

PROPERTY VICTIMIZATION, IDENTITY THEFT VICTIMIZATION, AND CYBERVICTIMIZATION

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students should be able to

1. Describe what thefts are and the extent to which they occur
2. Identify the risk factors and typical characteristics of a theft victim and theft victimization
3. Describe what motor vehicle theft victimization is and the extent to which it occurs
4. Identify the risk factors and typical characteristics of a motor vehicle theft victim and motor vehicle theft victimization and compare them to other victimizations
5. Describe what burglary victimizations are and the extent to which they occur
6. Identify the risk factors and typical characteristics of burglary victimization

So far, we mainly have discussed violent or person victimizations. These are the types of victimization that commonly make the news—murders, rapes, assaults, and child abuse, to name a few. We tend to think about these when we hear the word *victimization*. But these are not the most common types of victimization. Instead, the most common type is property victimization. In fact, it is theft! Although this is not the type of victimization most commonly shown on the evening news, it is what will most likely happen to you if you are unfortunate enough to become a crime victim. There are, of course, other types of property victimization, and we discuss those as well. And in today's world, criminals are acting in innovative ways. No longer does an offender need to be in your presence to victimize you. Indeed, the Internet has opened up numerous ways for you to have your money taken, your privacy violated, and even your identity stolen. In this chapter, we discuss these two types of victimization that generally receive less attention in the field of victimology but nonetheless impact numerous persons each year.

PROPERTY VICTIMIZATION

Victimization is generally discussed in two categories: personal victimization and property victimization. Personal victimization, as measured in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), includes simple assault, aggravated assault, rape and sexual assault, and robbery. Property victimization as measured in the NCVS includes theft, motor vehicle theft, and household burglary. There are other types of property victimization, but we will limit our discussion to these three types.

Theft

Theft, also called larceny-theft, is defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2009) as the “unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another.” To be classified as a theft, the item cannot be taken by force, violence, or fraud. As such, if items are taken via embezzlement, confidence games, check fraud, or forgery, it is not considered larceny-theft. If these types of action are excluded, what, then, would be considered theft? Stealing a bicycle, shoplifting, pocket picking, or stealing any item or property, so long as it is not achieved through force, violence, or fraud, as noted, is theft (FBI, 2009).

Extent of Theft

Theft is the most common crime victimization experienced by Americans. This is supported by statistics from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and those from the NCVS. According to the UCR, in 2018, there were more than 5.2 million larceny-thefts, resulting in a rate of 1,594.6 per 100,000 persons in the United States (FBI, 2018p). Larceny-thefts composed 73% of all property crimes that occurred in 2015 (FBI, 2018p). The extent of theft is also captured in the NCVS. For 2018, the NCVS estimates that there were about 2 times the number (10,329,210) of thefts (not including attempted and completed purse snatching and pocket picking) compared with the UCR data. Theft composed 52% of all victimizations in the NCVS and 77% of all property victimizations (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019). Why do you think the estimates from the NCVS are so much higher for theft compared with those from the UCR?

Characteristics of Theft

The UCR and the NCVS also describe the characteristics of theft in the United States. According to the UCR, the average larceny costs the victim \$1,153 in lost property, which amounts to a \$6 billion total loss for all larcenies in 2015 (FBI, 2018p). According to the NCVS, losses for larceny are somewhat lower, with a mean dollar loss of \$403 (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2007), although updated values are not available. You are probably not surprised to learn that most thefts go unreported to police. In fact, only 29% of all thefts were reported to the police in 2018 (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019). The low reporting rates probably contribute to the low recovery rates of stolen property. In more than 86% of larceny victimizations reported in the NCVS, the victim noted that none of his or her property was recovered (BJS, 2007).

You may wonder what items people most commonly steal. About a quarter of larcenies reported to the police (remember that the UCR includes only those crimes the police know about) were thefts from motor vehicles (FBI, 2018p). When persons were asked in the NCVS what was stolen, almost 34% indicated that personal effects such as portable electronics, photographic equipment, jewelry, and clothing were taken (BJS, 2007).

7. Describe what identity theft victimizations are and the extent to which they occur
8. Identify the risk factors and typical characteristics of an identity theft victim and identity theft victimization
9. Describe different types of cybervictimization, including technology-facilitated sexual violence, technology-based coercive control, romance scams, and cyberbullying
10. For each type of cyber victimization, identify the typical victim and the typical victimization and the risk factors for cybervictimization
11. Identify prevention techniques for the types of cybervictimization and evaluate them for their effectiveness at reducing cybervictimization

Who Are Theft Victims?

Although virtually any possession can be stolen, theft rates do differ according to household characteristics measured in the NCVS. Rates of theft are highest for households headed by persons who are neither white or Black, but another race, whereas Hispanics are more likely to be victimized than non-Hispanics (BJS, 2019). Households headed by younger people (19 years of age or younger) report higher rates of theft victimization than households headed by older persons. Households that have a total income less than \$14,999 annually have the highest theft rates (BJS, 2019). Also, as the number of people in the household increases, so does the risk of theft. In fact, households with six or more people had the highest rates of theft victimization (BJS, 2019).

Risk Factors for Theft Victimization

Theft is so common, at least in terms of victimization, that it may seem as though risk is ubiquitous, and theft amounts to little more than having your property in the wrong place at the wrong time. Remember, though, that researchers have linked victimization risk to certain qualities and characteristics, often due to a person's lifestyle and routine activities. Theft victimization also has been explained using this perspective. In fact, L. E. Cohen and Felson (1979), in their routine activities theory, linked increases in property crime to the production developments that made goods smaller, more durable, and easier to move. At the individual level, exposure to delinquent or criminal others increases the chances that a person will become the victim of theft. In a study of college students, Mustaine and Tewksbury (1998) found that smoking marijuana increased the risk of minor theft victimization, whereas threatening another with a gun or threatening without a weapon increased the risk of minor and major theft victimizations. Living in a neighborhood that had too much crime or was too noisy also positively impacted minor victimization risk. In addition, having capable guardianship decreased the chances of theft. College students who had a dog in their residence and who lived in rural areas were less likely to experience minor larceny victimization. Installing extra locks also decreased the chances of major larceny victimization for college students (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998).

College students may be deemed suitable targets for theft as well. Students who eat out frequently found themselves at a greater risk of minor theft victimization than did others, likely because these students were exposing themselves to many people and displaying their wallets and money. Students who left their homes often to study were also more likely to be theft victims than were others, likely because they were exposing their personal items to would-be offenders (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998). Beyond this study of routine activities theory and theft among college students, the research on the reasons why some people become victims of theft has not been fully explored. Can you think of other theories or explanations that could elucidate why certain people have their possessions stolen?

Motor Vehicle Theft

Anyone who has a car has probably thought about the possibility of having it stolen, but motor vehicle theft can also occur with other self-propelled vehicles that run on land, such as sport utility vehicles, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters, all-terrain vehicles, and snowmobiles (FBI, 2009). When we discuss motor vehicle theft, it covers the theft or

attempted theft of the vehicle itself. If a car is broken into, for example, and the contents taken, it is a larceny-theft, not a motor vehicle theft. When auto theft involves the taking of a car by an offender who is armed and the vehicle is occupied, it is called carjacking. In this chapter, we limit our discussion to the nonviolent victimization of motor vehicle theft.

Extent of Motor Vehicle Theft Victimization

In 2018, 748,841 motor vehicle thefts (attempted and completed) were reported to the police—this number of reported thefts equates to a motor vehicle theft rate of 228.9 per 100,000 persons in the United States (FBI, 2018q). For motor vehicle theft, the number of reports to the police, as shown in the UCR, is slightly different from the estimate in the NCVS. In 2018, there were 534,010 motor vehicle thefts according to the NCVS (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019). Why are motor vehicle theft estimates so close for the UCR and NCVS, whereas estimates for theft, as you read earlier, are so divergent? The answer is probably tied to the nature of the victimization. If your car was stolen, don't you think you would be quite likely to report it to the police? You would want to get the police on the case so your car could be found. You also need a police report for insurance purposes. These reasons likely contribute to the similar estimates.

Characteristics of Motor Vehicle Theft Victimization

Along with knowing the extent to which motor vehicles are stolen, we also have an idea of the characteristics of motor vehicle thefts that occur in the United States. The costs associated with motor vehicle theft are high. According to the UCR, each stolen vehicle costs, on average, \$8,407 (FBI, 2018q), and the average is \$6,286 according to the NCVS (BJS, 2007). For the nation as a whole, motor vehicle theft costs almost \$6 billion annually (FBI, 2018q). However, financial costs are not the only ones that victims incur when their motor vehicles are stolen. More than one-fifth of victims report missing at least 1 day of work due to motor vehicle theft (BJS, 2007).

