Chapter 10

Criminal Victimization It's Personal

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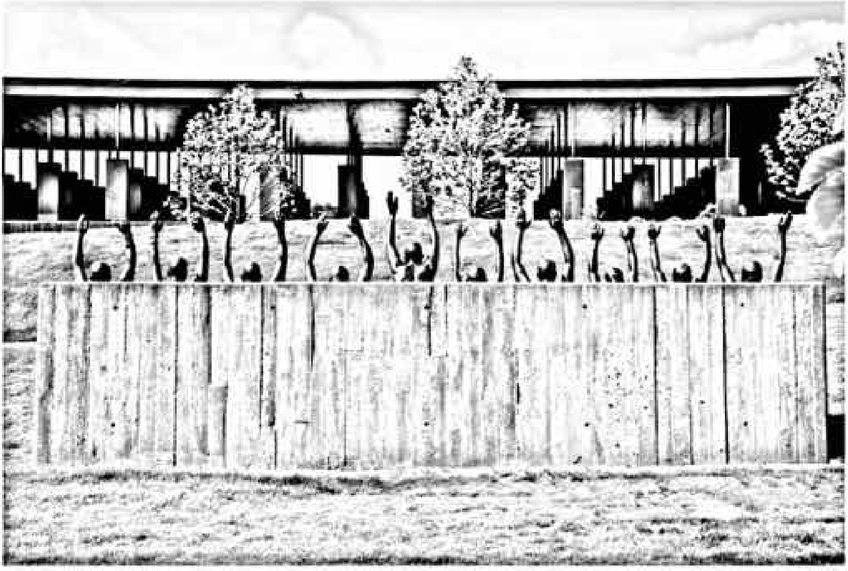
Learning Objectives

10.1 What is victimology, and what are the various types of victims?

10.2 What do official statistics tell us about crime trends in the United States?

10.3 Explain demographics. What kind of demographic features correlate with criminal victimization?

Statutes help define crime and criminal victimization today; but what is criminal today may not have been illegal in the past. Consequently, historical events like the Holocaust, war-time atrocities, slavery, and mob-inspired lynchings, have become important cultural focal points—reminding us of justice ideals that were sometimes forgotten, and unearthing historical episodes that many would like to forget.



The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. The Museum opened in 2018. What is its purpose?
Madeleine Jettre/dbimages/Alamy Stock Photo

In 2018, for example, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice opened in Montgomery, Alabama. The Memorial, popularly known as the "Lynching Museum," was proposed in 2011 by the Montgomery-based Equal Justice Initiative to advance racial equality, to protect basic human rights, and to expose the past and present burdens of presumptions of guilt, and police and mob violence imposed on generations of black Americans.[1052] Set on a six-acre site, the memorial blends sculpture, art, and landscape design in an attempt to capture the experience of racial terror, and to recognize ~~the victims of past lyn~~chings in the equality, to protect basic human rights, and to expose the past and present burdens of presumptions of guilt, and police and mob violence imposed on generations of black Americans.[1052] Set on a six-acre site, the memorial blends sculpture, art, and landscape design in an attempt to capture the experience of racial terror, and to recognize the victims of past lynchings in the United States. To date, memorial workers have documented more than 4,400 illegal killings of black men throughout the South between 1877 and 1950. Many of those unsanctioned lynchings had been carried out by mobs of white men under the pretense of justice, but without incriminating evidence or judicial involvement—and were never investigated by authorities who might have prevented them from continuing. In the words of the Initiative, "racial terror lynchings in the American South were acts of violence at the core of a systematic campaign of terror perpetuated in furtherance of an unjust social order." [1053] The lynchings marginalized black people throughout the country's political, economic, and social realms, and fueled a massive migration of black refugees—reshaping American demographics in ways that survive into the present day. Founders of the memorial hope to advance truth and to build reconciliation around issues of race and justice in America, as well as to relieve African-Americans of an emotional and social burden that many experience today. Visit the museum online at **https://eji.org/national-lynching-memorial**. The report, "Lynching in America," can be found online at **https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report-landing**.

Types of Victims

10.1 What is victimology, and what are the various types of victims?

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Victimology

As noted in **Chapter 1**, no study of crime would be complete without a consideration of victimization and of the role that victims play in the criminal event. **Victimology**, a field of study that developed out of criminology, involves the scientific study of criminal victimization, including the process of victimization, the causes and consequences of victimization, the treatment of victims by the criminal justice system, and how society responds to victims. As such, **victimologists** study particularly vulnerable groups of people and attempt to understand the victimization process.[1054]

how society responds to victims. As such, **victimologists** study particularly vulnerable groups of people and attempt to understand the victimization process.[1054]

A **direct victim** of a crime is an individual who personally experiences a criminal victimization. However, the effect of a single crime may reach well beyond the direct victim. Many others may also be affected by this same crime. **Indirect (or secondary) victims** are people who are not directly involved in the crime but may still experience its effects. Indirect victims include the direct victim's family, friends, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, and so on. For each direct victim, there may be a lot of secondary victims.[1055] Service providers such as first responders or medical and mental health personnel who are frequently exposed to crime and violence may also be indirect victims. Other indirect victims, who are known as **vicarious victims**, may have no personal relationship with the victim, but may simply be aware of the crime, often as a result of media coverage of the event. Vicarious victims may experience fear due to the belief that "it could have been me."[1056]

A special category of indirect victims are **homicide survivors**—the family and friends of a homicide victim. The reactions of homicide survivors to the loss of a loved one are often more severe than when the death results from accident or illness.[1057] Homicide survivors often experience similar PTSD symptoms as direct victims of crime.[1058]

Victimization by the Numbers

10.2 What do official statistics tell us about crime trends in the United States?

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To understand victims and victimization, it is important to understand how crime is measured. This section examines how crime statistics are gathered, how they are accessed, and how they impact our view of crime and victimization. There are two major sources of official statistics on crime and victimization in the U.S. today. The first is the **Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program**, which is run by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The UCR program also includes data from the newer **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**, and is referred to here as the UCR/NIBRS program. The second is the **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**, an annual survey-based self-reporting program conducted under the auspices of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The main difference between the two is that the UCR/NIBRS program reports data on crimes that are known to law enforcement authorities, while the NCVS is survey-based and relies upon information collected by interviewers who gather data by canvassing randomly selected households.

The Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR/NIBRS)

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)

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The UCR collects information on crimes reported to over 18,000 law enforcement agencies throughout the United States Participating agencies include local, city, county, state, university and college, and tribal departments. Agencies participate voluntarily in the program, which has been in operation since 1930.

The program originally collected data on seven **Part I crimes**: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. In 1970, an eighth Part I crime, arson, was added to the UCR as the result of a congressional mandate. The FBI also collects arrest data on 21 **Part II crimes** as well as data on human trafficking, cargo theft, and some federal crimes.

The FBI publishes its findings in a preliminary release in the spring of each year, followed by a detailed annual report called *Crime in the United States*, which is issued in the fall. In addition to crime counts and trends, the UCR report includes data on crimes cleared, persons arrested (by age, gender, and race), law enforcement personnel, and the characteristics of homicides (including age, gender, and race of victims and offenders; victim–offender relationships; weapons used; and circumstances surrounding the homicides). The UCR Program also generates other periodic reports, including a series of reports on the incidence of hate crimes as well as information on law enforcement officers killed or injured in the line of duty.

Map

FBI Crime Clock and Offense Definitions

Check Your Understanding: Clearing Crimes

Select each row below to learn more about the UCR Program's guidelines regarding clearing offenses.

If a police department closes a case, does that mean the UCR considers the case to be cleared?

Reveal answer

When is a crime cleared by arrest?

Reveal Answer:

When is a crime cleared by exceptional means?

Reveal Answer:

What are some examples of exceptional clearances?

