as the ideology of **victimism** (see Sykes, 1992). An “ism” is an **ideology** (e.g., conservatism or liberalism) that presents a coherent, integrated set of beliefs that shapes interpretations and guides political actions. Victimism is the outlook of people who share a sense of common victimhood. Individuals who accept this outlook believe that they gain insight from an understanding of their history: of how their fellow group members (e.g., women, homosexuals, or racial and religious minorities) have been seriously “wronged” by some rival group (to put it mildly; viciously slaughtered would be a better way to phrase it in many historical cases!), or held back and kept down by unfair social, economic, or political institutions built upon oppressive and exploitative roles and relationships.

Staunch critics of current conditions often connect the dots by tracing the roots of today’s social problems back through centuries of systematic subjugation and exploitation. Activists who see conflicts through the prism of victimism insist that the injustices of the past still persist right up to the present. But the commentators cited in Box 1.4 claim that adopting this kind of victimist orientation leads to an unhealthy preoccupation of dwelling on past

BOX 1.4 Some Striking Examples of “Victimology Bashing”

Concerning male/female relations:

- During a nationally televised interview, a critic of contemporary feminism (Paglia, 1993) declared: “I hate victimology. I despise a victim-centered view of the universe. Do not teach young women that their heritage is nothing but victimization.”
- A collection of letters written to the editors of the *New York Times* (1996, p. E8) was published under the headline “What women want is a lot less victimology.”
- A reviewer (Harrop, 2003) of a book about the difficulties facing boys wrote: “The art of victimology requires three easy steps: (1) Identify a group suffering real or perceived injustices. (2) Exaggerate the problem. (3) Blame the problem on a group you don’t like. Conservatives have long condemned the ‘victimology industry’ as a racket, especially when practiced by women and minorities. As it happens, conservatives also play the game, and very well indeed.... The latest victimized group seems to be American boys.”
- A political analyst subtitled her provocative article about an alleged “Campus Rape Myth” as “The reality: bogus statistics, feminist victimology, and university approved sex toys” (MacDonald, 2008a).
- A former speechwriter for President Bush entitled his editorial “The Victimology of Hillary Clinton” (Frum, 2014).

Concerning heterosexual/same sex relationships relations:

- In a newspaper opinion piece about the controversy surrounding homosexuals serving in the military, the author (Sullivan, 1993, p. A21) observed: “The effect that ending the ban could have on the gay community is to embolden the forces of responsibility and integration and weaken the impulses of victimology and despair.... A defeat would send a signal to a gay community at a crossroads between hopeful integration and a new relapse into the victimology of the ghetto.”

Concerning race and ethnic relations:

- An author of a book about race relations called a well-known reverend and civil rights activist a “professional victimologist” (see Dreher, 2001).
- A former governor of Colorado (Lamm, 2004) warned that a plot to “destroy America” through immigration and multiculturalism would include the following strategy: “establish the cult of victimology ... start a grievance industry blaming all minority failure on the majority population.”

- A newspaper columnist and political activist (Kuhner, 2011) lamented: “Victimology and racial set-asides dominate large swathes of American life, from university admissions and government bureaucracies to big business and construction.”
- A law professor, writing in an online liberal publication about who wins awards in Hollywood observed: “This moment shines a spotlight on the phenomenon of white victimology... the misguided impulse to overshadow the exclusion experienced by people of color with competing and imagined narratives of injury” (Robinson, 2016).

Concerning international relations:

- A former intelligence officer (Pacepa, 2005) characterized the United Nations as a breeding ground for “a virulent strain of hatred for America, grown from the bacteria of Communism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, jingoism, and victimology.”
- A prominent newspaper columnist (Brooks, 2006) wrote about the public’s perception of the Middle East: “What these Americans see is fanatical violence, a rampant culture of victimology and grievance, a tendency by many Arabs to blame anyone but themselves for the problems they create.”
- A reviewer (Anderson, 2008) of a book about the war on terrorism wrote: “The Left’s victimology now sickens [the author].”
- The Secretary of Defense in both the Bush and Obama administrations (Gates, 2009) told members of the armed forces: “I think most of our families don’t regard themselves as victims and don’t appreciate sometimes the victimology piece. They are very proud of the service of their soldiers overseas....”
- The founder of a group promoting economics education (Reed, 2016) declared: “Socialism preaches envy and theft and delivers strife and conflict. It pits class against class. It cynically buys off one faction at the expense of another. It thrives on victimology and shuns personal responsibility.”