As previously mentioned, motor vehicle theft is widely reported to the police (79%) (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019). About half the victims of motor vehicle theft report that all their property (in this case, their vehicle) was recovered (Truman & Langton, 2015). UCR data indicate that 60% of locally stolen motor vehicles are recovered (FBI, 2018r). Motor vehicle theft is most likely to occur at night (BJS, 2007), near the victim's home, and in urban areas (BJS, 2019). Almost half of motor vehicle thefts occur when the victims are sleeping (BJS, 2007).

As you may imagine, though, not all vehicles are equally likely to be stolen. To determine the cars most likely to be stolen, the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) compiles a list using National Crime Information Center data based on police reports (Insurance Information Institute, 2011). See Table 11.1 for a list of the cars that were most stolen in 2018 (National Insurance Crime Bureau, 2019). After you examine the list, consider that the value of these cars being stolen may not be that much compared with the cost of more expensive cars. When insurance claims rates and the size of insurance payments are considered together, the Highway Loss Data Institute has identified that the Dodge Charger HEMI has the highest theft-claim rate for passenger vehicles of 2016–2018 models in the United States, followed by the Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat, the Infiniti Q50 four-door, the Infiniti QX80, and the GMC Sierra 1500 crew cab (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2019).

Photo 11.1
The Dodge Charger
HEMI has the highest
theft-claim rate for
passenger vehicles
that are 1 to 3 years
old in the United
States in 2018.

Table 11.1 Top 10 Most Frequently Stolen Passenger Vehicles in 2018

Rank	Make and Model (Includes All Model Years)
1	Honda Civic
2	Honda Accord
3	Ford Pickup (Full Size)
4	Chevrolet Pickup (Full Size)
5	Toyota Camry
6	Nissan Altima
7	Toyota Corolla
8	GMC Pickup (Full Size)
9	Dodge/Ram Pickup (Full Size)
10	Jeep Cherokee/Grand Cherokee

Source: Reprinted by permission of the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

Table 11.2 Top 10 U.S. Metropolitan Areas With Highest Motor Vehicle Theft Rates in 2018

Rank	Metropolitan Statistical Area
1	Albuquerque, NM
2	Anchorage, AK
3	Bakersfield, CA
4	Pueblo, CO
5	Modesto, CA
6	Redding, CA
7	Stockton-Lodi, CA
8	Wichita, KS
9	Vallejo-Fairfield, CA
10	St. Joseph, MO-KS Metropolitan Statistical Area

Source: Reprinted by permission of the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

When the number of these vehicles that are stolen and the costs associated with their loss are totaled and compared with the number of each make and model insured, their theft costs the insurance industry the most. These values take into account the value of the contents of the vehicles as well, so it does not include just the cost of the vehicle.

Along with certain types of cars being prime targets, certain cities have higher than average rates of motor vehicle theft. In 2018, the Albuquerque, NM Metropolitan Statistical Area had the highest motor vehicle theft rate per capita in the United States, according to data compiled by the NICB (National Insurance Crime Bureau, 2019). All the top 10 cities for highest motor vehicle theft rates are in the western part of the United States. See Table 11.2 for the list.

Who Are Motor Vehicle Theft Victims?

Anyone can have their car stolen—do you know someone who has had this happen? Does this person have the common characteristics of the “typical” car theft victim? Read on to answer this question. Households headed by persons 34 years old and younger have the highest rates of motor vehicle theft (BJS, 2019). Households headed by persons who are Black or by Hispanic persons have higher rates of motor vehicle theft than do others (BJS, 2019). Households that rent rather than own their home (Truman & Rand, 2010), have total incomes of \$7,500 per year or less, and have more people in them (single-person households have the lowest rates) experience higher rates of motor vehicle theft than do other households (BJS, 2019).

Risk Factors for Motor Vehicle Theft Victimization

Routine activities theory provides an excellent underpinning for understanding why some motor vehicles are stolen whereas others remain in the possession of their rightful owners. Remember, the three constructs relevant to this theoretical perspective are motivated offenders, suitable targets, and lack of capable guardianship. Motivated offenders are assumed to be present. What makes a vehicle a suitable target, though? Vehicles that are easy to steal are going to be deemed more suitable than those that are more difficult to steal. Vehicles with keys in the ignition are definitely suitable targets. Similarly, vehicles left unlocked are more suitable than locked vehicles. Cars parked on streets with poor lighting are suitable targets, whereas those parked in locked garages are not suitable targets. Also consider why a person would be compelled to steal a car. One reason is to sell the parts. A suitable target, then, would be a vehicle whose parts are easy to sell. A suitable vehicle would be a popular model, in that there would be a resale market for its parts. Common vehicles would be easier to sell parts from than more rare models that hardly anyone drives. In addition, vehicles



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► **Photo 11.1**
The Dodge Charger HEMI Escalade had the highest theft-loss rate for passenger vehicles that are 1 to 3 years old in the United States in 2018.

that do not have vehicle identification numbers (VINs) etched in the windows are more suitable than vehicles with these numbers. Thieves will not want to replace the windows after stealing the vehicle.

Capable guardianship is also an important concept to consider. Guardianship for vehicles can be physical—those things that physically provide protection from theft. For cars, this can be locks, steering wheel column locks, car alarms, ignition cut-off systems, and electronic tracking devices. It is a bit more difficult to provide social guardianship for a vehicle, because people are bound to leave their cars unattended at some point. That is why it is imperative that vehicles are left locked at all times, with personal belongings and electronics stowed out of sight.

Building on routine activities theory, additional factors have been used to identify ways in which motor vehicle theft can be understood and perhaps prevented. Five situational factors have been identified: watchers, activity nodes, location, lighting, and security (WALLS). Watchers are capable guardians at the auto theft location, activity nodes are locations that draw heavy use for legal and illegal activity, location refers to the characteristics of the location that make it a suitable target for selection, lighting refers to the quality and amount of lighting near the auto theft location, and security refers to environmental cues that dissuade a person from committing auto theft (Levy & Tartaro, 2010).

Response to Motor Vehicle Theft

As previously discussed, motor vehicle theft has one of the highest reporting rates of all crimes. Even so, only 14% of motor vehicle thefts are cleared by police (FBI, 2018s). When a case is cleared by police, it means the police either made an arrest in the case or cleared the case exceptionally. To clear a case exceptionally, the police agency must know who the offender is, be able to support an arrest, and know where the offender is, but be unable to make an arrest and have the charges filed (FBI, 2018s). These low clearance rates suggest that many motor vehicle thieves are not being apprehended. In addition to police actions, other efforts have been undertaken to reduce motor vehicle theft victimization.

Several key pieces of federal legislation have been passed to deal with motor vehicle theft. The **Motor Vehicle Theft Law Enforcement Act (1984)** required manufacturers to stamp identification numbers on parts in high-theft major passenger car lines (the impetus for the VIN) to make it easier to trace parts that are stolen from vehicles. Penalties for altering or removing these numbers were also increased. Investigators believe that requiring the marking of vehicle parts aids in the arrest of individuals who steal parts or vehicles (P. Finn, 2000). This act also made interstate trafficking in stolen vehicles part of the federal racketeering statutes (Insurance Information Institute, 2011). The **Anti-Car Theft Act (1992)** made carjacking a federal crime and provided funding to link all state motor vehicle departments. This funding was created in hopes that states would be able to share title, registration, and salvage information to make it more difficult for stolen vehicles to be easily titled and registered. This led to the development of the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System. It also expanded the parts-marking identification number requirement to include more than just high-theft passenger car line parts. Vans and utility vehicles that have higher-than-average theft rates and half of passenger cars, vans, and SUVs with lower-than-average theft rates were also required to have their major parts (engines, transmissions, and 12 other major parts) marked (Smart Motorist, n.d.). As part of the Violent Crime

Control and Law Enforcement Act, 2 years later, the **Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Act** of 1994 authorized the development of a national, voluntary motor vehicle theft prevention program. Those people who wished to participate could place on their vehicles a decal alerting police that their car is not normally operated between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. (Federal Grants Wire, 2011). The ability of states and the federal government to determine if a car was stolen was strengthened by the **Anti-Car Theft Improvements Act of 1996**. This act served to upgrade state motor vehicle department databases that contain title information (Smart Motorist, n.d.).