Reveal Answer:

Critique of the UCR

The most significant problem with the UCR is indicated by its name: it is a *reporting* program. In other words, only crimes that are reported to the police (or that are discovered by the police or by others who then report them to the police) are included in the victimization statistics compiled by the program. Most complaints are made by victims, and not all victims go to the police. Reasons for not doing so may include embarrassment, fear of the law (as in the case of undocumented aliens), fear of retaliation from victimizers, or even a simple inability to communicate.

Some experts say, for example, that rape is the most underreported crime in the FBI data, with four to five times as many rapes occurring each year as are reported. Reasons for not reporting a crime such as rape are numerous and include fear of the perpetrator, shame, fears the victim may have of not being believed, and fear of participation in the justice system.

Although rape is indeed seriously underreported (a conclusion drawn from comparison of NCVS and UCR/NIBRS rape statistics), many other crimes are likely underreported as well. The most seriously underreported crime may be larceny because the theft of small items never makes it into official police reports.

Additionally, because the program is voluntary, law enforcement agencies may choose not to report data to the UCR. Participating agencies may underreport crimes to the FBI, due to economic or political pressure.

The UCR's **hierarchy rule** means that in incidents involving multiple Part I offenses, only the most serious is recorded. The other Part I crimes committed during that incident are not included in the UCR data.

The definitions of crimes used by the UCR do not necessarily correspond to any federal or state statutes, or to definitions used for other purposes. Attempts to address those problems can lead to difficulties in comparing data over time. For example, in 2012, the definition of "rape," which had previously only included the rape of females, was changed to be conclusion drawn from comparison of NCVS and UCR/NIBRS rape statistics), many other crimes are likely underreported as well. The most seriously underreported crime may be larceny because the theft of small items never makes it into official police reports.

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For researchers studying victims, the UCR poses specific concerns. The UCR primarily collects information on offenses and offenders, rather than victims. Data on victims is only collected for homicides.

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

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To address some of the concerns about the UCR, the FBI began working to redesign the UCR program in 1982, with input from various other federal agencies. The new program, NIBRS, is incident-based, so that it collects data on all crimes, rather than using the UCR's hierarchy rule. NIBRS also includes information on many more crimes than the UCR, collecting incident data on 46 Group A offenses in 24 offense categories as well as arrest data on 11 Group B offenses.

According to the FBI, NIBRS has several advantages over the traditional UCR program. NIBRS collects information on more offenses and examines all offenses within each incident. It collects more detailed information, helps give context to specific crime problems, and provides more analytic flexibility.[1059] The federal **Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)** says that because of the additional detail contained in its reports, NIBRS provides eight specific benefits to victim service providers that go beyond traditional UCR reports:

1. NIBRS provides a broader range crime data
2. It provides victimization data that are categorized by age and type of crime

3. NIBRS provides data on victim–offender relationships, giving a better picture of family violence

4. NIBRS provides information on the timing of victimizations

5. NIBRS provides data on victimizations involving weapons

6. NIBRS provides data on co-occurring victimization in a single incident

7. NIBRS provides statistics on case clearances

8. NIBRS provides a more complete picture of crime and victimization. [1060]

Figure 10–1 shows combined rates of violent and property crime by county, using UCR/NIBRS data.

Figure 10-1

Crime Rates by County

Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Critique of NIBRS

Like the UCR, NIBRS is also a reporting program, so

Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Critique of NIBRS

Like the UCR, NIBRS is also a reporting program, so NIBRS information is still based on crimes reported to or discovered by the police. NIBRS also uses standardized definitions of crimes, which do not correspond to federal or state statutes.

Another problem can be found in the fact that less than half of the law enforcement agencies participating in the UCR Program submit data in NIBRS format—and many of those that do are small town or rural agencies. Agency participation in NIBRS was originally anticipated at much higher levels, but the current lack of participation has necessitated the creation of the National Crime Statistics Exchange (NCS-X). NCS-X is a BJS-led statistical sampling program that aims to collect complete crime data from 400 large city police departments, with the goal of providing detailed national estimates of the volume and characteristics of crimes known to law enforcement. NCS-X works by combining data from those 400 agencies with reported NIBRS data from law enforcement agencies that are already fully NIBRS compliant. Many of the compliant agencies are small, but the participation of 400 large agencies in the NCS-X program permits the application of statistical techniques that provide a more accurate national picture of crime than would be otherwise possible.

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

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The NCVS, which is run by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), is the primary information source in the United States on the number and nature of criminal victimization incidents research.[1061] The NCVS uses self-report interviews to gather information on nonfatal personal crimes (rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, and personal larceny) and household property crimes (burglary, motor vehicle theft, and other theft). Interviewers gather data on crimes, whether or not those offenses have been reported to police. Consequently, one of the most important features of the NCVS is that it collects data on both reported and unreported crimes.

Each year, the BJS obtains information from a nationally representative of approximately 135,000 U.S. households, surveying about 225,000 persons aged 12 or older in those households. Households remain in the program for three years and household members are interviewed every six months. Participation in the NCVS is voluntary. All initial interviews are conducted in person, while subsequent interviews, if any, are conducted either in person or by phone. For each selfreported victimization incident, the NCVS collects information about the victim and the offender (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender, and victim–

offender relationship), characteristics of the crime (including time and place of occurrence, use of weapons, nature of injury, and economic consequences), whether the victimization was reported to police, reasons the offense was or was not reported, and victim experiences with the criminal justice system. **Table 10-1** shows 2018 violent victimization rates using NCVS data, while **Figure 10–2** shows NCVS victimization rates from 1993 to 2018.

Table 10-1

NCVS: Violent Victimization by Type of Crime, 2018

TYPE OF VIOLENT CRIME	NUMBER	RATE PER 1,000
Violent crime	6,385,520	23.2
Rape/sexual assault	734,630	2.7
Robbery	573,100	2.1
Assault	5,077,790	18.4
Aggravated assault	1,058,040	3.8
Simple assault	4,019,750	14.6
Selected characteristics of violent crime		
Domestic violence	1,333,050	4.8
Intimate partner violence	847,230	3.1
Stranger Violence	2,493,750	9.1
Violent crime involving injury	1,449,530	5.3
Violent crime involving a weapon	1,329,700	4.8

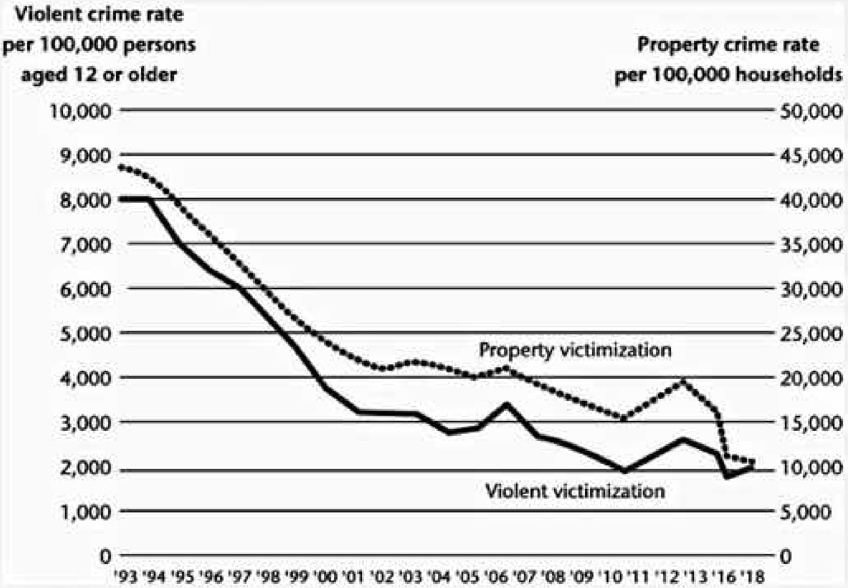
Note: Rate per 1,000 persons aged 12 and older.
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Figure 10-2

Victimization Rates from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 1993–2018

Figure 10-2

Victimization Rates from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 1993–2018



Source: A Bureau of Justice Statistics.