Concerning controversies in the “culture wars”:

- In his syndicated column, a leading conservative partisan (Buckley, 1994, p. 30a) condemned the thinking of the 1960s Woodstock generation: “The countercultural

BOX 1.4 (Continued)

music is the perfect accompaniment for the culture of sexual self-indulgence, of exhibitionism, of crime and illegitimacy, and ethnic rancor and victimology.”

Concerning courtroom strategies:

- A news magazine columnist (Leo, 2002) took a swipe at certain lawsuits: “Yes, everybody is a victim now, but some breakthroughs in victimology are more noteworthy than others. The year’s best example was the trio of supersize teens who sued McDonald’s, claiming the burger chain made them fat by enticing them to eat its meals nearly every day for five years.”
- In a critique of several jury verdicts that found defendants “not guilty,” a news magazine commentator (Leo, 1994) complained: “We are deep into the era of the abuse excuse. The doctrine of victimology—claiming victim status means you are not responsible for your actions—is beginning to warp the legal system.... The irony of this seems to escape victimologists. A movement that began with the slogan, ‘Don’t blame the victim’ now strives to blame murder victims for their own deaths.”

Concerning academia and life on college campuses:

- A columnist (Seebach, 1999) berated liberal professors for producing college grads whom employers would reject because the students were “experts only in victimology or oppression studies.”
- An editor of a conservative journal complained that “colleges teach nonjudgmental political correctness and victimology that makes so many of their students incapable of critical thinking, as measured by the *College Learning Assessment Plus* test” (Magnet, 2017).
- Another editor of the same conservative journal condemned campus protests against highly inflammatory speakers, lamenting the “academy’s decline from a place of learning to a victimology hothouse” (MacDonald, 2017).

Concerning everyday life:

- A Pulitzer Prize-winning conservative commentator (Will, 1998, p. 42) titled his syndicated column opposing the Clinton administration’s antismoking campaign as “President feeds the culture of victimology.”
- One journalist (Parker, 1999) insisted that “Americans are fed up with twentieth-century victimology.”

wrongs, and that this orientation impedes efforts to achieve reconciliation and move forward.

This debate over who or what is to blame for persisting injustices surrounding sex, class, and race is part of an ongoing political battle for the hearts and minds of the American people—a continuing ideological struggle that is often categorized as “identity politics,” which is part of the “culture wars.” Unfortunately, victimology has become confused with victimism and as a result has been caught up in the acrimonious cross fire between partisans of the conservative Right and the liberal Left.

But victimology, as an “-ology” and not an “-ism,” is an objective, neutral, unbiased, scientific endeavor that does not take sides, play favorites, or speak with just one predictable voice in these political debates. So there is no reason to condemn the whole scholarly enterprise of victimology and dismiss it as flawed, distorted, or slanted, as the commentators quoted in Box 1.4 did. To put it bluntly, victimology has received a bum rap by those who mockingly

equate it with victimism. Read on and this confusion will be dispelled. Victimology will take shape as a challenging, meaningful, balanced, enlightening, socially beneficial, and relevant field of study that focuses on a very old problem—being harmed by criminals—from a fresh, new angle.

COMPARING VICTIMOLOGY TO CRIMINOLOGY

Victimology is an interdisciplinary field that benefits from the contributions of sociologists, psychologists, social workers, counselors, political scientists, doctors, nurses, lawyers, detectives, criminal justice professionals, volunteers, advocates, and activists. But academically and organizationally, victimology is best conceived of as an area of specialization within criminology, on par with other fields of intensive study, such as delinquency, drug abuse, and penology. All these subdisciplines merit elective

courses and textbooks of their own in colleges and graduate programs. In other words, criminology is the older and larger parent discipline and victimology is the recent offshoot.