Federal legislation is not the only way to combat motor vehicle theft victimization. In many states, anti-car theft groups have formed that comprise law enforcement, insurers, and consumers. These groups work together to promote awareness of motor vehicle theft and to pass state and local legislation to reduce motor vehicle theft (Insurance Information Institute, 2011). Many states attach fees to car registration or car insurance policies that go toward funding such groups. For example, Michigan has a program called **Help Eliminate Auto Theft (HEAT)**, funded through auto insurance policies (\$1 from each policy), that offers a hotline for people to report thefts and “chop shop” operations. In 25 years of operation, the program has aided in the recovery of more than 4,200 vehicles (Insurance Information Institute, 2011).

Other ways to reduce motor vehicle theft are centered on target-hardening approaches. **Target hardening** is the process whereby a target is made more difficult for an offender to attack. This approach is likely to be successful in reducing motor vehicle theft. In fact, it has been argued that “the most promising preventive approach is through the manufacture of more secure vehicles” (Clarke & Harris, 1992, p. 1). Locking car doors and installing security devices can be quite beneficial in reducing motor vehicle theft. In addition, installing a steering wheel column lock, such as the Club, can reduce the likelihood that a motor vehicle will be stolen. In the event that your car is stolen, you can increase your chances of recovering it by having an electronic tracking device. One such device, called **LoJack**, uses a radio transmitter. If your car is stolen, the police can track your car via the radio signal to locate it. LoJack (2011) reports a 90% recovery rate for stolen vehicles equipped with this system. Electronic immobilizers can also be used that disable the ignition, starter, and fuel systems until the system is activated by a computer-coded key (Linden & Chaturvedi, 2005). Research conducted in Canada and Australia indicates that these electronic immobilization systems are quite successful—theft rates for vehicles that have these systems are low (Potter & Thomas, 2001; Tabachneck, Norup, Thomason, & Motlagh, 2000).

Household Burglary

Perhaps one of the scariest things you could think of is to be alone, in the privacy of your own home, when an intruder comes in with a weapon—stealing whatever he or she wants and threatening you. If this were to occur, you would be the victim of a household or residential burglary. The FBI (2018t) defines burglary as “the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft.” To understand this definition, you must understand what constitutes a structure. The FBI’s definition recognizes structures to include houses, apartments, house trailers, houseboats when used as a permanent dwelling, barns, offices, railroad cars, vessels, and stables. Also important to note, entry into the structure does not have to occur forcefully. Entry can be achieved either via (1) forceful entry or (2) unlawful entry without

force. Forceful entry includes such things as breaking a window or forcing a door open, whereas unlawful entry without force would occur if an offender used an unlocked or opened door to enter the structure. Attempted forceful entry of a structure can also constitute a burglary. Residential or household burglary—those burglaries of structures where persons live—made up 66% of all burglaries reported to the police in 2018 (FBI, 2018u).

You may also have heard the term *home invasion* used to refer to household burglary. This term is most commonly used to refer to a specific type of residential burglary that occurs when someone is home and the offender intends to harm, use force, or use violence against the residents, as in the example just presented. Most typically, a home invasion involves forceful entry. The term *home invasion* has been incorporated into some state laws, where such an offense is a specific crime. For example, in Florida, a home invasion robbery occurs when a person enters a dwelling with the intent to commit a robbery of the persons inside and does, in fact, do so (Fla. Stat. § 812.135). For household burglary to occur more generally, however, intent on the part of the offender to harm the occupants or rob them is not needed—just that the offender enters the dwelling to commit a felony or theft.

Extent of Household Burglary

According to the UCR, in 2018 there were 1,230,149 burglaries, 66% of which were burglaries of dwellings (FBI, 2018v). Of all property crimes during that year, almost 17% were burglaries (including nonresidential burglary). Most household burglary occurred during the day, perhaps because this is the time when people are at work and their homes are left unguarded. We will return to this point again. On average, each residential burglary resulted in a loss of \$2,799, with total losses to victims of burglary totaling \$3.4 billion (FBI, 2018u). Remember, however, from our discussion in Chapter 2, the UCR includes only information about crimes that are known to law enforcement—typically because the crime is reported to the police. About half of all crimes go unreported, and just slightly less than half (48%) of burglaries are reported to the police (Morgan & Ouerderk, 2019). As such, the UCR likely underrepresents the true amount of crime victimization that occurs in the United States. Also, the UCR provides only limited information about the offense, criminal, and victim. To find out about victimizations that are reported and not reported to the police and to understand the patterns and characteristics of victims and victimization events, we often use the NCVS. So, let's discuss residential burglary using statistics from the NCVS.

According to the NCVS, in 2018, there were 1,724,720 household burglaries, which does not include household burglaries in which someone became a victim of a violent crime or was threatened (Morgan & Ouerderk, 2019). According to NCVS classification rules, those incidents would be classified as personal victimizations according to what occurred (e.g., rape/sexual assault, simple assault). If a household burglary occurred and no one was home or no one was hurt or threatened, it would be classified as a property victimization. It is interesting to examine both types of incidents, however, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) published a report analyzing victimization that occurs during household burglary (Catalano, 2010). When taking into account all household burglaries, it is estimated that there were almost 3.4 million burglaries in 2011. When a burglar is successful, most typically a household appliance or portable electronic device is stolen. In 2011, among households that experienced at least \$1 in loss due to burglary, the median dollar value of items and cash stolen was \$600 (J. H. Walters, Moore, Berzofsky, & Langton, 2013).

Characteristics of Household Burglary

In 2018, most household burglaries were achieved through forcible entry, with about one-third involving unlawful entry (FBI, 2018v). When forceful entry was used or attempted, most typically, a door or window pane was damaged or removed. In about 28% of household burglaries, someone was present during the incident, and 7% of households that were burglarized had someone injured as a result. Most typically, the type of violence that occurred was a simple assault (15%), followed by a robbery (7%), and rape/sexual assault (3%). For those burglaries that occurred when no one was home, one-fourth of victims said they were at work at the time and slightly less than one-fourth said they were participating in a leisure activity away from home. About 40% of household burglaries occurred between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. A larger percentage of burglaries occurred during this time period when no one was home, as compared with burglaries that occurred when someone was present. Even though burglary might seem to be one crime that would be perpetrated by a stranger, almost two-thirds (65%) of household burglaries that involved violence were perpetrated by someone known to the victim (Catalano, 2010).

What Households Are Burglarized?

If a burglar is intent on entering a house, which house does he or she choose? Is it random or more systematic? Well, it appears that some houses are at greater risk than others for burglary. Households composed of married couples without children have the lowest rates of burglary. When examining households with children, single female-headed households had the highest burglary rates (J. H. Walters et al., 2013).

Race, income, age, and type of housing unit are also risk factors for burglary. Households with a non-Hispanic Black person as head have the highest rates of burglary. Lower-income households (those with an income of \$14,999 or less) and those headed by younger persons (up to age 19) had higher rates of burglary than did higher income households and those headed by older persons. Finally, burglary rates were highest for households residing in rural areas and urban areas compared to suburban areas (BJS, 2019).

Risk Factors for Household Burglary

As with most types of victimization, researchers have attempted to identify why some households are more likely to be burglarized compared with others. This line of inquiry has mainly focused on the decision making of burglars—why they select certain homes to break into but leave others alone. This body of research has concluded that, at least to some degree, household burglars choose suitable targets that lack capable guardians (Cromwell, Olson, & Avary, 1991; Tunnell, 1992; R. T. Wright & Decker, 1994). In other words, routine activities theory is a viable explanation for burglary victimization. Remember from Chapter 2 that routine activities theory suggests victimization is likely to occur when motivated offenders, suitable targets, and lack of capable guardianship coalesce in time and space. Let's consider household burglary from this perspective.

Motivated offenders do not need to be explained, according to routine activities theory (L. E. Cohen & Felson, 1979). Given opportunity, then, motivated offenders will burgle homes. The selection of homes is what is interesting. What makes a home a suitable target? Ethnographic research conducted via interviews on burglars shows that they

tend to target middle-or high-income neighborhoods (Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985), and quantitative research predicting burglary indicates that expensive homes are most prone to burglary (Fishman, Hakim, & Shachmurove, 1998)—even though statistics from the NCVS (that do not control for other factors) indicate that lower-income households are more prone to household burglary (Catalano, 2010). A target also becomes suitable to a burglar when it lies on a familiar route that is also along major arterial routes (Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985).