NCVS data are available through a number of venues. The first, a print and online publication called *Criminal Victimization*, takes the form of an annual report that covers the broad range of detailed information collected by the NCVS. The second, the *NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool*, is an online database through which users can explore victimization rates, crime counts, and percentages using a range of victim and offense characteristics. BJS also periodically publishes detailed reports on topics such as intimate partner violence, workplace violence, hate crime, and crime against persons with disabilities. The National Archive of Criminal Justice Data at the University of Michigan maintains the NCVS datafiles to enable researchers to perform independent analyses on newly collected and historical data. The NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool can be reached via **https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat**.

Critique of the NCVS

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The NCVS can be criticized for possible overreporting or underreporting because it is difficult to verify the actual occurrence of crimes reported to NCVS interviewers. There is no reliable measure of the number of crimes that might be falsely reported or of the number of crimes that might be under-reported in NCVS data. There are many likely causes of misreporting. Some individuals, when approached by NCVS interviewers, may be unable to resist embellishing victimization reports pertaining to their households and may even concoct victimization data for purposes of self-aggrandizement or in an attempt to please the interviewer by providing copious amounts of data. Others may simply forget about a criminal incident that occurred or deliberately choose not to report a crime to the interviewers. Additionally, certain subgroups are not contacted by NCVS surveyors, including anyone not living in a household. Homeless people and those living in institutions like hospitals, prisons, battered women's shelters, and so on are excluded from the sample. Also, the NCVS only interviews respondents aged 12 or older, so crimes against younger victims are not included.

The NCVS program is much newer than the FBI's UCR Program, and comparisons between the programs are not available before 1973. As with the UCR/NIBRS, embellishing victimization reports pertaining to their households and may even concoct victimization data for purposes of self-aggrandizement or in an attempt to please the interviewer by providing copious amounts of data. Others may simply forget about a criminal incident that occurred or deliberately choose not to report a crime to the interviewers. Additionally, certain subgroups are not contacted by NCVS surveyors, including anyone not living in a household. Homeless people and those living in institutions like hospitals, prisons, battered women's shelters, and so on are excluded from the sample. Also, the NCVS only interviews respondents aged 12 or older, so crimes against younger victims are not included.

The NCVS program is much newer than the FBI's UCR Program, and comparisons between the programs are not available before 1973. As with the UCR/NIBRS, definitions of crimes measured by the NCVS do not necessarily correspond to any federal or state statutes or to definitions used for other purposes, making comparisons with other state and federal crime records difficult. The NCVS covers only a very small number of crimes—it does not include homicide, crimes against businesses, federal crimes or white-collar crime. Complicating matters still further, changes in NCVS categories have resulted in the inability to easily compare NCVS findings of even a decade ago with current NCVS data.[1062] Finally, the NCVS does not attempt to verify the information in the surveys that it conducts and has to assume that respondents are being honest and forthright.

Comparing the UCR/NIBRS and the NCVS

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The primary objective of the UCR/NIBRS program is to provide a reliable set of crime statistics for law enforcement administration, operation, and management. BJS, however, established the NCVS to provide researchers with previously unavailable information about victimization (including victimizations not reported to police) and victim and offender characteristics. As a result, while the two programs share many similarities, there are also some significant differences between them.

The NCVS and the UCR/NIBRS measure an overlapping but nonidentical set of crimes. The two programs essentially measure the same subset of serious crimes: rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft. However, unlike the NCVS, the UCR/NIBRS includes information on homicide, arson, commercial crimes, and crimes against children under age 12, the homeless, and persons living in institutions. Conversely, the NCVS includes data on sexual assault (completed, attempted, and threatened), verbal threats of rape, simple assault, and crimes not reported to law enforcement, all of which are not found in the UCR/NIBRS.

The UCR/NIBRS and NCVS also calculate property significant differences between them.

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The UCR/NIBRS and NCVS also calculate property crime rates differently. Property crime rates in the UCR/NIBRS are calculated as the number of crimes per 100,000 persons in the population. The NCVS rates are the number of crimes per 1,000 households, leading to higher rates in the NCVS.

The definitions of crimes used by the UCR/NIBRS and the NCVS are similar, but not identical. Most noticeably, the UCR/ NIBRS defines burglary the unlawful entry or attempted entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft. The definition used by the NCVS is broader, defining burglary as the entry or attempted entry of a residence by a person who had no right to be there.

Hidden Victims

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As noted above, many crimes never become known to the authorities. Additionally, some are not even uncovered by those who are victimized. The **dark figure of crime** is a term used to describe the relatively large number of unreported or undiscovered crimes that never come to the attention of officials (**Figure 10–3**) Crime's dark figure is sometimes glimpsed through victimization surveys such as the NCVS, or through **self-report surveys**, in which respondents, without fear of disclosure or arrest, are asked to confidentially report any violations of the criminal law that they have committed. Offender self-report studies, however, provide little information about victims. Because of this, they are often of little use to victimologists, other than to help illuminate the dark figure of crime.

Figure 10-3

The Dark Figure of Crime

A recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for example, found 1.3 million women who stated that they had been raped in the year preceding the survey. However, only 83,425 of those rapes were reported to the police.[1063] Similarly, a recent Canadian sexual assault survey conducted by independent researchers showed a rate more than 100 times higher than official reports of rape.[1064] (Rape victimization will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.)

Almost all crimes are underreported to some degree. However, although the number of *unreported crimes* may be large for at least some types of crime, the number of *undiscovered crimes* may be even larger and is very difficult to estimate. Undiscovered crimes are those that are not known even to those who have been victimized. Many undiscovered crimes are committed through the use of high technology and illegal access to digital information (and money) through social media or Internet-based transactions. Some notorious offenses, like the classic Nigerian e-mail scheme, in which a victim is promised huge sums of money after making a "small" initial investment, may even lead victims to think that they are fortunate to have participated. Other crimes, including white-collar pyramid schemes, in which early investors are paid off with proceeds from later participants, may never face law enforcement scrutiny as long as the nature of the **victimization** remains unknown. Bernie Madoff a famous Ponzi schemer, bilked stock investors of as much as $18 billion, and might never have been caught but for economic circumstances that impacted the entire American economy—causing his scheme to spiral out of control. Undiscovered offenses are responsible for a significant level of victimization in the researchers showed a rate more than 100 times higher than official reports of rape.[1064] (Rape victimization will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.)

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Changing Offense Patterns

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Since official crime statistics were first gathered around 1930, there have been three major shifts in victimization patterns.[1065] The first occurred during the early 1940s at the outbreak of World War II, when crime decreased sharply due to the large number of young men who entered military service. Young males make up the most "crime-prone" segment of the population, and their participation in the war efforts abroad did much to lower rates of reported victimization at home. From 1933 to 1941, victimization rates declined from 770 to 508 offenses per every 100,000 members of the U.S. population.[1066]

The second significant shift in victimization statistics was a dramatic increase in most forms of crime that began in the 1960s and ended in the 1990s. Many criminologists believe that this shift also had a link to World War II. With the end of the war and the return of millions of young men to civilian life, birth rates skyrocketed between 1945 and 1955, creating a postwar baby boom. By 1960, baby boomers were entering their teenage years. The presence of a disproportionately large number of young people in the U.S. population produced a dramatic increase in most major crimes.

