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What Is Victimology?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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To practice looking at victims and victimization through a scientific lens.

To appreciate why objectivity is worth striving for when examining the victims' plight.

To discover why some people have a negative impression about what they brand as victimology.

To be able to recognize how victimology is similar to as well as different from criminology.

To become familiar with the steps to follow when conducting a victim-centered analysis.

FOCUSING ON THE PLIGHT OF CRIME VICTIMS

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

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

Victimology is the scientific study of the physical, emotional, and financial harm people endure because of illegal activities. Victimologists first and foremost investigate the victims' plight: the impact of the injuries and losses inflicted by offenders on the people they target. In addition, they carry out research into the public's political, social, and economic reactions to the suffering of victims. They also study how victims are handled

by officials and agencies within the criminal justice system, especially interactions with police officers, detectives, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, probation officers, and members of parole boards.

Victimologists want to know whether and to what degree crime victims experience physical wounds, economic hardships, or emotional turmoil. One aim, of course, is to devise ways to help them recover. In the aftermath of the incident, are they saddened, depressed, frightened, terrorized, traumatized, infuriated, or embittered? Also, victimologists want to find out how effectively the injured parties are being assisted, supported, served, accommodated, rehabilitated, and educated to avoid further trouble. Victimologists are equally curious to determine the extent to which their suffering is being totally ignored, largely neglected, belittled, manipulated, and commercially or politically exploited. Some individuals who sustain terrible injuries and devastating losses might be memorialized, honored, and even idolized, while others might be mocked, discredited, defamed, demeaned, socially stigmatized, and even condemned for bringing about their own misfortunes. Why is this so?

Victimologists also want to examine why some injured parties find their ordeals life transforming. Some become deeply alienated and withdraw from social relationships. They may become burdened by bouts of depression, sleep disorders, panic attacks, and stress-related illnesses. Their healing process may require overcoming feelings of helplessness, frustration, and self-blame. Others might react to their fear and fury by seeking out fellow sufferers, building alliances, and discovering ways to exercise their "agency"—to assess their options and make wise decisions, take advantage of opportunities, regain control of their lives, rebuild their self-confidence, and restore a sense of trust and security. Why do people experience such a wide range of responses, and do personality or social factors primarily determine how a person initially reacts and then recovers?

Direct or primary victims experience the criminal act and its consequences firsthand. **Indirect or secondary victims** (such as family members and loved ones) are not immediately involved or physically

injured in confrontations. But they might be burdened, even devastated, as the following examples illustrate.

A teenager who shot and killed a high school athlete is about to be sentenced to prison. The distraught father of the murdered boy tells the judge, "We always hope our little guy will come through the door, and it will never be. We don't have lives. We stay in every day. We can't function." (MacGowan, 2007)

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

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

Note that victimologists are social scientists and researchers, as opposed to practitioners who directly assist injured parties to recover from their ordeals or who advocate on their behalf. Doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, counselors, social workers, caseworkers, lawyers, clergy, and dedicated volunteers provide hands-on services, emotional support, and practical advice to their clients (see Williams, 2002). Victimologists step back and evaluate the effectiveness of these well-intentioned efforts by members of the healing and helping professions. Conversely, people who minister to those in distress can gain valuable insights and useful suggestions from the findings of studies carried out by victimologists.

The term *victimology* can mean different things to different people, and detectives can consider themselves "victimologists" too. In police work, the term *victimology* is applied to a type of background investigation. To homicide detectives, *victimology* is the process of reconstructing events and learning as much as possible about a person who was murdered in order to help figure out who the killer is (see Box 1.1).

STUDYING VICTIMIZATION SCIENTIFICALLY

The suffering of victims and of the people who are very close to them always has been a popular theme for artists and writers to interpret and for political and religious leaders to address. But this long and rich tradition embodies what might be categorized as the **subjective approach** to the plight of victims, since issues are approached from the standpoint of morality, ethics, philosophy, personalized reactions, and intense emotions. Victimologists examine these same topics and incidents from a fresh, new angle: through a social science lens. **Objectivity** is the hallmark of any social scientific endeavor. Scientific objectivity requires that the observer try to be fair, open-minded, evenhanded, dispassionate, neutral, and unbiased. Objectivity means not taking sides, not showing favoritism, not allowing personal prejudices to sidetrack analyses, not permitting emotion to cloud reasoning, and not letting the dominant views of the times dictate conclusions and recommendations.