Households that lack capable guardians are also most likely to be burgled. For instance, homes are most likely to be burgled during the day, when people are at work, and most burglaries occur when no one is home (Catalano, 2010). Because burglars seek out unoccupied homes, research shows that one way to reduce the chances of having your home burglarized is by making it appear that someone is home. Ways to do this are by keeping a car in your driveway, keeping lights on outside and inside, and keeping a television or radio on even if you are not home (Fishman et al., 1998).

In addition, houses located on quiet residential streets are more prone to burglary than others (Fishman et al., 1998), whereas households in high-density areas are less likely to be burglarized (Catalano, 2010). Homes on quiet streets are less likely to have watchful eyes, and burglars may feel that they can successfully get away with their crime. Although it is difficult to change the location of your home, simply having a burglar alarm reduces the chances that your house will be burglarized (Fishman et al., 1998). In addition, findings from the NCVS show that homes located in gated or walled communities have lower burglary rates than homes not located in such communities. Also of note, residences with restricted access, such as those having doormen or a reception desk, were targeted less frequently by burglars than other residences without restricted access (J. H. Walters et al., 2013).

IDENTITY THEFT

As technology advances, the means by which a person's property and money are taken also change. Especially with the widespread use of computers and the ready access people have to them, it is easier today than ever for people to access other people's money illegally. With key pieces of identifying information, criminals can assume your identity and either access your existing accounts or open new accounts in your name. Collectively, these actions are known as identity theft, and this section describes its occurrence, its effects, and the system's response.

Generally, **identity theft** is defined as the use of personal identifying information by a person to commit some type of fraud (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation [FDIC], 2004). According to the FDIC, it is one of the fastest-growing types of consumer fraud. Identity theft became a federal offense when the **Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act (1998)** was passed. It made it a crime for anyone to

knowingly transfer or use, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person with the intent to commit, or to aid or abet, any unlawful activity that constitutes a violation of Federal law, or that constitutes a felony under any applicable State or local law. (FDIC, 2004, pp. 4–5)

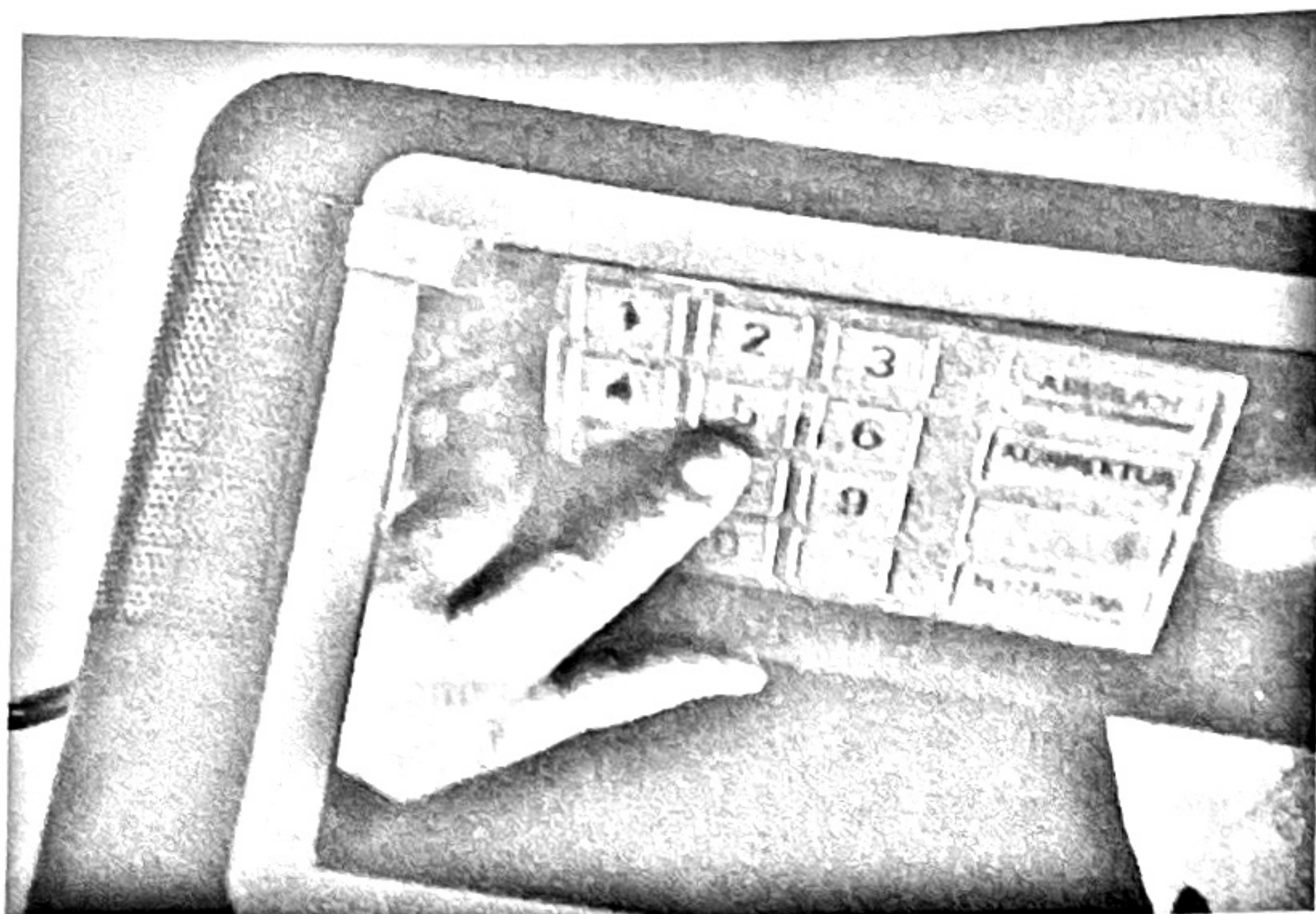
Identity theft covers taking over an existing account (account hijacking), creating new accounts, or creating a synthetic identity to obtain services or benefits fraudulently (FDIC, 2004).

What are the common ways identity theft occurs? Computers have allowed criminals easy access to your information, but criminals do not necessarily need computers to steal your personal information. One way they can steal your information is by **shoulder surfing**. Shoulder surfing involves criminals watching while you input numbers such as a credit card number. Criminals also can listen while you say your credit card number over the telephone, such as while you are placing an order or booking a trip (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). Account numbers can be stolen via **skimming** devices placed on automated teller machines (ATMs) that record a person's debit account number, password, account information, and other data that can then be used to imprint a new card and withdraw funds (S. Berg, 2009).

Your physical mail is also a valuable resource for offenders wanting to steal your identity. Criminals may **Dumpster dive**, going through garbage cans or communal Dumpsters or bins in hopes of finding documents with account numbers on them, checks, or bank and credit card statements (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). Criminals may find in your trash or mailbox preapproved credit card offers that they can send off in your name. You may not even know that there are open credit lines in your name that others are using.

The Internet is also widely used for identity theft. One common way of executing account hijacking is through **phishing**, a broad term that covers a range of tactics used to get people to share key personal information. When phishing occurs, deceptive e-mails or fake websites are used to get people to provide usernames, passwords, and sometimes account numbers to perpetrators who then are able to use this information to access accounts (FDIC, 2004). Phishing incidents are those that do not specifically target a person with information specific to them. On the other hand, **spear phishing** occurs when a person is directly targeted with personal information that makes the sender seem more legitimate. An example of phishing is when an e-mail is sent to people en masse indicating a problem with their account and they are asked to log in to his or her account through a hyperlink included in the e-mail. Unfortunately, the hyperlink takes the person to a spoofed website. If the person does, indeed, go to the site through the hyperlink and enters his username and password, the information is then collected and the account can be hijacked (FDIC, 2004). Spear phishing may involve an e-mail about a recent purchase made at an online store that is targeted to a specific individual. Other types of phishing include **vishing**—phishing that is perpetrated over the phone. **Smishing** occurs when users are targeted via SMS alerts. **Whaling** is a specific form on phishing that involves attackers pretending to be senior-level employees who target other senior or key individuals at their organization.