Other factors also contributed to the increase in reported victimi~~zations during the same~~ period. Crimes reported victimizations during the same period. Crimes that may have gone undetected in the past began to figure more prominently in official statistics. Similarly, the growing professionalization of some police departments resulted in more accurate and increased data collection, making some of the most progressive departments appear to be associated with the largest crime increases.[1067] Finally, the 1960s were tumultuous years, punctuated by the Vietnam War, a vibrant civil rights struggle, the heady growth of secularism, dramatic increases in the divorce rate, diverse forms of "liberation," and the influx of psychedelic and other drugs. As a consequence, social norms were blurred and group control over individual behavior declined substantially. According to the FBI, from 1960 to 1980, victimization rates rose from 1,887 to 5,950 offenses per 100,000 members of the U.S. population.

Victimization rates recorded by the FBI continued to remain high, with the exception of a brief decline in the early 1980s, when postwar boomers began to "age out" of the crimeprone years and U.S. society emerged from the cultural drift that had characterized the previous 20 years. At about the same time, however, an increase in drug-related criminal activity led victimization rates to soar once again, especially in the area of violent crime. UCR/NIBRS-reported victimizations peaked around 1991 and have since shown a third major shift, with decreases in the rates of most major crimes being reported since that time. Between 1991 and 2018, the victimization rate decreased from 5,898 to 2,605 offenses per every 100,000 citizens, sending it down to levels not seen since 1968.

Decreases in crime rates since the mid-1990s may have

Decreases in crime rates since the mid-1990s may have been largely due to an "aging out" of the post–World War II baby-boomer generation (members of which are now mostly too old to continue active criminal lifestyles), new strict laws, expanded justice system and police funding, changes in crime-fighting technologies, economic factors, and the increase in forms of crime not readily counted by official reporting programs. In 2013, in an article published in the journal *Crime Science*, Graham Farrell, Professor of International Comparative Criminology at the University of Leeds in England, examined fifteen hypotheses that have been proposed to explain the decrease in "street crime" that has occurred throughout much of the Western world since 1990.[1068] Hypotheses that were tested included decreased lead poisoning among young people; abortion legalization; the decriminalization of drugs; changing immigration and migration patterns; increased policing and criminal punishments; use of the death penalty; changes in gun laws; improved security; and various aspects of changing demographics (**Table 10-2**). Farrell was able to reject fourteen of the fifteen hypotheses, and found that only the security hypothesis held true explanatory power. The security hypothesis, based on the notion of situational crime prevention, is a relatively simple explanation for crime's decline—and says that improved security measures that have been put in place since the early 1990s have reduced criminal opportunities, and have therefore lowered rates of street crime.

Table 10-2

Fifteen Hypotheses Offered to Explain the Drop in Crime Rates That Began in the Early 1990s

Table 10-2

Fifteen Hypotheses Offered to Explain the Drop in Crime Rates That Began in the Early 1990s

NAME	MECHANISM
Strong economy	Wealthy offenders commit less crime
Concealed weapons laws	More defensive guns, less crime
Capital punishment	More death penalty deterred crime
Gun control laws	Less guns, less crime
Rising prison population	Incapacitation and deterrence reduce crime
Policing strategies	Policing focused on crime problems (Compstat, POP)
More police	More police detected and deterred crime
Legalization of abortion	More abortion since 1973, less offenders by 1990s
Immigration	Immigrants commit less crime, so crime fell as immigration rose
Consumer confidence	Wealthy buy less from stolen goods markets
Waning crack market	Second-generation youth deterred by violence and prison for elders
Childhood lead	Lead poisoning of children made them adolescent criminals
Changing demographics	Aging population means relatively less young offenders
Civilizing process	Social institutions more legitimate (1960s–1980s = age of protest)
Improved security	Improved security, reduced crime opportunities

Source: *Crime Science*, Five Tests for a Theory of the Crime Drop, Vol. 2, No. 5 (2013). Graham Farrell, "With permission of Springer".

While the 28-year-long decline in reported victimization that took place in the United States beginning in 1991 is noteworthy, it did not even begin to bring the overall rate of street crime in this country anywhere close to the low crime rates characteristic of the early 1940s and the 1950s. From a long-term perspective, even with recent declines, rates of reported criminal victimi~~zations in the United St~~ates remain

Civilizing process	Social institutions more legitimate (1960s–1980s = age of protest)
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Source: *Crime Science*, Five Tests for a Theory of the Crime Drop, Vol. 2, No. 5 (2013). Graham Farrell, "With permission of Springer".

While the 28-year-long decline in reported victimization that took place in the United States beginning in 1991 is noteworthy, it did not even begin to bring the overall rate of street crime in this country anywhere close to the low crime rates characteristic of the early 1940s and the 1950s. From a long-term perspective, even with recent declines, rates of reported criminal victimizations in the United States remain more than seven times what they were in 1940.

Some evidence seems to indicate that the decline in U.S. crime is ending and that we may be on the cusp of a new cycle of increased criminal activity.[1069] Part of that potential increase may come in the form of new and innovative forms of victimization that are not easily captured by official measures. Many types of crimes today are Internet-based or involve advanced technology. Neither the UCR nor the NCVS count computer crimes among the major crime categories that they report, although these types of offenses are sometimes subsumed under the category of under the category of "larceny" because they frequently involve the theft of money or other things of value. Additionally, the specter of random mass shootings, a high number of inner-city murders, and novel forms of criminal activity complicate today's victimization picture.

Demographic Correlates of Victimization

10.3 Explain demographics. What kind of demographic features correlate with criminal victimization?

Audio

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Demographics describe the statistical qualities of a given population. While victims of crime may be of any gender, age, race, or ethnicity, demographic characteristics are significantly correlated with victimization risk (**Table 10-3**). Young single women, for example, are more likely to be victims of sexual assault than any other subgroup in the American population. In general, however, studies show that the "typical victim" of violent crime is a socioeconomically disadvantaged young black male, especially one living in the inner-city region of a large metropolitan area.[1070] This is not to say that females and older people are not similarly victimized; they are, but the rate of violent victimization is notably higher for young African-American males than for other demographic groups.

Table 10-3

Violent Victimization Rates by Victim Demographic Characteristics, 2004, 2012, and 2018

	VIOLENT CRIME		
VICTIM DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	2004	2012	2018

VICTIM DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	2004	2012	2018
Total	27.8	26.1	23.2
Sex			
Male	30.2	29.1	22.1
Female	25.5	23.3	24.3
Race/Hispanic origin			
White	28.5	25.2	24.7
Black/African American	30.2	34.2	20.4
Hispanic/Latino	20.1	24.5	18.6
Other	34.1	25.1	65.4
Age			
12–17	49.7	48.4	34.2
18–24	55.4	41.0	35.9
25–34	31.2	34.2	31.8
35–49	28.0	29.1	25.2
50–64	15.4	15.0	18.3
65 or older	2.5	5.7	6.5
Marital status			
Never married	46.2	40.7	33.5
Married	13.8	13.5	12.1
Widowed	9.3	8.3	12.5
Divorced	36.7	37.0	39.1
Separated	110.7	83.1	[illegible]

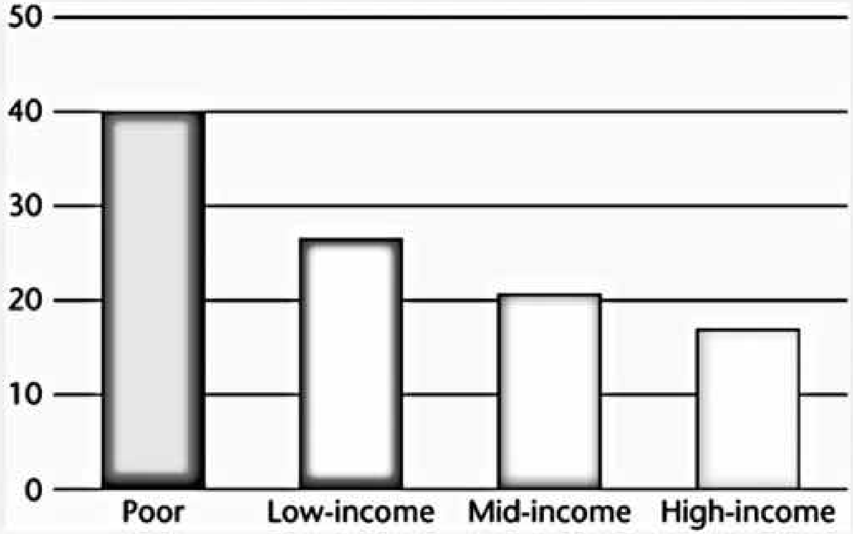
Note: Rates shown are per 1,000 persons age 12 or older.
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

A number of additional social factors have also been found to be associated with increased risk of victimization. They include the region of the country in which a person lives, as well as various family factors, including low socioeconomic status (SES), family including low socioeconomic status (SES), family criminal history (parental crime), single-parent household, and poor parental supervision.[1071] According to information published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2018, those living in urban locations were 150% more likely to be violently victimized than people in rural areas; while those in the South were considerably less likely to be violently victimized than people living in the Northeastern or Western parts of the United States. Risk of property crime, however, was highest in the West and South, but slightly lower in the Midwest, and lowest of all in the Northeast.