Criminology can be defined as encompassing the scientific study of illegal activities, offenders, their victims, the origins and functions of criminal law, the actual operations of the criminal justice system, and societal reactions to the crime problem.

Historically, much of criminology can be characterized as **offenderology** because of its preoccupation with the reasons why criminals behave as they do, a focus on the wrongdoers' personal motives and the underlying root causes of their antisocial behavior, and whether punishment or treatment will make them stop. Lawbreakers always have been under a spotlight while the people they harmed remained shadowy figures on the fringes. Victimology enriches criminology by contributing to a more balanced and comprehensive analysis that sheds light on both parties and their interactions.

The Many Parallels between Criminology and Victimology

Even though it is a rapidly evolving subdiscipline, victimology parallels its parent, criminology, in many ways. Criminologists ask why certain individuals become involved in lawbreaking while others do not. Their studies concentrate on the offenders' backgrounds and motives in order to uncover the root causes of their misbehavior. Victimologists ask why some individuals and households are targeted while others are not. Researchers aim to discover the sources of vulnerability to criminal attack and the reasons why some individuals might act carelessly, behave recklessly, or even incite others to attack them. Criminologists recognize that most people occasionally break certain laws (especially during adolescence) but are otherwise law-abiding; only some who engage in delinquent acts graduate to become hardcore offenders and career criminals. Victimologists realize that anyone can suffer the misfortune of being at the wrong place at the wrong time but wonder why certain individuals are preyed upon over and over again.

Although the law holds offenders personally accountable for their illegal conduct, criminologists explore how social, economic, and political conditions “breed” or foster or generate criminal activity. Similarly, victimologists examine personality traits, agents of socialization, and cultural imperatives that compel some people to participate in various lifestyles in which they take chances and put their lives in danger. Just as aggressive criminal behavior can be learned, some victims may have been taught to lead high-risk lifestyles—or at the other end of the spectrum—to play subordinate roles and passively tolerate abuse.

Both criminologists and victimologists place a great emphasis on following the proper ways of gathering and interpreting data as evidence. Criminologists and victimologists calculate statistics, compute rates, compile profiles, draw graphs, and search for patterns and trends. Criminologists collect and analyze information about individuals engaging in illegal behaviors, especially their social backgrounds (e.g., educational attainments and income levels). Victimologists look over statistics about the sex, ages, and social standing of the people who are harmed by unlawful activities.

Criminologists apply their findings to devise local, regional, and national crime-prevention strategies. Victimologists scrutinize the patterns and trends they detect to identify other people's misfortunes and mistakes. Then they evaluate anticrime devices, protective services, and risk-reduction tactics.

Both criminologists and victimologists study how the criminal justice system actually works, in contrast to the way the system is supposed to operate according to agency regulations, official roles, federal and state legislation, court decisions, and politicians' promises. Criminological research reveals how suspects, arrestees, defendants, and convicts are really handled. Similarly, victim-centered studies examine the way injured parties are actually treated by police officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, juries, probation and parole officers, and parole boards (what victims want and what they get are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7).

Criminologists assess the needs of offenders for counseling, psychotherapy, additional education, job training, and drug treatment. In addition, criminologists evaluate the effectiveness of various

rehabilitation programs offered behind bars or available to probationers or parolees that are intended to reduce recidivism rates. Similarly, victimologists want to identify the emotional problems that beset people after they have been harmed by offenders, and to test out the usefulness of programs designed to facilitate their recovery (see Lurigio, 1990; and Roberts, 1990).

Criminologists try to calculate the social and economic costs that illegal activity imposes on a community or on society as a whole. Victimologists estimate the losses and expenses that individuals incur due to acts of violence, theft, or fraud.