You may wonder how often phishing occurs. In the fourth quarter of 2019, the Anti-Phishing Working Group (2020) determined that 132,553 unique phishing e-mail campaigns were reported, and 162,155 unique phishing websites were detected. Recent data suggests a 3% click rate for 3% of phishing emails (Verizon, 2020). From 5% (FDIC, 2004) to 22% (Gartner, 2006) of the people who receive such phishing e-mails respond to them (FDIC, 2004). Account hijacking can also occur when people hack into financial institutions or service providers and access customers' information (FDIC, 2004). Accounts also may be hijacked using software, called **spyware**, that collects information from unsuspecting persons' computers. This software is surreptitiously loaded when a person opens



► **Photo 11.2**
This ATM has a mini-camera that was covertly installed so that PIN codes can be stolen.

an e-mail attachment or clicks on a pop-up advertisement. The software then tracks keystrokes and information such as usernames, passwords, and account information and sends it to the defrauder (S. Berg, 2009). It may not take sophisticated software, however, to hijack an account. It is estimated that 65% to 70% of identity theft is committed by employees who have access to sensitive personal data (as cited in FDIC, 2004).

Extent of Identity Theft Victimization

It is quite difficult to know exactly how much identity theft victimization occurs each year in the United States. It is possible that you could have your identity stolen and be completely unaware—or if you did become aware, it could be weeks, months, or even years after it initially occurred. Even if you were aware your identity had been stolen, you may not notify the police. And the UCR does not neatly measure identity theft; it is not one of the eight index crimes that the FBI includes in its yearly report. To begin to understand the extent and characteristics of identity theft, an identity theft victimization supplement to the NCVS was collected for the first time in 2008. Unlike with the NCVS, only persons over the age of 16 participated in the survey, and persons were asked about experiences of identity theft they experienced in the previous 2 years (Langton & Planty, 2010). Persons completing the Identity Theft Supplement (ITS) were also people participating in the NCVS. The final sample in the 2016 ITS included 96,100 persons (Harrell, 2019).

The ITS collected data on the use or attempted use of existing accounts (account hijacking), use of personal information to open a new account, or misuse of personal information for other fraudulent purposes. Existing accounts that a person might hijack include a credit card account, savings account, mortgage account, loan, or checking account. Persons may want to use personal information to obtain a job, for medical care, when interacting with law enforcement, to rent an apartment, or for government benefits (Harrell, 2015). Based on findings, it was estimated that 26 million people (10% of persons 16 years old or older) were the victims of identity theft during the previous 12 months. When only one type of existing account was targeted, most commonly (86%), in the most recent incident, victims reported that they had an existing credit card account or bank account information misused or attempted to be misused, equating to about 22.1 million victims. About 3% of identity theft victims indicated that only a new account was opened. About 8% of victims reported multiple types of identity theft or misuse of accounts during their single or most recent incident. (Harrell, 2019). There are other ways to assess the extent to which people are victimized by identity theft. One of these ways is to look to agencies where people report their victimizations. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) publishes a report, the Consumer Sentinel Network Databook, of complaints it and other agencies (the Internet Crime Complaint Center, the Better Business Bureau, Canada's PhoneBusters, United States Inspection Service, Identity Theft

Assistance Center, and the National Fraud Information Center, among others) receive regarding fraud and identity theft. In this report, identity theft was the number one complaint received by the FTC in 2019, with 20% of all complaints. There were 650,572 identity theft complaints made to the FTC. Of these complaints, 271,823 were credit card fraud complaints (FTC, 2020).

Characteristics of Identity Theft Victimitizations

One of the interesting things about identity theft victimization is that people may be unaware that they have been victimized. Others may not have any idea as to how the offender was able to victimize them. Not knowing how the offender stole your identity can be especially problematic for prevention. In the ITS, victims were asked if they knew how the identity theft had occurred. About a quarter of victims indicated that they knew how their identity had been stolen (Harrell, 2019). Of those victims, about 1 in 4 believed that their identity had been stolen during a purchase or transaction (Harrell, 2015). It is probably not surprising to you to learn that most victims of identity theft do not know their offender—94% did not know anything about their offender's identity (Harrell, 2019).

What do victims of identity theft do after realizing that their identities have been stolen? According to findings from the ITS, only 7% of identity theft victims notified a law enforcement agency about the incident. Victims who had offenders misuse their personal information (35%) and those who had experienced multiple forms of identity theft were more likely to report than others. If victims do not tell the police, are they telling others? Results from the ITS indicate that they often do disclose the incident. About 90% of victims contacted a credit card company or bank to report that their account or personal information had been misused and 8% notified a credit bureau (Harrell, 2019).

Who Is Victimized by Identity Theft?

Identity theft can happen to anyone, but results from the ITS show to whom identity theft is most likely to occur. Males and females face similar risks of being identity theft victims (Harrell & Langton, 2013). Remember that young people (ages 12–34) are the typical victims of most property and personal victimizations (Morgan & Ouerderk, 2019). Younger persons are actually less likely than older persons to experience identity theft. In fact, once accounting for credit card ownership, persons ages 35 to 49 and 50 to 64 are actually the most likely to report having their credit card misused (Harrell, 2019). Reports to the FTC also indicate that older persons are more often victims of identity theft than are younger persons. About a quarter of complaints filed with the FTC were by persons between the ages of 30 and 39 and by those 50 and older (FTC, 2020). Differences across race and ethnic groups were also found in the ITS. Persons who are white have greater rates of identity theft than Black, Hispanic, or people of other races. There also was a difference in the types of identity theft experienced. Income is also relevant for understanding who is likely to be victimized by identity theft. As household income increases, so too does a person's likelihood of being victimized. Persons living in households with incomes of \$75,000 or more were more likely than others to be identity theft victims (Harrell, 2019). Locales also differed in their rates of identity theft reporting. The states with the highest rates of identity theft reports for 2019 are Georgia, Florida, California, Texas, and Nevada (FTC, 2020). For an example of a state's 2019 occurrences of identity theft, see Table 11.3, which shows the extent of reports in Virginia for 2019.

Table 11.3 Reports of Identity Theft in Virginia, 2019

Rank	Identity Theft Type	Complaints
1	Credit card fraud	3,907
2	Other identity theft	3,394
3	Loan or lease fraud	1,748
4	Phone or utilities	1,337
5	Bank fraud	1,234

Source: Federal Trade Commission. *Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book* (2020, p. 69).

Note: Complaints $n = 10,284$.

Risk Factors for Identity Theft Victimization

Routine activities theory helps us understand who is vulnerable to identity theft. Motivated offenders are, by definition, present. It is when motivated offenders come into contact with suitable targets in time and space without capable guardianship that identity theft is likely to occur. Suitable targets are likely to be those who are easily victimized. Why would a person be an easy target for identity theft? Consider the mechanisms by which offenders steal a person's identity. Leaving personal identification intact in the trash, making phone calls in public places to discuss personal information, and using public Internet connections to access personal accounts all make a person a suitable target. A novice to the Internet or a person who does not understand the intricacies of how secure Internet sites work will also be a more suitable target than a savvy Internet user. Notably, even persons who are aware of the dangers are still likely at risk. What is interesting about identity theft achieved via the Internet is that potential victims will not or cannot curtail their Internet usage, even if they fear victimization. Capable guardianship, then, is a particularly important concept for identity theft, especially when considering online accounts, usernames, and passwords. Guardianship often comes in the form of warning e-mails, antivirus software, and firewalls (Cox, Johnson, & Richards, 2009). But simply having bank accounts, credit card accounts, and a Social Security number puts you at risk of having this personal information stolen. For this reason, as discussed in a later chapter, everyone should take precautions to protect these pieces of information.

Consequences of Identity Theft

Reporting is not the only consequence victims face after being victimized by identity theft. One consequence is the financial cost that being a victim of identity theft carries. The majority of victims incurred some financial cost associated with their victimization. These costs can be direct or indirect. **Direct costs** are monies and the value of goods and services taken. **Indirect costs** consist of things such as legal bills, phone calls, bounced checks, and notary fees (Langton & Planty, 2010). The ITS estimates that 67% of identity theft victims

experienced either a direct or indirect financial loss in 2016. Of those victims who suffered an indirect and direct loss, the median was \$300, and 12% suffered an out-of-pocket cost that was not reimbursed. Other problems that arose for victims were things related to their credit such as having to pay a higher interest on credit cards or being turned down for loans. Others report having their utilities turned off or having issues with debt collectors. Slightly less than 10% of identity theft victims indicated suffering problems with their family/friends or with work/school. About the same percentage noted that the experience of identity theft was severely distressing. In responding to identity theft, about 45% of victims noted that they had to spend more than one day trying to clear up problems resulting from having their identities stolen (Harrell, 2019).

Responses to Identity Theft Victimization

As noted in the first part of this chapter, the Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998 introduced identity theft into the federal criminal code.