A recent BJS compilation of victimization data (**Figure 10-4**) shows that persons living in poor households at or below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (39.8 per 1,000) have more than double the rate of violent victimization as do persons in high-income households (16.9 per 1,000).[1072] The percentage of persons reporting violence to police is also higher among households at or below the FPL. More than half of victims of violence from poor households (51%) reported the victimization to police compared to 45% of victims from high-income households.

Figure 10-4

Rate of Violent Victimization, by Household Poverty Level (per 1,000 Persons Age 12 or Older)



Note: "Poor" refers to households at 0% to 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). "Low income" refers to households at 101% to 200% of the FPL. "Mid-income" refers to households at 201% to 400% of the FPL. "High income" refers to households at 401% or higher than the FPL.
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Finally, victimization risk varies considerably by type of crime. Young minority women, and especially those living with male partners, for example, are more likely than other demographic groups to experience domestic violence.[1073] Similarly, victims of white-collar crime are more likely to be older and to be of relatively high socioeconomic status.

It is important to remember however, that demographic characteristics tell us nothing about *why* victimization occurs. These relationships only identify *who* is at greater risk of victimization. Additionally, these are group-level relationships; knowing that, for example, people living in low-income households are at greater risk of violent victimization does not mean that a specific low-income individual will be a victim of violence.

Victim-Offender Overlap

Audio

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An examination of demographic characteristics of victims and offenders shows that they share many demographic characteristics. Victims and offenders both tend to be disproportionately young, male, racial or ethnic minorities, living in social disadvantaged urban areas.[1074] There is a significant relationship between risk of victimization and prior involvement in delinquency and crime.[1075] Victims and offenders often lead similar lifestyles and participate in similar types of risky behaviors that are linked to an increased risk of both victimization and offending.[1076]

Repeat Victimization

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Becoming a victim of crime does not provide protection from it happening again. In fact, victimization is often a good predictor of future risk of repeat victimization, at least for some types of crimes. While repeat victims make up only a small percentage of all victims of crime, they experience a disproportionately large number of victimizations.[1077] For example, research suggests that about 4% of victims experience almost 45% of all crimes.[1078] Risk of repeat victimization may increase as people lose the ability to defend themselves or their property through loss of financial resources, livelihood, and psychological and physical health—all due to earlier instances of victimization.

Studies of repeat victimization have identified various different forms of the problem. **Revictimization** refers to continued victimization by the same offender committing the same type of crime. For example, a woman who is repeatedly abused by her spouse is experiencing revictimization. **multiple victimization** refers to multiple instances of *varied* victimizations; in other words, the victim experiences different types of crimes, such as sexual abuse, assault, and robbery. **polyvictimization** refers to a situation in which the target of multiple victimization is a child who experiences various different types of victimizations, such as sexual a[redacted]llying (see such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, bullying (see **Chapter 11**), and exposure to family violence.[1079] A study of polyvictimized children found that the demographic characteristics (**Table 10-4**) that distinguish polyvictims of violence from children who are less exposed to violence include (1) the more serious nature of their victimizations, (2) the greater range of victimizations they suffer, and (3) their overrepresentation among certain demographic groups (i.e., boys, older children, children of medium socioeconomic status, African-American children, and children in single-parent, stepparent, and other adult caregiver families).

Table 10-4

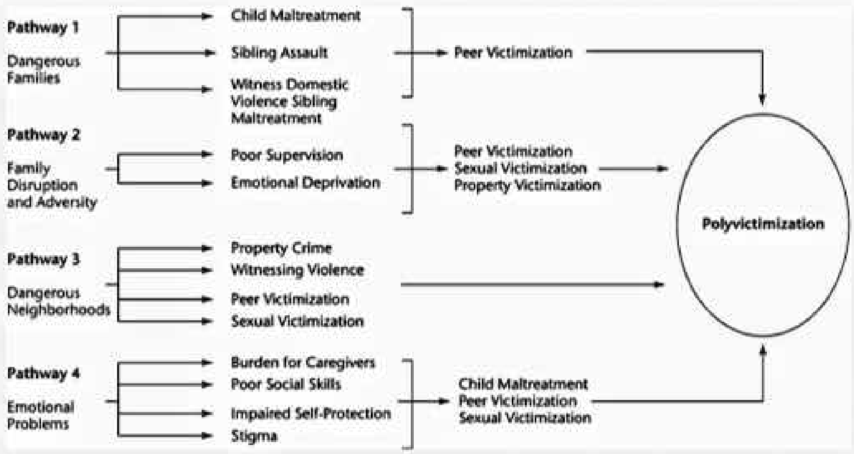
Polyvictimization Rates by Demographic Characteristics

CHARACTERISTIC	POLYVICTIM (%)
Gender	
Female	7.5
Male	8.4
Age Group	
2–5 Years	5.2
6–9 Years	4.0
10–13 Years	9.5
14–17 Years	13.0
Socioeconomic Status	
Low	7.3
Middle	8.8
High	4.7
Race/Ethnicity	

Using DVS data, the researchers developed and tested a conceptual model that identifies four distinct pathways to becoming a polyvictim (see **Figure 10–5**). These pathways are: (1) living in a "dangerous family"—or one that experiences considerable violence and conflict (dangerous family), (2) having a family beset with problems around such things as money, employment, and substance abuse that might compromise a child's supervision or create unmet emotional needs (family disruption and adversity), (3) residing in or moving into a dangerous community (dangerous neighborhoods), and (4) having preexisting emotional problems that increase risky behavior, create antagonism, and compromise the capacity for self-protection. The study confirmed that each of these pathways contributes independently to the onset of polyvictimization.[1082] The emotional problems pathway was most prominent for children younger than 10 years old, while the other pathways appeared to be more associated with children aged 10 and older.

Figure 10-5

Pathways to Polyvictimization



Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

The Costs of Criminal Victimization

10.4 What are the personal impacts of criminal victimization?

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Crime and society's response to it pose significant costs—both tangible and intangible. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that federal, state, and local governments spend over $280 billion annually on criminal justice programs such as police protection, the court system, and incarceration. There are also many other financial and nonfinancial effects of crime that should be considered when estimating the total costs of crime in the United States. These can include tangible costs of victimization, such as replacing damaged property or medical care to treat victims' injuries. Intangible costs can extend to changes in people's behavior to avoid crime, personal pain and suffering, lost income, and lowered quality of life (**Figure 10–6**). Different researchers have estimated varying annual costs of crime, including totals of $690 billion, $1.57 trillion, and $3.41 trillion.[1083] In the sections that follow, we examine the *personal* costs of victimization, looking at things such as physical, economic, and socio-emotional impacts of victimization.