Prescriptions to remain disinterested and uninvolved are easier to abide by when the incidents under scrutiny happened long ago and far away. It is much harder to maintain social distance when investigating the plight of real people right here and right now. These scientific tenets are extremely difficult to live up to when the subject matter—the depredations inflicted by lawbreakers—connects to widely held beliefs about good and evil, right and wrong, and justice and unfairness. Most offenders show such callous disregard and depraved

BOX 1.1 What the Police Mean by the Term *Victimology*

When homicide squad detectives say they are engaged in victimology, they mean piecing together clues and leads from the dead person's life in order to help discover the killer's identity. Police investigators want to find out as much as possible about the deceased from interviews with the next of kin and eyewitnesses, e-mail messages, diaries, banking deposits and withdrawals, computer files, and records of telephone calls.

Detectives look into the victim's associates (by compiling lists of contacts, including friends, family members, acquaintances, rivals, and enemies), social background (lifestyle, occupation, education, marital status, secret lovers), criminal history (any prior record of arrests, convictions, and incarcerations plus any cases in which the departed served as a complainant, plaintiff, or witness against others), financial situation (sources of income, debts owed, investments, and who is next in line to inherit any property), and health issues (drinking habits, substance abuse, and other problems). Autopsy findings shed light on the final meal, the presence of any traces of recent drinking and drug taking, the cause of death, and the approximate time interval when the fatal confrontation took place.

For example, if a drug dealer is found shot to death in an alley, detectives would construct a timeline of his last known

whereabouts and activities. What were his known hangouts (bars, clubs, parks, etc.)? Investigators would seek clues to determine whether he was killed by someone above him in the hierarchy of drug trafficking or someone below who worked for him or bought controlled substances from him. Was he recently embroiled in any disputes or court cases, and did he secretly serve as a confidential informant? Who had a motive and an opportunity to slay him? (NYPD homicide detectives, 2008). When police discovered the scattered remains of a number of young women in a stretch of deserted sand dunes near a popular beach, their victimological inquiries soon established a common thread: that they all had been prostitutes apparently slain by a serial killer (Swartz, 2013).

Clearly, whereas victimologists want to uncover trends, patterns, and regularities that hold true for many injured parties in general, police investigators seek to establish in great detail everything that can be unearthed about the life and death of a particular person. "Forensic victimology" in this very pragmatic and immediate sense is undertaken to increase the odds of solving a case, apprehending a suspect, and testifying in court on behalf of a person who is no longer able to pursue justice on his or her own (see Petherick and Turvey, 2008).

indifference toward the human beings they have cold-bloodedly targeted as depersonalized objects that it is difficult to avoid being caught up and swept away by strong emotional currents. Consider how natural it is to identify with those on the receiving end of violent attacks, to feel empathy and sympathy toward them, and to bristle with hostility toward the aggressors, as in the following real-life cases (all involving college students):

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

A 22-year-old college student who aspires to become a police officer works in a bakery. But he is gunned down in his home by a gang of young men who barge in and mistake him for his look-alike younger brother, who had gotten them in trouble with the authorities. "He was one of the best boys you will ever find," his mother laments. (Bultman and Jaccarino, 2010)

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

add, "We are devastated by the loss of our beautiful daughter." (Martinez, 2014)

A classroom door swings open, and a mentally deranged undergraduate barges in and shoots the professor who is lecturing by the blackboard. Then, starting with those in the front rows, the silent and expressionless gunman methodically starts firing away at the horrified students, who hit the floor and turn over desks to shield themselves. "There were a couple of screams, but for the most part it was eerily silent, other than the gunfire," a student reports. As the mass murderer wanders off, another student recalls, "I told people that were still up and conscious, 'Just be quiet because we don't want him to think there are people in here because he'll come back in.'" Indeed, he tries to return to resume the slaughter, but a wounded classmate keeps the door wedged shut. Still determined to reenter into the classroom, the deeply disturbed young man fires repeatedly at the door. When he eventually stalks off, frantic students call 911 on their cell phones and holler for help out the windows. The attacker is later found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head, in another classroom, alongside the bodies of some other undergrads he murdered. (Hernandez, 2007)

Doesn't basic human decency demand that observers identify with the wounded, fallen, downtrodden, and underdogs and condemn vicious predatory behavior? Why would anyone even consider striving for objectivity to be an indispensable prerequisite of each and every scientific analysis?

WHY OBJECTIVITY IS DESIRABLE

At first glance, the importance of reserving judgments, refraining from jumping to conclusions, and resisting the urge to side with those who are in pain might not be self-evident. An angry, gut reaction might be to ask, "What kind of person would try to remain detached and dispassionate in the midst of such intense suffering? What is wrong with championing the interests of people whose

lives have been upended by unjust and illegal actions? Why is neutrality a worthwhile starting point in any analysis?"