The **New Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003** enacted several provisions to reduce identity theft and also to help identity theft victims. This act

- mandated that the three major credit reporting bureaus provide a free copy of credit reports to consumers once every 12 months;
- created the National Fraud Alert System, which allows persons who reasonably suspect that they are or will become a victim of identity theft, or who are on active duty in the military, to place an alert on their credit file;
- provided that credit card receipts must have shorter account numbers and developed rules for financial institutions and creditors for the disposal of sensitive credit report information;
- noted that if a person establishes that she or he has been a victim of identity theft, credit reporting agencies are required to stop reporting the fraudulent account information;
- established that creditors and businesses must provide copies of records of fraudulent accounts or transactions related to them so that victims can attempt to prove their victimization; and
- provided for victims to report accounts affected by identity theft directly to creditors. (FTC, 2004)

The **CAN-SPAM Act of 2003** also addressed identity theft. This act made it a federal crime to send spam e-mail under certain circumstances. For the specifics of this act, see Box 11.1. The **Identity Theft Penalty Enhancement Act (2004)** was passed and created the crime of aggravated identity theft, which added 2 years to the sentence of anyone convicted of unlawful identity theft during and in relation to specified felony violations. It also created an additional 5-year prison term enhancement for unlawful identity theft related to terrorist acts. In addition to these federal laws, each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws addressing identity theft. See Box 11.2 for the law in Illinois.

BOX 11.1 CAN-SPAM ACT OF 2003

IN GENERAL—Whoever, in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, knowingly—

1. accesses a protected computer without authorization, and intentionally initiates the transmission of multiple commercial electronic mail messages from or through such computer,
2. uses a protected computer to relay or retransmit multiple commercial electronic mail messages, with the intent to deceive or mislead recipients, or any Internet access service, as to the origin of such messages,
3. materially falsifies header information in multiple commercial electronic mail messages and intentionally initiates the transmission of such messages,
4. registers, using information that materially falsifies the identity of the actual registrant, for five or more electronic mail accounts or online user accounts or two or more domain names, and intentionally initiates the transmission of multiple commercial electronic mail messages from any combination of such accounts or domain names, or
5. falsely represents oneself to be the registrant or the legitimate successor in interest to the registrant of 5 or more Internet Protocol addresses, and intentionally initiates the transmission of multiple commercial electronic mail messages from such addresses, or conspires to do so, shall be punished as provided in subsection (b).

Source: Federal Trade Commission. (2004). *The CAN-SPAM Act: A compliance guide for business*. Retrieved from <http://business.ftc.gov/documents/bus61-can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business>.

BOX 11.2 IDENTITY THEFT LAW, ILLINOIS

A person commits the offense of identity theft when he or she knowingly uses any personal identifying information or personal identification document of another person to fraudulently obtain credit, money, goods, services, or other property. Penalties for identity theft depend on the value of the theft.

If the value of the credit, money, goods, services, or other property is less than \$300, the crime is a Class 4 felony, punishable by one to three years in prison and a fine up to \$25,000. Subsequent offenses are upgraded to a Class 3 felony, punishable by two to five years in prison, as is the penalty for people who have previously been convicted of

certain crimes, including burglary, theft, or fraud. If the amount is between \$300 and

\$2,000, it is a Class 3 felony; between \$2,000 and \$10,000 is a Class 2 felony (punishable by two to seven years in prison); between \$10,000 and \$100,000 is a Class 1 felony (punishable by four to fifteen years in prison); and over \$100,000 is a Class X felony (punishable by six to thirty years in prison).

Penalties are increased one step (with the exception of a Class X felony) if the victim of the offense is an active duty member of the Armed Services or Reserve Forces of the United States or of the Illinois National Guard serving in a foreign country.

Source: Reprinted by permission of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

PREVENTION

Not only can laws reduce the occurrence of identity theft, but there are many things individuals can do to reduce their chances of having their identities stolen. When going out of town, you should have your mail held at the post office or have a trusted friend or family member remove it from your mailbox. Do not discuss your personal information (address, telephone number, Social Security number) on a phone in public near people who can hear you and possibly intercept your information. Do not provide this information in an e-mail. Do not give out your personal information to people who *call you* on the telephone, even if they say they are from your bank or work for a business with whom you have an account. If they do, in fact, work with one of these businesses, they should have your information. If you *call them*, however, you should expect to be asked to verify your identity. Your personal checks should display the least amount of personal information possible—do not put your Social Security number or your phone number on your checks. Phone calls notifying you of exciting prizes you have won that require you to give your Social Security number, credit card number, or bank account number may be fraudulent. Ask for these offers to be sent to you in writing (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). Shred all documents that display your account numbers or personal information before discarding them. Anti-virus software should be used—it can detect software on your computer that can track your activities and cause damage to your computer. Companies may also provide cybercrime awareness training for employees. In part, they can run simulated phishing attacks to see who clicks on phishing e-mails and then use this information to teach why those e-mails are phishing attacks.

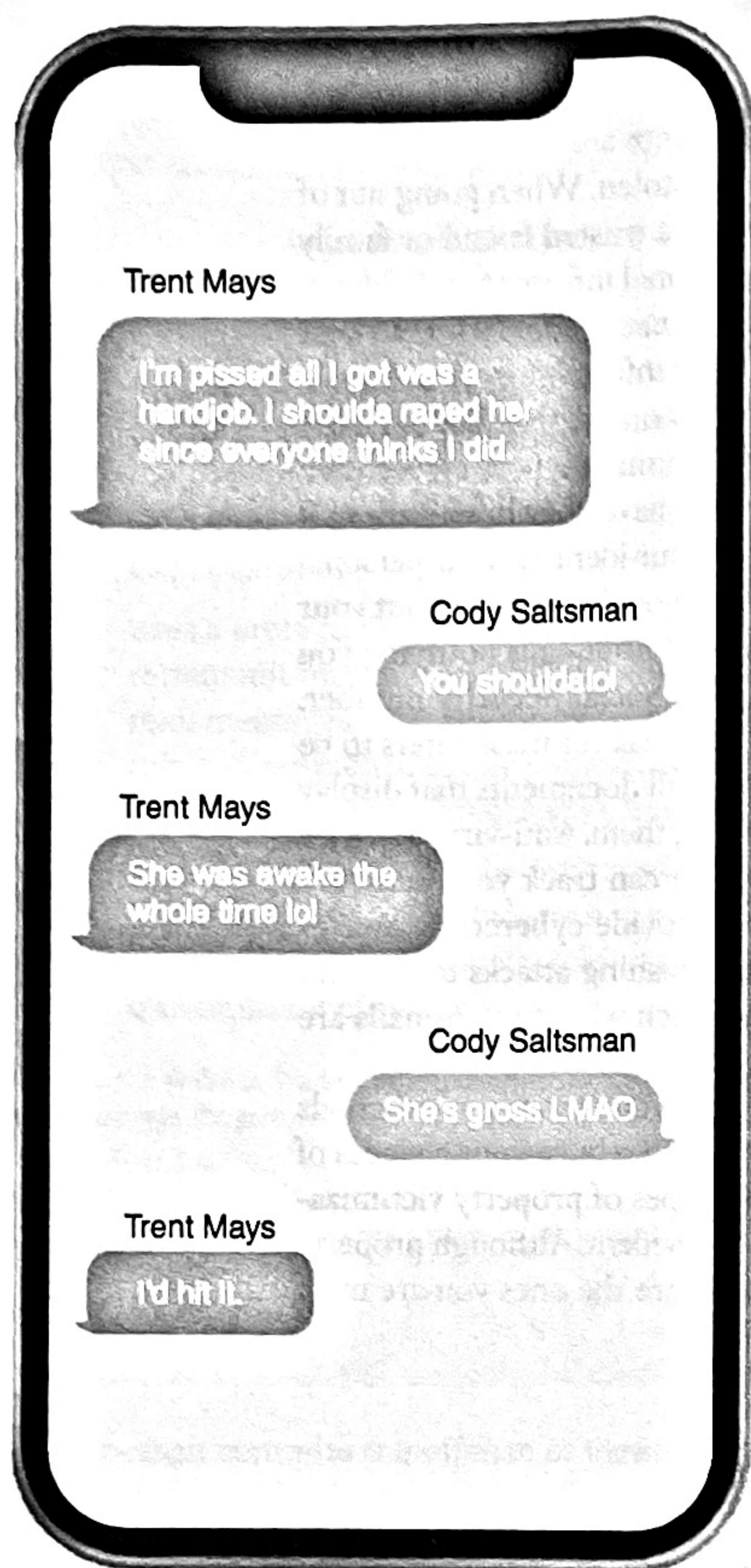
As you can tell, as technology advances, the ways in which your property and goods can be stolen also expand. It will take new prevention strategies to reduce your chances of being victimized. Nonetheless, the connections between the types of property victimization and the factors that place individuals and homes at risk are evident. Although property crimes may not always make the news, these types of offenses are the ones you are most likely to experience.