Figure 10-6

The Costs of Criminal Victimization

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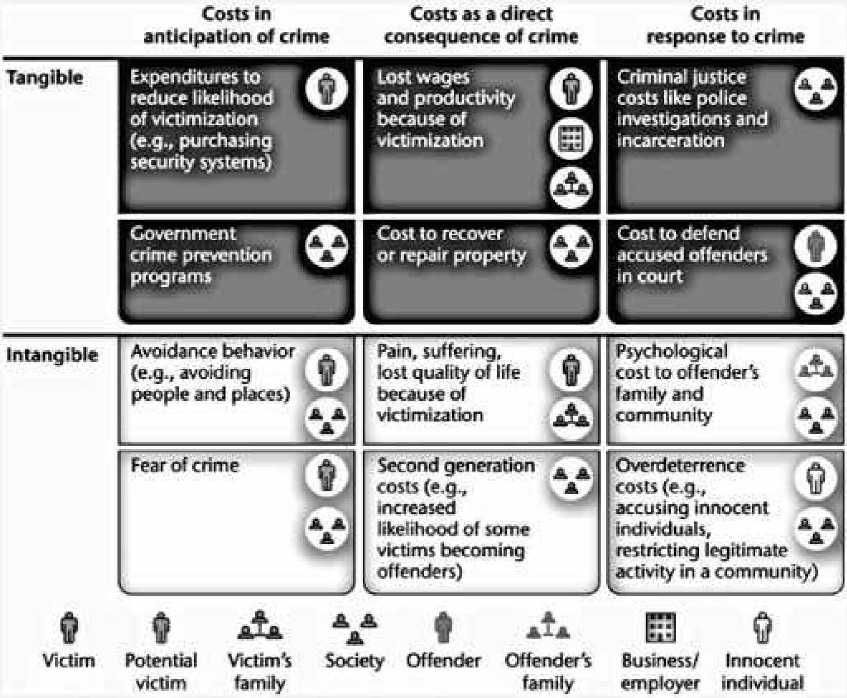
Figure 10-6

The Costs of Criminal Victimization



Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office.

The Physical Impact of Victimization

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Researchers have long known that crime victims can be significantly impacted by the experience of victimization. One researcher who surveyed crime victims found that “Almost all respondents reported that their lives had changed forever.”[1084] The effects of criminal victimization are many and varied, and may include physical, economic, and socio-psychological impacts. Victimization may also be a risk factor for later involvement in delinquency or crime.

Some crimes, particularly those that are violent and confrontational, may produce direct physical injuries as well as other kinds of physical reactions in those who are victimized.[1085] Victims may experience minor physical injuries (such as bumps and scratches), or more serious injuries (such as gunshot wounds, broken bones). They may have permanent injuries (such as brain damage or paralysis), be permanently disfigured, be infected with a sexually transmitted disease, or lose their lives.

Physical impacts other than injury may include stimulation of the fight-or-flight response, which includes increase in blood-level adrenalin, increased heart rate, hyperventilation, shaking, numbness, crying, dryness of the mouth, loss of bowel control, and a sense that things are occurring in slow motion.

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Theories of Victimization

10.5 What theories of victimization does this chapter discuss?

Blaming the Victim: Early Theories of Victim Precipitation

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While theories of crime causation frequently focus on the offender, attempting to explain why some people (or groups) are more likely to be involved in crime or why crimes occur, theories of victimization consider why some people are more likely to be victimized and consider the role of the victim in setting the stage leading up to the criminal event. As noted in **Chapter 1**, criminal victimization is a complex process involving many parties (the criminal, the victim, the justice system, members of society, and others). Theories that emphasize the role of the victim in crime causation were some of the earliest contributions to the study of victimology.

<u>**Victimogenesis**</u> is a term that refers to the origin or cause of victimization and includes a cluster of variables that ultimately lead to victimization. Some victims actively contribute to their own victimization by appearing defenseless (such as by being old and frail or intoxicated), by failing to take appropriate defensive measures (leaving doors unlocked or forgetting to

(flashing large amounts of cash or other valuables in a public place), or by making other choices that increase their vulnerability (like walking down a dark alley off of New York City's Times Square at 3 o'clock in the morning). In any discussion of victimization, however, it is critically important to recognize that while a victim's actions may put him or her in jeopardy, this does not necessarily mean that any subsequent victimization was the victim's fault. In other words, victims should not be blamed for their own victimization, especially when their actions are innocent.

First-generation victimologists tended to create typologies, categorizing victims based on various characteristics and classifying them according to the degree to which they contributed to their own victimization. Some of the most well-known include **Hans von Hentig, Benjamin (or "Beniamin" in his native language) Mendelsohn, Stephen Schafer, Marvin Wolfgang, and Menachem Amir.**

Hans von Hentig, who wrote in the late 1940s, published an important book, The *Criminal and His Victim.*[1097] Von Hentig classified victims into 13 categories depending on biological, social, and psychological factors that he believed correlated with victimization risk. According to von Hentig, some people are more vulnerable to victimization because of personal biological or social characteristics (such as being young or old; having a "mental defect"—a developmental disability or illness; being a minority; or being an immigrant). Others are at risk because of psychological factors that may lead them to become involved in risky or dangerous situations, such as depressive; greedy or acquisitive; lonesome and heartbroken; blocked, exempted, or fighting victims; and tormentors. For example, depressed individuals and those who are lonesome and heartbroken may be apathetic or overly trusting, while those who are greedy or acquisitive may allow their desire for money to override their common sense. Wonton or promiscuous individuals may take excessive risks. Blocked, exempted, or fighting victims are those who are in trouble and cannot go to the police (such as a blackmail victim, or a drug dealer who is a victim of robbery). Finally, tormentors are individuals whose violent behavior results in their victimization (such as a physically abusive spouse who is killed by his or her victim).

Benjamin Mendelsohn, a Romanian attorney is often referred to as the *father of victimology*. He coined the term *victimology* in 1947 and proposed the creation of a victimological research institute, a journal of victimology, and the establishment of a society for the study of victims.[1098] He is best remembered for the creation of a six-part victimology typology based on degree of victim culpability. While von Hentig focused on victim characteristics, Mendelsohn emphasized the victim's level of guilt. Essentially, he argued that not only offenders but also victims may be responsible for crime. Mendelsohn's six types of victims ranged from the completely innocent victim (i.e., a completely unconscious person or an infant who has no responsibility at all for his or her victimization) to the imaginary or simulated victim (i.e., someone who has not actually been victimized but falsely accuses not actually been victimized but falsely accuses another, perhaps as the result of a psychological disorder). In between were victims with minor guilt, victims as guilty as the offender, and victims with more guilt than the offender. Of Mendolsohn's six types, only the completely innocent victim was viewed as having no responsibility for the crime whatsoever.

Stephen Schafer, a Hungarian criminologist, published a book in 1968 that played off the title of von Hentig's work. It was called *The Victim and His Criminal.*[1099] Schafer believed that victims have a "functional responsibility" to avoid provoking offenders into victimizing them and to prevent their own potential victimization. He assigned victims to categories based on the degree of provocation in which they engaged and their level of responsibility for the criminal event. His typology, which included victims with no functional responsibility (i.e., the completely innocent victim), to those with total responsibility (i.e., self-victimizing), included the following types:

1. Unrelated victims (with no victim responsibility)

2. Provocative victims (victim shares responsibility)

3. Precipitative victims (with some degree of victim responsibility)

4. Biologically weak victims (with no victim responsibility)

5. Socially weak victims (with no victim responsibility)

4. Biologically weak victims (with no victim responsibility)

5. Socially weak victims (with no victim responsibility)

6. Self-victimizing (who has total victim responsibility)

7. Political victim (with no victim responsibility)

These early victimologists were focused on the concept of **victim precipitation**, which examines the characteristics of victims, the nature of their surroundings, or the quality of their relationships, insofar as they play a role in precipitating victimization. Essentially, they are attempting to measure the victim's level of culpability in their own victimization.[1100] They also examined the concept of **victim proneness**, which refers to an individual's likelihood of victimization.