The simple and direct answer to the question "Why shouldn't victimologists be openly, unabashedly, and consistently pro-victim?" is that, unlike the situations described in the examples above, on many occasions this formula offers no real guidance. So when is a person worthy of sympathy and support? Most people would consider an individual to be an innocent victim only when the following conditions apply (what sociologists would call the **ideal type** or positive stereotype): The person who suffered harm was weaker in comparison to the apparent aggressor and was acting virtuously (or at least was engaged in conventional activities and was not looking for trouble or breaking any laws), the wrongdoer was a complete stranger whose predatory behavior obviously was illegal and unprovoked, and the one who resorted to force was not a member of a governmental agency authorized to use coercion (such as police officers or prison guards). Using the language of sociology, the status of being a legitimate or bona fide victim worthy of support is socially constructed and conferred (see Christie, 1986; and Dignan, 2005).

Sometimes It Is Difficult to Distinguish Victims from Villains

But real-life confrontations do not consistently generate simple clear-cut cases that neatly fall into the dichotomies of good and evil, innocence and guilt. Not all victims were weak, defenseless, unsuspecting "lamb" who, through tragic or ironic circumstances or just plain bad luck, were pounced upon by cunning, vicious "wolves." In some instances, observers may have reasonable doubts and honest disagreements over which party in a conflict should be labeled the victim and which should be stigmatized as the villain. These complicated situations dramatize the need for impartiality when untangling convoluted relationships in order to make a rational argument and a sound legal determination that one person should be arrested, prosecuted, and punished, and the other defended, supported, and assisted. Unlike the black-and-white examples

presented above, many messy incidents reported in the news and processed by the courts embody shades of gray. Clashes frequently take place between two people who, to varying degrees, are simultaneously both victims, or both wrongdoers. Consider the following two accounts of iconic, highly publicized incidents from past decades that illustrate just how difficult it can be to establish exactly who seriously misbehaved and who acted appropriately:

A wealthy couple are at home in their mansion watching television and eating ice cream when someone shoots the man point-blank in the back of the head and then blasts his wife with a shotgun a number of times in the face. The police search for the killers for six months before the couple's two sons, 21 and 18, concede that they did it. In a nationally televised trial for first-degree murder and facing possible execution, the sons give emotionally compelling (but uncorroborated) testimony describing how their father sexually molested and mentally abused them when they were little boys. The brothers contend they acted in self-defense, believing that their parents were about to murder them to keep the alleged incestuous acts a family secret. The prosecution argues that these boys killed their parents in order to get their hands on their \$14 million inheritance (they had quickly spent \$700,000 on luxury cars, condos, and fashionable clothing before they were arrested). The jurors become deadlocked over whether to find them guilty of murder or only of the lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter, and the judge declares a mistrial. In the second trial, the prosecution ridicules their "abuse excuse" defense. The jury convicts them of premeditated murder and sentences them to life in prison without parole. Soon afterwards, each brother gets married (the older one divorces and has a second wedding behind bars) even though the prison system does not permit conjugal visits for life. (Berra, 1994; Mydans, 1994; Associated Press, 1996a; and Hubbard, 2012)

An ex-Marine who works as a bouncer in a bar wakes up in his bed and discovers to his horror that his wife has sliced off his penis with a kitchen knife.

Arrested for "malicious wounding," she tells the police that she mutilated him because earlier that evening in a drunken stupor he forced himself upon her. He is put on trial for marital sexual abuse but is acquitted by a jury that does not believe her testimony about a history of beatings, involuntary rough sex, and other humiliations. When she is indicted on felony charges (ironically, by the same prosecutor) for the bloody bedroom assault, many people rally to her side. To her supporters, she has undercut the debilitating stereotype of female passivity; she literally disarmed him with a single stroke and threw the symbol of male sexual dominance out the window. To her detractors, she is a master of manipulation, publicly playing the role of a sobbing battered wife deserving of sympathy to divert attention from her act of rage against a sleeping husband who had lost his sexual interest in her. Facing up to 20 years in prison, she declines to plead guilty to a lesser charge and demands her day in court. The jury accepts her defense—that she was traumatized, deeply depressed, beset by flashbacks, and susceptible to "irresistible impulses" because of years of cruelty and abuse—and finds her not guilty by reason of temporary insanity. After 45 days under observation in a mental hospital, she is released. Soon afterwards, the couple divorces, and then they each take financial advantage of all the international media coverage, sensationalism, titillation, voyeurism, and sexual politics surrounding their deeply troubled relationship. Over the years, he is arrested seven times, gets married three more times, stars in porn movies, and brags that about 70 women have been sexually attracted to him because of his ordeal and re-attachment surgery. She is arrested for punching her mother but then sets up a charitable organization that attempts to prevent domestic violence. (Margolick, 1994; Sachs, 1994; and Moye, 2013)