Some Differences and Issues about Boundaries

Criminology and victimology differ in several important ways. For starters, criminology is several hundred years old, whereas victimology did not emerge until roughly the second half of the twentieth century.

Criminologists agree among themselves that they should limit their studies to illegal activities and should exclude forms of social deviance that do not violate any criminal laws. For instance, the undesired attention and advances that constitute sexual harassment at a workplace are no longer considered to be a private matter or a personal problem but are a type of discrimination that can lead to a civil lawsuit against the perpetrator. However, these unwanted remarks and gestures are not crimes that can lead to an arrest, and hence lie beyond the scope of criminology and victimology. (If the offensive initiatives escalate into stalking or unwanted physical contacts, then the behavior crosses the line into criminality.)

Similarly, certain expressions of bullying (mocking, teasing, taunting) can be upsetting and ought to be firmly discouraged, but they are not illegal acts. Both criminologists and victimologists would study harassment when it is menacing enough to constitute a crime. The same with bullying—intentional acts of physical aggression can rise to the level of criminal behavior if they result in vandalism or theft, or, worse yet, erupt into violence (e.g., dishing out a beating to the object of scorn).

Whenever incidents of sexual harassment or bullying escalate into criminal matters, criminologists can focus on the aggressors and victimologists can study injured parties (see DeGette, Jenson, and Colomy, 2000; Unnever and Cornell, 2003; and Lipkins, 2008).

However, victimologists, unlike criminologists, have not reached a consensus about the appropriate outer limits of their field. Some victimologists argue that their scientific studies should not be restricted to criminal victimization. They believe that additional sources of harm, anguish, and loss are worthy of systematic analysis: cruel political repression (brutality, torture, execution) carried out by despotic regimes that violate basic human rights; manmade slaughters (e.g., wars and genocide); natural disasters (e.g., floods and earthquakes); and maybe even sheer accidents (like meltdowns of nuclear power plants). There are victims of floods, famines, ethnic cleansing, and torture who suffer in similar ways to people injured in crimes. The common thread would be to understand the nature of their tribulations and travails, and the consistent goal would be to develop effective strategies for short-run relief as well as long-term solutions to alleviate emotional distress, financial hardships, and physical pain stemming from all kinds of calamities.

However, the majority of victimologists believe that their studies should remain focused on criminal victimization so that there are precise, readily identifiable limits and clear directions for further research and theorizing. Actually, criminal victimization may not be more serious (economically), more injurious (medically), or more traumatic and longer lasting (emotionally) than other types of harm. But it is necessary to rein in the boundaries of the field in order to make it manageable for the practical purposes of holding conferences, publishing journals, writing textbooks, and teaching college courses. (For the pros and cons of these alternative visions of what the scope of victimology ought to be, see Schafer, 1968; Viano, 1976, 1983, and 1990a; Galaway and Hudson, 1981; Flynn, 1982; Scherer, 1982; Schneider, 1982; Friedrichs, 1983; Elias, 1986; Fattah, 1991; and Dussich, 2009b.)

Differing Political Approaches within the Discipline

Victimology does not have the distinct schools of thought that divide criminologists into opposing camps, probably because this new subdiscipline lacks its own well-developed theories of human behavior. However, in both criminology and victimology, political ideologies—conservative, liberal, and radical left/critical/conflict—can play a significant role in influencing the choice of research topics and in shaping policy recommendations.