Victim precipitation builds on observable correlates of victimization to explain why some people are more likely to be victimized than others. So, for example, individuals who live in inner-city high-crime areas are, generally speaking, more likely to become crime victims than those who reside in gated suburban communities. Similarly, those who work in certain occupations (i.e., late-night convenience store clerks) are more likely to become victims of crime than those in certain other occupations (i.e., medical technologists). Two types of victim precipitation can be distinguished: active and passive. *Passive precipitation* occurs when the victim's personal traits encourage the offender toward criminal action, such as a hate crime communities. Similarly, those who work in certain occupations (i.e., late-night convenience store clerks) are more likely to become victims of crime than those in certain other occupations (i.e., medical technologists). Two types of victim precipitation can be distinguished: active and passive. *Passive precipitation* occurs when the victim's personal traits encourage the offender toward criminal action, such as a hate crime that is precipitated by the victim's ethnicity or sexual orientation. *Active precipitation* takes place when the victim knowingly provokes the victimization (e.g., through violent behavior, threats, or provocative language).

In addition to this simple dichotomy, victimologists recognize three ways in which victims contribute to their own victimization. The first is *victim facilitation*, which can occur when potential victims fail to take simple precautions against being victimized. Victim facilitation is often unintentional and may happen when home-owners leave their doors unlocked, when drivers leave keys in their cars, or when students leave laptops unattended in a library or other public place. *Victim provocation* involves a situation in which the victim may be the initial aggressor who has the tables turned on him or her and ends up being injured or killed. In crimes involving victim provocation, the argument may be that the victim incited another individual into committing the crime. Finally, *victim initiation* happens when the victim attracts the offender's attention through certain activities (i.e., hiking alone on an isolated mountain trail) or by visible displays of wealth or other things of interest.

Victim Blaming

Audio

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The idea that victims may contribute in some way to their own victimization is extremely controversial because it can lead to **victim blaming**.[1101] Victim blaming involves holding the victim responsible for his or her victimization and minimizing the offender's culpability for the crime. Victim blaming is seen in the media and the criminal justice system, but victims may also find their family and friends engaging in victim blaming. For example, after a young woman is raped on a date, the media may blame her for flirting, dressing provocatively, or drinking, rather than focusing on the behavior of the individual who committed the rape.

It is important to remember that the early research into victim precipitation and victim proneness was not intended to blame the victim for becoming a victim. Early victimologists focused on examining both individual and situational factors that may have contributed to and initiated the crime. This is especially important in studying patterns of homicide, for example, because quite often a homicide begins as a fight or an argument between people who know each other. The circumstances of the particular encounter determine whether the event will end as some type of assault or as a homicide.

Marvin Wolfgang, a famous pioneer in victim studies, was one of the first researchers to make an effort to assess the extent of victim participation in homicide events. Wolfgang studied homicides in Philadelphia in the late 1940s to early 1950s and concluded that 26% were the result of active victim precipitation. He identified several factors that were common to victimprecipitated homicides, including a prior relationship between the victim and victimizer; a minor disagreement that careened out of control; and the consumption of alcohol. Wolfgang found that alcohol played an important role in homicide cases where the "victim is a direct, positive precipitator in the crime." [1102] He concluded that the positive and significant association between alcohol and victim-precipitated homicides may be explained by the fact that the victim was the "first to slap, punch, stab, or in some other manner commit an assault" and that if the victim had not been drinking, he or she would have been less violent.[1103] He also hypothesized that at least some victims of homicide were longing to commit suicide and provoked others to kill them as a way of satisfying that unconscious desire.

Menachim Amir, a student of Wolfgang's, studied rapes in Philadelphia in the late 1950s. In his research, which was published in the early 1970s, he found that 19% of all forcible rapes involving female victims were victim precipitated, involving factors such as the use of alcohol (by both parties), seductive behavior or conversation on the part of the victim, and provocative clothing worn by the victim. Amir's research was intensely criticized by the feminist movement that began about the time he published his findings. Women's activists accused him of placing the blame for rape on the victi[redacted]ffenders who violent.[1103] He also hypothesized that at least some victims of homicide were longing to commit suicide and provoked others to kill them as a way of satisfying that unconscious desire.

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The idea that victims are somehow selected for victimization based on personal traits is still being explored. In 2013, for example, the results of a study published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* suggested that people are sometimes mugged because of the way they walk. Researchers found that an unsteady or slow gait reveals to potential robbers that the victim is slow, unable to escape, and unable to defend himself or herself—and makes an ideal target for interpersonal crime.[1104]

during what was then their formative period.[1127] Victims' assistance programs, which are common today, offer services in the areas of crisis intervention and follow-up counseling, and help victims secure their rights under the law.[1128] Following successful prosecution, some victims' assistance programs also advise victims in the filing of civil suits to recoup financial losses directly from the offender.

One of the recommendations of the President's Task Force was an amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing rights for victims and providing victims the same kind of fairness victims that is routinely accorded to defendants. This is a continuing goal of victims' advocacy groups and there have been many attempts to ratify a federal victims' rights amendment. Originally, the National Victims' Constitutional Amendment Passage (NVCAP) sought to add a phrase to the Sixth Amendment providing rights for victims: "likewise, the victim, in every criminal prosecution, shall have the right to be present and to be heard at all critical stages of judicial proceedings." The NVCAP now advocates the addition of a separate amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would provide rights for victims at all stages of the criminal justice process. Visit the NVCAP via **https://nvcap.org**.

There have been many proposals to add a victims' rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution, starting with a joint resolution introduced in Congress in 1991. Many of these attempts have had bipartisan and presidential support, but none have been successful. However, while a victims' rights amendment to the federal Constitution may not yet be a reality, over 30 states have passed their own victims' rights

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Check Your Understanding

Figure 10-10: State Victim Rights Amendments

Restorative Justice: Making the Victim Whole Again

10.7 Describe restorative justice, and what it means to "make the victim whole again." Explain victim compensation and victim restitution.

Audio

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Much of the philosophical basis of today's victims' movement can be found in the restorative justice model. Restorative justice, which was discussed in the last chapter, emphasizes both offender accountability and victim reparation.[1138]

Restorative justice focuses on repairing the harm that is caused by criminal behavior. Restorative justice programs emphasize including everyone who was affected by the crime, including victims, offenders, and members of the community, in the resolution process. Restorative justice also encourages reintegration of both the victim and the offender back into the community, so that they can become active and contributing members of the community.

Restorative justice has both a community safety dimension and an offender accountability focus.[1139] The community safety dimension of the restorative justice philosophy recognizes that the justice system has a responsibility to protect the public from crime and

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Restorative justice has both a community safety dimension and an offender accountability focus.[1139] The community safety dimension of the restorative justice philosophy recognizes that the justice system has a responsibility to protect the public from crime and from offenders.[1140] It also recognizes that the community can participate in ensuring its own safety. The accountability element defines criminal conduct in terms of obligations incurred by the offender, both to the victim and to the community.[1141] RJ also has what some describe as a competency development element, which holds that offenders who enter the justice system should leave it more capable of participating successfully in the wider society than when they entered.

Criminal Profiles

Bill Cosby—The Public Face of the "Me-Too" Movement

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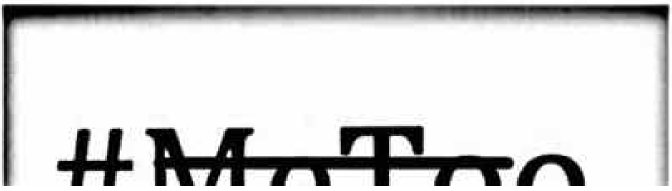
The experience of victimization is uniquely individual and highly personal. Yet sometimes entire groups of people can be victimized. That's what happened for many years to a significant number of American women who sought career advancement in professions controlled by powerful men, only to find themselves routinely subjected to unwanted sexual overtures—some of them criminal. Because of the stigma associated with such victimization, many women kept silent for decades. They regarded their victimization as something unspoken, something private, something to be ashamed of. Starting in 2017, however, a few women began to speak out against their victimizers. Soon, a social phenomenon known as the "Me Too Movement" was born.[1] The movement lent strength to women who had been too fearful to come forward and confront their tormenters. Today, hundreds of women, in dozens of professional fields, have shared their victimization experiences in hopes that doing so will put an end to the sexual inequality that fed their abuse.