CYBERVICTIMIZATION

In addition to identity theft, other types of victimizations occur via the cyberworld. This form of victimization occurs when offenders use the online environment to harm others—this includes using the Internet but can be accomplished through a variety of tools. People can use computers, cell phones, and gaming systems to effect their victimization. Although the types of victimizations that can occur in cyberspace are many, this section will focus on technology-facilitated sexual violence, technology-based coercive control (a form of intimate partner violence), romance scams, and cyberbullying.

Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence

The expansion of the Internet has brought about lots of wonderful things—the instant access to information has changed the nature of society. Unfortunately, the Internet may also be a place for harmful behavior to occur. A broad category of Internet-facilitated sexual victimization is called technology-facilitated sexual violence



► **Photo 11.3**

Cyberbullying can result in depression, anxiety, anger, and even self-harm. This is an excerpt from a text message conversation between the defendants in the Steubenville rape case.

In addition to revenge porn, the Internet can be used for sexual harassment. One specific way this can occur is by people receiving unwanted sexually explicit images. In one early study of this form of TFSV, J. Finn (2004) found that over half of college students included in the study of one university had received unwanted pornographic images. Other researchers have reported that many people experience sexual harassment online. This could mean feeling sexually harassed in online chat rooms—one study reported that 16% of college undergraduate students had experienced this form of online sexual harassment (Goodson, McCormick, & Evans, 2001). Other research shows that people receive unwanted requests to speak about sex or are asked intimate questions. A more recent Pew Research Center survey found that 6% of Internet users had experienced sexual harassment (as cited by Henry & Powell, 2018).

(TFSV) (Henry & Powell, 2018). Within this large category, such behaviors include revenge porn, sexual harassment, cyberstalking, among other things. One way the Internet has been used as a harm is “revenge porn.” Revenge porn, or what is known as nonconsensual pornography, occurs when sexually graphic images of individuals are distributed without the person’s consent. Not always motivated by revenge, a person may choose to disseminate intimate images of another for a variety of reasons. It has been estimated that some 3,000 websites are dedicated to revenge porn (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016). One notorious website, “Is Anyone Up?,” received upwards of 300,00 unique visitors each day until it was shut down in 2012 (Lee, 2012). Recent laws in 40 states make such a behavior illegal. For example, in Connecticut doing so is a Class A Misdemeanor so long as the person has suffered harm as a result (Public Act No. 15-213). Many major technology companies including Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and Twitter have banned revenge porn and have procedures that victims can use to remove these images (Franks, 2017). A national-representative study found that about 12% of adult social media users have been victimized or threatened with the unauthorized distribution of sexually explicit images or videos (as cited by Franks, 2017). Another study of college students revealed that 10% had a private photo shared to people other than the original recipient (Branch, Kilinski-Rosick, Johnson, & Solano, 2017). The effects of revenge porn are many. Research on victims of revenge porn shows that victims experience trust issues, depression and anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal ideation (Bates, 2017). Importantly, it may be difficult to completely remove images from the Internet, meaning that the consequences can be long-lasting (Bates, 2017).

Most research finds that females are more likely to experience online sexual harassment than are males (Henry & Powell, 2018). This discrepancy in sex is also found among people who play multiplayer online games—females report higher levels of sexual harassment than males (as cited by Henry & Powell, 2018). Others have used social media to bully individuals after a sexual victimization has been disclosed or reported. One recent study of the comments that are posted on articles about rape found that about 25% of the comments included victim blaming (Zaleski, Gundersen, Baes, Estupinian, & Vergara, 2016). Other people use social media for more obvious negative treatment of victims. The stories depicted in the documentary *Audrie & Daisy* reveal this phenomenon. Audrie Pott was 15 when she was raped. Following her disclosure, she and her family were subject to rampant online abuse. Most shockingly, nude pictures of her were posted online along with the bullying. She subsequently committed suicide. Other similar stories emerged such as what happened to the victim in the Steubenville, Ohio, rape case (although she did not commit suicide), suggesting the need for care in how people respond online to victims and their families.

Social media may also be used for good by victims. Consider the #MeToo movement that has received lots of recent attention, although it was founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke to help young women, particularly of color from low-income communities, heal. Following a tweet by actress Alyssa Milano in late 2017, the #MeToo movement took Twitter by storm. In this tweet she asked that anyone who had been sexually harassed or assaulted to write “me too” as a reply. By the next morning, some 40,000 had replied (Stevens, 2017). Shortly thereafter, stories about sexual abuse of many gymnasts at the hands of Larry Nassar, about abuse by media mogul Harvey Weinstein, and about abuse by actors such as Kevin Spacey were published. The movement has been so successful that *Time* magazine named “Silence Breakers” its 2017 Person of the Year, citing individuals behind the #MeToo movement (C. A. Johnson & Hawbaker, 2018).

Technology-Based Coercive Control (Digital Coercive Control)

A specific type of intimate partner violence is coercive control. Coercive control involves intimidation, isolation, and control of victims and has been argued to underlie serious intimate partner physical abuse and keep victims enmeshed in abusive relationships (Stark, 2007). A specific way that offenders can coercively control their partners is through technology, called technology-based coercive control. That is, digital media can be used to facilitate abuse against intimate partners. Examples of this include stalking using GPS data, audio and video recordings taken without knowledge of the partner, using SMS to threaten, monitoring e-mail, accessing accounts without permission, impersonating the partner, publishing private information, or publishing sexual content (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

Although it is difficult to know the context in which behavior may occur and where the line between normal communication and abuse is, researchers have begun to investigate the extent to which technology-based coercive control occurs. Picard (2007) found that over one-third of American teenagers had a boyfriend or girlfriend who checked up on them more than 10 times per day—asking things like “where are you, what are you doing, etc.” Perhaps it is the perception of the receiver that matters; if the behavior feels threatening or elicits negative emotional responses, it may be abusive. Research on domestic violence victims in Australia shows that abusive text messages, surveillance through

GPS and mobile applications, and the use of social media to harass victims was common (Woodlock, 2015). Other research has focused on dating violence that involves the use of digital media—often termed **electronic dating violence**. Study of youth show that many experience electronic dating violence. For instance, one poll showed that 22% of youth in a romantic relationship felt that their partner checked up on them too often either online or via their cell phone. Another study of youth across 10 schools found that about a quarter of youth in a current or recent relationship experienced some form of cyber dating abuse victimization during the previous year (Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman, 2013). In this study, a greater percentage of females reported experiencing cyber dating abuse than males. In a large-scale study of youth between the ages of 11 and 18 years, researchers determined that 12% of students had been a victim of electronic dating violence. Electronic dating violence was found to commonly co-occur with other forms of dating violence (Hinduja, & Patchin, 2011). In another study, interviews with individuals who had experienced teen dating violence revealed that of the 56 participants, 23 mentioned the use of technology by their partner in their interviews to perpetrate emotional or verbal aggression (Draucker, & Martsof, 2010). Other forms of electronic dating violence experienced include having text messages read without giving permission, being made to remove contacts of former boyfriends or girlfriends from social media, being made to give passwords to e-mail or Internet accounts, among other behaviors (Stonard, Bowen, Lawrence, & Price, 2014). Although a new area of research, some researchers have found that perpetrating psychological dating abuse, perpetrating physical dating violence, and experience sexual harassment victimization increase the odds of experiencing electronic dating aggression victimization (Cutbush, Williams, Miller, Gibbs, & Clinton-Sherrod, 2012).

Romance Scams

As the use of the Internet has exploded over the past several decades, so too has the use of Internet dating sites. There are at least 1,400 dating sites in North America alone (Rege, 2009). Although these sites are used by many to find partners, there is a dark side of them as well. Unfortunately, they are ripe venues for romance scams (sweetheart swindles) where people are bilked out of money. Although the way in which these scams work can vary, they typically involve a scammer convincing a target that they have strong feelings for them, which eventually leads to some type of fraud. Often, fake profiles are set up with quality pictures and a nicely worded essay. The scammer usually reaches out to the target and builds trust over time—often taking months to develop a relationship. They move communication to channels external to the dating site so that they can communicate even if the fake profile is removed (Kopp, Layton, Sillitoe, & Gondal, 2015). Eventually, the scammer requests money for some type of emergency or tragic circumstances (e.g., their mother was in the hospital and needs money for bills). Over time, the scammer will invent new reasons for needing money (Rege, 2009).