The conservative tendency within victimology focuses primarily upon street crimes. A basic tenet of conservative thought is that everyone—both victims and offenders—must be held strictly accountable for their decisions and actions. This translates into an emphasis on scrutinizing whether the victim did anything “wrong” or was “blameworthy” in any way for what took place. Stressing individual responsibility leads to an additional theme: self-reliance is favored over counting on governmental assistance when it comes to preventing, avoiding, resisting, and recovering from criminal acts. Individuals should strive to take personal responsibility for their own safety and for defending themselves, their families, and their homes from outside attack (arming for self-protection is thoroughly explored in the first half of Chapter 13). Conservatives embrace the crime control model of criminal justice, believing that the primary purpose of the legal system is to protect the innocent from those who seek to harm them. As a result, lawbreakers must be punished in proportion to the suffering they inflicted on their victims (the philosophy of retribution, or **just deserts**). Making criminals pay also is supposed to accomplish the goals of general deterrence (to make a negative example of them, to serve as a warning to other would-be offenders that they should think twice and decide not to break the law), as well as specific deterrence (to teach them a lesson so they won’t repeat this forbidden conduct in the future). Incapacitating predators behind bars keeps them away from the targets they would like to prey upon.

The liberal tendency sees the scope of the field as stretching beyond street crime to include

criminal harm inflicted on persons by reckless corporate executives and corrupt officials. A basic theme within liberal thought is to endorse societal intervention through the instrument of government to try to ensure fair treatment and to alleviate needless suffering. This position leads to efforts to extend the “safety net” mechanisms of the welfare state to cushion shocks and losses due to all kinds of misfortunes, including crime. To “make the victim whole again,” aid must be available from state compensation funds, subsidized crime insurance plans, rape crisis centers, and shelters for battered women. Some liberals are enthusiastic about restorative justice experiments that, instead of punishing offenders by imprisoning them, attempt to make wrongdoers pay restitution to their victims so that reconciliation between the two estranged parties might become possible (restorative justice is the focus of the second half of Chapter 13).

The radical left/critical/conflict perspective seeks to demonstrate that the problem of victimization arises from the exploitative and oppressive relations that are pervasive throughout the social system. Therefore, the scope of the field should not be limited simply to the casualties of criminal activity in the streets. Inquiries must be extended to cover the harm inflicted by industrial polluters, owners and managers of hazardous workplaces, fraudulent advertisers, predatory lenders (e.g., of mortgages with deceptive provisions for repayment of the loan), brutally violent law enforcement agencies, and discriminatory institutions. Victims might not be particular individuals but whole groups of people, such as factory workers, minority groups, customers, or neighborhood residents. From the radical/critical/conflict point of view, victimology can be faulted for preferring to study the more obvious, less controversial kinds of harmful behaviors (acts of personal violence and crude theft by desperate individuals) instead of the more fundamental injustices that mar everyday life: the inequitable distribution of wealth and power that results in poverty, malnutrition, homelessness, family dysfunction, chronic structural unemployment, substance abuse, and misplaced aggression toward

potential allies who are in similar circumstances. The legal system and the criminal justice apparatus are considered part of the problem by criminologists as well as victimologists working within this radical/critical/conflict framework because these institutions that supposedly promote fairness actually primarily safeguard the interests of influential groups and privileged classes (see Birkbeck, 1983; Friedrichs, 1983; Viano, 1983; Elias, 1986, 1993; Fattah, 1986, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Miers, 1989; Reiman, 2015; Walklate, 1991; Mawby and Walklate, 1993; and Spencer and Walklate, 2017).

WHY STUDY VICTIMOLOGY?

One last parallel between criminology and victimology merits highlighting. Criminology and victimology are not well-paying fields ripe with lucrative opportunities for employment and advancement. So why take a course in victimology if one's major is not criminology or criminal justice? There are several good reasons why a growing number of people are investing time, energy, and money to study victimology in training academies, and in undergraduate programs in colleges and graduate programs in universities.

Studying the *modus operandi* of criminals and the mistakes made by the individuals they injured certainly doesn't make a person invincible to physical attacks, thefts, or swindles. However, this heightened awareness of how and why offenders choose their targets might reduce some risks. More important, the study of victimization helps to put concerns and outright fears into perspective, in terms of the odds of being harmed, especially in comparison to other misfortunes.