Frank Schmalleger

Some of the men who have been accused of preying upon women seeking advancement include disgraced film producer Harvey Weinstein, NBC co-host Matt Lauer, Def Jam Record's Russel Simmons, actor Kevin Spacey, Amazon Studios head Roy Price, and Las Vegas resort owner Steve Wynn. Others include Olympic snowboarder Shaun White (who settled a civil suit brought by a woman who claimed sexual harassment), actor/producer Jeremy Piven, film director Morgan Spurlock, publisher of the New Republic Hamilton Fish, actor Ben Affleck, former Senator Al Franken, renowned restaurateur Mario Batali, Warner Brothers executive producer Andrew Kreisberg, Vox Media editorial director Lockhart Steele, celebrity chef John Besh, Pixar chief John Lasseter, DC Comics editor Eddie Berganza, actor Tom Sizemore, Girls writer Murray Miller, Hardball host Chris Matthews (who settled a sexual harassment complaint out of court), political journalist Mark Halperin, politician Charlie Rose, and actor Dustin Hoffman. Many other men (and some women) have also been named by women who said that they had acted inappropriately (but perhaps not criminally) in their presence. To date, only a few have been charged with crimes, and even fewer have been convicted. Among the convicted are comedian Bill Cosby and Larry Nassar, a former U.S. gymnastics doctor who was sentenced to 60 years in prison. At trial, Nassar admitted to using his position "to sexually abuse underage girls." More than 140 women and girls had underage girls." More than 140 women and girls had accused Nassar of sexual assault. The case of Bill Cosby is illustrative, not only because he was accused by numerous female victims of drugging them before forcing them into unwanted sexual intercourse, but also because he had become famous as the soft-spoken, comical "America's Dad" of the entertainment world. It was all the more surprising to many of his followers that, in 2018, the 80-year-old Cosby was convicted on three counts of aggravated indecent sexual assault.[2] Cosby had been identified by dozens of women as a sexual predator, a number of whom took the stand and testified against him in court. Cosby stands out among sex offenders in that he is a well-known comedian whose humor entertained generations of Americans. He is also a tragic figure because of the loss of his son Ennis who was murdered at the age of 27 in 1997, and the 2018 loss of his daughter, Ensa, to kidney disease.

Matt Slocum/AP Images

Some trial watchers said that the ground for Cosby's conviction in his second trial (the first ended in a hung jury) was laid by one of the first witnesses to take the stand—Dr. Barbara Ziv, a sexual assault expert. Ziv told jurors that ~~many victims of sexual~~ assault do not stand—Dr. Barbara Ziv, a sexual assault expert. Ziv told jurors that many victims of sexual assault do not report their victimization, or that if they do, it is only after months or years of dealing with the trauma they suffered.[3] Prosecutor Kristen Feden, another key figure in Cosby's trial, told The Associated Press that Cosby needed to be exposed. "That was the most sickening part of this all," she said. "When people in positions of power use that power to victimize people, I find that to be beyond disgusting."[4] Bill Cosby's roots go back to Germantown, Pennsylvania, where he was born on July 12, 1937. Cosby was one of four brothers, and his father, who was in the Navy, was gone much of the time. As the eldest son, Cosby helped steer the family and spent much of the time when he was not in school working at odd jobs to help pay the family's bills. Eventually he dropped out of high school to join the Navy, but later earned his GED through correspondence classes. A comedian all of his life, Cosby became a funny bartender when he returned from the Navy, working in a local pub. After that, his career took off, and he quickly earned two Grammy Awards, one for his album, I Started Out as a Child. His TV show, The Cosby Show, which ran on NBC TV from 1984 to 1992 held the number 1 prime-time spot for five years. Cosby's troubles with women appear to have begun when he turned 40, and soon earned a reputation as a womanizer. He told an interviewer for Ebony magazine that "You look at the enjoyment you may get from a given activity ... for example, sex with a young beautiful woman who has plenty of energy." He was pictured in the magazine staring at a beautiful young mocha-skinned woman in a tiny bikini accompanied by the caption, "One of those things you want, but are glad you can't have." The death of his son, Ennis—the boy he had once called his "Prince"—seemed to hit Cosby hard. Ennis's car had broken down at night on a California freeway, and he was shot that he had slipped drugs into their drinks and raped them, however, Cosby's positive image as an American cultural icon remained intact.

Sexual victimization, in many of its forms, appears to be an intimate part of social life not only in America, but in most parts of the world. Ironically, the #MeToo movement has yet to identify victimizers among average people—especially the lesser known or financially less successful. To date, only wealthy and powerful men who are publicly recognizable have been accused of forcing women into compromising positions. Advocates of the movement can only hope that the message they are sending today will impact both professional and personal relationships on a day-to-day basis among members of society at all levels.

The case of Bill Cosby raises several interesting questions. Among them are the following:

1. What caused Cosby to lead a secret life in which he drugged and sexually abused women? The question is important because few of the details of his early life would lead anyone to suspect that he would turn to such activity.

2. Some say that power corrupts. Was that true of Cosby, or might there have been other factors contributing to his sexual abusive behavior?

3. How many other men, both those in positions of power, and those who are less powerful, have forced women into compromising sexual situations? Should they all be prosecuted?

4. Is Cosby's behavior a reflection of American institutions and values, akin to the story that

4. Is Cosby's behavior a reflection of American institutions and values, akin to the story that started this chapter about an era in our history when lynching was routine, and those involved in the crime were largely ignored or even glorified?

5. Cosby's defense attorney, Kathleen Bliss likened his trial and the #MeToo movement to witch hunts and lynchings of earlier days because many of the accused have been assumed guilty, and their reputations ruined in the media—all without processing by the justice system. Is there any merit to her claim?

Notes:

1. Michael R. Sisak, "Prosecutors: Bill Cosby Sexual-Assault Conviction Will Stand," *SFGate*, April 29, 2018, **https://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/television/article/Prosecutors-Bill-Cosby-sexual-assault-conviction-12873280.php** (accessed August 28, 2018).

2. "Anika Reed, "Bill Cosby Spends First Night in Jail; O.J. Simpson says he Belongs in Protective Custody," *USA Today*, September 26, 2018, **https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2018/09/26/prosecutor-says-accuser-andrea-constand-happy-cosby-sentence/1430100002** (accessed September 30, 2017).

3. The Daily Dot, "Here are all the bad men of the #MeToo era," **https://www.dailydot.com/upstream/list-of-bad-men** (accessed August 28, 2018).

2. "Anika Reed, "Bill Cosby Spends First Night in Jail; O.J. Simpson says he Belongs in Protective Custody," *USA Today*, September 26, 2018, **https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2018/09/26/prosecutor-says-accuser-andrea-constand-happy-cosby-sentence/1430100002** (accessed September 30, 2017).

3. The Daily Dot, "Here are all the bad men of the #MeToo era," **https://www.dailydot.com/upstream/list-of-bad-men** (accessed August 28, 2018).

4. Chris Francescani, "How Bill Cosby's Defense Team's Vicious Strategy Backfired: Analysis," *ABC News*, **http://abcnews.go.com/US/bill-cosbys-defenseteams-vicious-strategy- backfired-analysis/story?idT784938** (accessed August 29, 2018).

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