You may think that it would be hard to become a victim of a romance scammer, but some scammers make upwards of \$30,000 a month (as cited by Rege, 2009). Many of these romance scams are perpetrated by criminal groups rather than by individuals acting alone (Whitty, 2018).

Although anyone can be a victim of romance scams, women who are middle-aged and well-educated seem to face particularly high risks. In addition, victims of these scams tend

FOCUS ON RESEARCH

One way to determine how romance scams work is by reviewing fraudulent profiles and identifying common characteristics. One study analyzed 37 fraudulent profiles on a dating site that is free to use for European women and men who are searching for an international partner. The researchers found that male profiles highlighted masculine features where they describe themselves as wealthy, loyal, and humorous, and

often referenced religion. Male profiles indicated interest in romantic dancing, fitness, swimming, or cooking. Female profiles used descriptions displaying confidence and indicating financial independence, but often also have flirtatious or sexual suggestions. They expressed interest in music, fitness, or sports. In short, the authors concluded that the profiles were generated to create the illusion of a "perfect partner."

Source: Adapted from Kopp, C., Layton, R., Sillitoe, J., & Gondal, I. (2015). The role of love stories in romance scams: A qualitative analysis of fraudulent profiles. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 9, 205–217.

to be more trustworthy but also score high in impulsivity (Whitty, 2018). They are likely to have idealized notions of what romantic partners should be and look like (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014).

This type of victimization may be especially difficult for victims to experience as their emotions are involved. Not only their emotions, but victims also have lost money. They often blame themselves and are blamed by others (Sorell & Whitty, 2019), and experience a sense of real loss of relationship (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). Because of this complex array of feelings, many victims will delay seeking help or not get any at all.

Cyberbullying

As discussed in Chapter 10 on school victimization, one of the types of victimization that people may experience is bullying, in particular when perpetrated using the cyberworld. Cyberbullying can be conducted through e-mail, social media, websites, gaming systems, and cell phones. It is defined as "intent to consistently harass another individual to cause harm via any electronic method, including social media, and includes defamation, public disclosure of private facts, and intentional emotional distress" (Watts, Wagner, Velasquez, & Behrens, 2017, p. 269). Because of the distance between the offender and the victim, it can be easily perpetrated and the consequences may not be visibly or easily detected. Cyberbullying can be especially harmful in that it may not be private—using the cyberworld to bully in some contexts can be seen by many. Think about a post made to a social media platform—it may be seen by the intended target but also seen by others and then shared; thus, one post may make its way through the cyberworld quickly and snowball.

Extent of Cyberbullying

Estimates of the extent to which cyberbullying occurs differ depending on the age of the sample and the methodology used to study it. That is, cyberbullying can take many forms,

and not all forms are included in surveys designed to measure cyberbullying. Some studies estimate that between 17% and 25% of youth are the victims of cyberbullying (Li, 2006; Patchin & Hinduja, 2008). Others estimate that between 2% and 14% of children and adolescents in Europe have experienced cyberbullying (Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzog, & Olafsson, 2011). Specific forms of cyberbullying may be more pervasive than others. In one study of cyberbullying in chatrooms, it was discovered that 35% had been abused or insulted (Katzner, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009). In a survey of primary and secondary students, having threats made or insults given by e-mail or mobile phone was the most common cyberbullying reported followed by having someone pretend to be someone else and having gossip spread by e-mail or mobile phone (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009).

Studies using college samples generally find that the prevalence of cyberbullying victimization is lower, although small-scale studies have reported prevalence rates of 31% for college students (Chapell et al., 2006). One study showed that college students reported higher levels of cyberbullying victimization in middle school than while in college (Zacchilli, & Valerio, 2011). It appears that those who are victimized in high school are more likely to be victimized in college as well (Watts et al., 2017).

Who Are Victims of Cyberbullying?

Some research suggests that females are at greater risk of experiencing cyberbullying than are males (M. Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler, & Kift, 2012). Others show that type of victimization may be related to sex. Male youth report higher levels of chat room cyberbullying than do females (Katzner et al., 2009). Age is also a relevant factor—for youth enrolled in Grades 6 through 12, younger students are at greater risk than older students. One of the most consistent correlates of cybervictimization is being a bully perpetrator (Katzner et al., 2009; Šléglová, & Cerna, 2011; Vandebosch, & Van Cleemput, 2009). In this way, the victim–offender overlap has been demonstrated in the cyberbullying literature.

Risk Factors for Cyberbullying

Similar to identity theft, the routine activities/lifestyles-exposure theory may be used to help understand why some people are cyberbullying victims. Those individuals who have routines that lead them to frequently use the Internet or frequent particular websites may be at greater risk of being cyberbullied than others. Kraft and Wang (2010) note that those who visited social media sites more than 14 times per week were more likely to experience cyberbullying than those who used social media less often. The time spent online has also been positively associated with cyberbullying victimization (Çelik, Atak, & Erguzen, 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Visiting extreme chatrooms (e.g., pornographic, right-wing extremist) increases the risk of experiencing cyberbullying in chat rooms as does the frequency of using socially manipulative behavior such as providing false information regarding age or sex (Katzner et al., 2009).

Other research reveals that certain individual-level characteristics may be related to cyberbullying victimization. Victims of chatroom cyberbullying have lower levels of self-esteem and more negative emotional parental relationships than those who did not experience this type of cyberbullying (Katzner et al., 2009). They also have lower levels of self-perception of popularity and low social integration in school (Katzner et al., 2009). Other research examining Internet or mobile phone bullying more generally has also

linked this type of victimization to feeling less popular (Vandebosch, & Van Cleemput, 2009). It could be that these characteristics lead others to target them, or these could be consequences of being bullied.

Consequences of Cyberbullying

The consequences of cyberbullying victimization are many. Research has shown that victims of cyberbullying are at risk for depression, and this risk may be more pronounced for victims of cyberbullying when compared to those who suffer traditional bullying victimization (Perren, Dooley, Shaw & Cross, 2010). Cyberbullying victims may also experience anxiety and anger as a result of their victimization (M. Campbell et al., 2012). When asked about the impact that cyberbullying victimization has on their life, almost 30% of cyberbullying victims in one study noted that it had a great impact on their lives (M. Campbell et al., 2012). When comparing those who are victims, but not also engaged with bullying, it has been found that victims have greater levels of depressive feelings and health complaints, which may be a function of the way victims cope with cyberbullying (Völlink, Bolman, Dehue, & Jacobs, 2012). Distrust of people and loneliness are also associated with experiencing cyberbullying. In the extreme, victims reported engaging in self-harm, increased aggression (Šléglová & Cerna, 2011), and suicide.

Criminal Justice System Response and Prevention

All 50 U.S. states currently have laws addressing cyberharassment or cyberstalking, with 48 having laws specifically including cyberbullying or electronic harassment (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018). Not all states have criminal sanctions for cyberbullying or electronic harassment. As of November 2018, six states did not include these sanctions and five do not have provisions such that schools can sanction for cyberbullying behavior (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018).

It may be especially difficult to ameliorate the harms of cyberbullying because many victims do not disclose to people with authority what has happened to them. As such, some have called for schools and universities to set up private e-mail address for students to use to report cyberbullying (Kraft & Wang, 2010). Educators should also be trained on cyberbullying to increase their awareness. Students and parents should also be trained on how to respond effectively to cyberbullying behavior. It is possible that existing anti-bullying curricula and programs can be modified to include components of digital literacy and specific tactics to reduce cyberbullying. Encouragingly, at least one small-scale study found that adolescents who had been cyberbullied were able to change their behavior to avoid its recurrence. For example, they used less risky online resources (Šléglová & Cerna, 2011). Others note that things like changing a screen/account name or changing phone numbers may be relatively easy ways to reduce cyberbullying (Slonje, Smith, & Frisé, 2012). Another potential source of prevention is bystanders. As noted in Chapter 7, bystander intervention programs have recently been instituted to reduce sexual victimization. Bystander intervention may also be effective at reducing cyberbullying. A bystander in this case is anyone who witnesses cyberbullying behavior who could intervene. To be an effective bystander, a person should intervene by extending support to the victim or by taking actions to prevent the bullying (stopbullying.gov, 2018). Similar to bystander intervention, one program that shows promise uses cybermentors to log on computers and mentor on demand and to provide referrals to counseling or other mentors (Slonje et al., 2012).