Second, those who study the plight of victims can benefit intellectually. Like other social sciences, victimology generates insights about everyday life and contemporary society. Recognizing how one's personal troubles usually can be traced back to larger social problems (e.g., crime, poverty, unemployment, dysfunctional families, and failing schools) leads to the development of a "sociological imagination" (Mills, 1959). Exercising

a "criminological imagination" (see Young, 2011) raises consciousness too. After studying victimology, it should be possible to better understand the connections between individual difficulties, historic injustices, the destructive impact of prevailing social institutions and ideologies, and the shortcomings of contemporary culture. The victims' plight and the social reaction to it reveals the sharp contrast between what is and what could be. Examining the way victims were treated in the past and how they are responded to in other societies reveals what has been, what might be, what should be avoided, and what ought to be emulated and adopted.

Third, working to ease the distress of others can foster a sense of purpose, self-worth, accomplishment, and satisfaction. Victimology focuses on harm in order to alleviate suffering. Research findings from victimological studies can assist practitioners to effectively deliver services to injured parties to help them to heal and recover from their ordeals.

WHY PLACE SUCH AN EMPHASIS ON CARRYING OUT RESEARCH?

Knowledge about crime victims is derived from research findings. Whenever people ask questions about victims, the proper initial answer should always be, "I don't know. Let's look into this subject. Let's see what previous investigations have discovered. If there are no existing studies that definitively answer this question, then research is called for to determine the truth."

Victimologists investigate all kinds of hypotheses: suspicions, hunches, impressions, accusations, assertions, and predictions. Like all social scientists, when presented with claims about what is true and what is false, their proper response is not to accept or reject the assertion but to declare: "Prove it! Show me! Where is the evidence?"

Testing hypotheses yields interesting findings, especially discoveries that cast doubt on common-sense notions (challenging what everyone "knows" to be true) and widely held beliefs. A major goal is to try to sort out myths from realities.

Different Types of Research Studies in Victimology

Everyone has strong feelings about the suffering of victims, impressions about the relationships and interactions between victims and the persons who harm them, and beliefs about what victims would like to see happen to offenders within the criminal justice process. But victimologists, as social scientists, can't accept these opinions and assertions at face value, and either agree or disagree with them. Victimologists must act as "claims investigators" and conduct research into any and all assertions about the degree to which victims suffer, and how well or how poorly they are treated by practitioners, the media, businesses, and criminal justice professionals. Victimologists must insist, "Show me! Prove it! Where is the evidence?" In other words, all research findings and conclusions must be based on facts derived from carefully crafted studies.

Take, for example, the problem posed by ransomware. News stories tell of incidents involving so-called drive-by ransomware, in which home computers or smartphones get infected when unsuspecting victims click on a compromised website. Often they are lured there by a deceptive e-mail or pop-up window. Suddenly the screen freezes and a message warns that all personal data and files will remain locked and/or encrypted until the victim pays the ransom (often using bitcoins) to get the key needed to unlock or decrypt them. Not only individuals have had their files held hostage, but government agencies, businesses, and colleges have also been targeted and then forced to pay ransom (FBI, 2015).

Four kinds of research projects can be carried out by victimologists, and can be identified by the questions they pose and then try to answer: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and evaluative studies (see Maxfield and Babbie, 2006).

Exploratory studies are undertaken when very little is known about some new form of victimization, like ransomware attacks. An exploratory study would use qualitative methods, such as interviewing or running a focus group of victims to see if they had any awareness of this cyberthreat, and how upset they were that they had to pay some unknown kidnappers to get access to their data and files back.

Descriptive studies are quantitative fact-finding undertakings that address basic questions such as "who, where, when, and how." Descriptive research seeks answers to questions that involve counting and measuring, such as "how many" and "how often?" Quantitative data collection methods, like surveys, are used to answer these questions. For example, the research questions might be, "Is this problem growing or subsiding? Based on all the known cases, what kinds of websites were infected the most often?" Other questions in a descriptive study might be, "What was the average ransom?" Also, "Which kinds of people, in terms of their age, sex, and education level, are at the highest risk of stumbling into this type of online scam?"

Explanatory studies tackle tougher questions by analyzing "Why did it happen?" Explanatory research seeks to answer questions like "why" and "how come" in order to discover the reasons or causes of some problem. In explanatory studies, the research question might be, "Why are some groups more vulnerable to these online attacks than others?" "How come some victims refuse to pay the ransom?" is another question worthy of serious inquiry.

Evaluation research probes into "What is actually going on?" Evaluation research attempts to assess whether some device, program, treatment, policy, law, or other intervention "actually works as intended in the real world." Evaluation research also tackles questions like "What would happen if...?" On the issue of ransomware demands, the research question in an evaluation research study might be "Are any countermeasures really effective in preventing ransomware from infecting computer systems?" A second type of evaluative study could be based on an actual or hypothetical social experiment: "What would happen if some agency or organization offered free assistance to victims who refuse to pay the ransom? Could they somehow recover or reconstruct the data and files that are being held hostage, and undermine the underground businesses that profit from providing keys to unlock the captive files?"

Different Disciplinary Approaches when Researching Victim Issues

Victimology has become an interdisciplinary field, even though it is largely an offshoot of criminology.

Some researchers come from other branches of the social sciences, and they bring with them certain orientations or priorities that shape their studies. Experts from the fields of psychology, law and criminal justice, history, and economics have made major contributions that have enriched victimology. The questions researchers pose reflect their orientations and the priorities of their disciplines. Here is how researchers from different academic backgrounds might approach the same subject—for example, wives beaten by their husbands (for a full discussion of domestic violence, see Chapter 9).

A psychological orientation emphasizes the importance of personalities and character traits as factors that shape how an individual reacts under attack, suffers in the aftermath, and responds to treatment. Psychological approaches might focus on emotional reactions like shock and numbness, fear and panic, grief, anger and resentment, depression, loneliness, and guilt. Researchers probing intimate partner violence might ask, “In what ways are these women suffering emotionally?” and “What kinds of therapeutic interventions would help them to cope and then recover?”

A legal and criminal justice orientation focuses on laws, regulations, and procedures. Researchers working in this tradition ask questions like, “What rights do battered wives have, if any, when it comes to influencing the decisions made by police officers, prosecutors, and judges?” and “Are they legally obligated to report serious offenses such as being threatened with a knife, or worse yet, with a gun?”

Historians look to the past and try to trace developments right up until the present. An historical approach might center on questions like, “How have battered wives been viewed by the authorities over the centuries, from colonial America up to the present?” and “When did public opinion toward wife beating change, and why?”

Anthropologists often study societies that are far away and that existed long ago. Taking an anthropological orientation might lead to questions like this: “In which societies around the world were cultural restraints on husbands using force against their wives strongest, as well as weakest, and why?”

Economists focus on finances, gains, benefits, costs, expenses, and losses. Researchers adopting an

economic orientation when studying wife beating might ask, “How much does domestic violence cost American society each year, in terms of lost wages, medical bills, and criminal justice outlays?” Additional lines of inquiry could be, “How serious are the monetary consequences, on average, suffered by battered women when they separate from their abusive husbands?” and “What types of assistance and forms of support would effectively help them to become financially independent of their abusive mates?”

Sometimes Research Findings Can Be Surprising!

As a branch of social science that closely focuses on how people behave and react, victimology must be research oriented. And yet, a criticism that is often voiced is, “Why spend all that time and money trying to establish what everyone already knows?” The answer is that research is always necessary because “common sense” or “conventional wisdom” sometimes is mistaken, and what people think they already know could be only partially true or even totally incorrect.

For example, consider what happened in this real-life incident:

A 43-year-old grad student enters a classroom in which about 20 students had assembled a few minutes before class. Armed with a military semiautomatic rifle loaded with a 30-round clip, he points the weapon at his classmates and pulls the trigger, but the rifle jams. He tries again, but again the gun does not fire. The students realize they are under attack and drop to the floor, overturn their desks, and try to hide behind them. One courageous student shoves his desk at the gunman, enabling the others to bolt out into the hallway and then out of the building. The gunman flees too but is captured within an hour back at his home. (Asmussen and Creswell, 1995)

Everyone knows what happened in the immediate aftermath, since—unfortunately—violence on college campuses has erupted so many times in recent decades (see Chapter 11 for an analysis of crimes on campus). Students in nearby classrooms heard a commotion and set up makeshift barricades while the 20 distraught students raced away in a panic from the

scene of the potential slaughter and immediately sought out counselors quickly provided by the administration, right? Wrong! Only a few were openly emotional and cried. Most were in a state of denial and milled around the entrance to the building kidding each other about their near-death experience, dismissing it as though it was trivial. No one called the campus mental health center right away. Most sought out the company of friends or hung out in nearby bars, according to two researchers who interviewed some of the students who thought they were about to die that fateful day (Asmussen and Creswell, 1995).

Next consider what is “known” about robbers: They single out targets that they consider weak and vulnerable, who are easy prey and are unlikely to put up much of a struggle to escape or to try to overpower and capture them. Therefore, it seems logical that elderly ladies would be robbed much more often than young men, right? Wrong. The findings derived from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) carried out by a government agency, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, each year (see Chapters 3 and 4) reveal that robbers go after teenage boys and young men (like themselves!) much more often than older women.

Everyone who lives in or visits big cities sees people living on the street or in run-down, crowded shelters, and “knows” that they are without homes because they can’t afford to pay rent, perhaps due to expensive drug habits or mental health issues. But an analysis of the files maintained by New York City’s Department of Homeless Services revealed that the leading cause for women and their families living in a shelter was not eviction for failing to pay rent; it was fleeing a violent intimate partner (Goldensohn and Schiffman, 2016).

Conventional wisdom assumes that fraud-related crimes like identity theft (discussed in Chapter 5) do not inflict the same types of harm as acts of violence. Identity theft doesn’t involve any frightening confrontation and is “only about money,” and monetary losses usually are swiftly absorbed by credit card companies and banks. But a fine-grained statistical analysis of the answers provided by victims of identity theft on the annual NCVS revealed that a significant number of them experienced negative emotional repercussions, like anxiety and depression, and even physical

reactions, such as headaches, back pain, and trouble sleeping. Interestingly, victims who were married suffered less emotional turmoil and fewer physical symptoms (Golladay and Holtfreter, 2017).

“Everyone knows” that victims are furious at the offenders who harm them and understandably demand that the justice system impose harsh punishments on those who get caught and convicted. Conventional wisdom predicts that victims would favor locking more criminals up and imposing stiffer sentences. But a national survey discovered that victims overwhelmingly support shorter prison sentences and increased spending on prevention and rehabilitation programs. Specifically, most victims endorsed investments in education, mental health services, treatment for substance abusers, and job training rather than paying for more jails and prisons (ASJ, 2016).

As a final example, most people are familiar with the military’s problem of sexual assaults within the ranks. Few would be surprised that servicemen, especially those of higher ranks, exploit their power over the women in uniform to coerce them to submit to sexual acts against their will. But it may be quite a shock to most observers to discover that a little more than half of all reports gathered by military researchers of “unwanted sexual contacts” imposed by men were directed at other men. Men therefore made up the majority of the targets of sexual assaults, although women suffered disproportionately high rates (females make up only 15 percent of all members of the armed forces but almost 50 percent of all victims). Clearly, the findings of the Pentagon’s survey indicate that the problem of sexual violence goes far beyond the confines of male–female relations among enlistees serving in the army, navy, air force, and marines (see Dao, 2013).

An emphasis on research is always desirable because unexpected but useful findings often are uncovered. Victimologists rely upon the same methods used by all social scientists: case studies; surveys and polls based on questionnaires given to representative samples of respondents; carefully designed social experiments; content analyses of various forms of communication (like images of victims in movies and song lyrics); detailed case studies; secondary analyses of already existing documents and files from