In both of the classic cases that were resolved by the criminal justice system years ago in ways that caused quite an uproar and still provoke many heated discussions, the persons officially designated as the victims by the police and prosecutors—the dead parents, the slashed husband—arguably could be considered by certain standards as wrongdoers

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

Now consider three confusing and controversial cases that made headlines and provoked heated public debates in recent years:

A 17-year-old boy wearing a hooded sweatshirt on a rainy night is on the phone with his girlfriend as he walks home from a store after buying a can of soda and some candy. A member of a neighborhood watch group on patrol in a gated community of townhouses that has recently suffered a rash of break-ins drives by, spots him, and calls the police, voicing his suspicions that, “He is up to no good. . . .” The 911 dispatcher tells the 28-year-old man, who had taken some criminal justice courses at a community college, not to follow and confront the youth. But he does, and after he gets out of his SUV, they exchange words and become embroiled in a fistfight. Neighbors hear someone screaming and pleading for help, and call 911. When officers arrive, they find the man bloodied and the teenager dead from a bullet to his heart. The man claims that he was the actual victim and that he had a right to fire his licensed handgun in self-defense. When the news spreads that the local police department has decided not to arrest the armed crime watch volunteer, demonstrations erupt across the country, demanding his arrest as an overzealous police wannabe who acted as a vigilante. Protesters also condemn provisions of the state’s “stand your ground” law for causing needless bloodshed and denounce the shooter for engaging in racial profiling because he trailed after what he deemed to be a “suspicious outsider.” The local police chief steps down, the county prosecutor and the Justice Department re-open the investigation, and President Obama identifies with the unnamed youth who was tragically and needlessly killed, telling journalists that, “If I had a son, he’d look like [the victim].” A jury of six women acquits the defendant of charges of second

degree murder, and even of the lesser charge of manslaughter. The jurors reject the prosecution’s version of the events: that the man had deliberately pursued the hoodie-clad black teenager and instigated the fight that led to the fatal shooting. The jury accepts the injured man’s contention that the teenager knocked him to the ground, punched him and repeatedly slammed his head against the sidewalk; and that he was justified in firing to protect himself because he feared grave bodily harm or death. The testimony and evidence at the trial does not clearly resolve key questions about what really happened that rainy night: who initiated the confrontation and started the fight by throwing the first punch, who screamed for help, and at what point was the handgun drawn? Angry protesters insisting that the dead teen was the genuine victim chant, “No justice, no peace.” After the controversial “not guilty” verdict, the man is featured in the news several times for brushes with the law involving violent outbursts. (Alvarez and Buckley, 2013; and Jauregui, 2014)

At around 4:30 am, a 55-year-old white man hears loud pounding and shouting at his front door and then at his side door. He grabs a shotgun and fires a blast through his locked screen door into the face of a teenage black girl standing on his front porch, killing her instantly. He is arrested and put on trial. Although he initially told the police that his weapon discharged accidentally, he tells the jury that he thought his home was about to be invaded by several intruders and, fearing for his life, vowed that “I wasn’t going to cover in my house, I didn’t want to be a victim.” The prosecution contends that he went to the door armed because he wanted to confront and frighten vandals who had defaced his vehicle with paintballs a few weeks earlier. The jury rejects his claim of firing in self-defense, and finds the man guilty of second degree murder and manslaughter. The young woman he killed turned out to be 19, unarmed, and intoxicated. Apparently she was making a commotion because she was seeking help after being involved in a car crash nearby several hours earlier. (Anderson, 2014; and Abby-Lambertz, 2014)

A 29-year-old mother of 3 enters her home to gather her belongings so she can escape from her abusive estranged husband, whose periodic beatings have inflicted injuries that have sent her to a hospital. But he returns home unexpectedly, accompanied by two of her stepsons. The 10-year-old and 13-year-old watch in horror as he beats and strangles her. She runs into the garage to get into her car but finds herself trapped, so she grabs her licensed handgun and returns to their house. When he curses and charges towards her, she fires what she contends are three warning shots into the kitchen ceiling to ward him off. But he calls the police, and her shots are viewed as angry attempts to hurt or kill him and his sons. She rejects a plea offer and is put on trial, and after the jury deliberates for a mere 12 minutes, she is convicted of three counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, which could keep her in prison for 20 years. A grassroots movement of supporters fights for her release and for the charges to be dropped, viewing her as a battered woman who used a weapon to defend herself from imminent bodily injury. When her conviction is overturned because of faulty jury instructions, the prosecution vows to retry her and to seek consecutive sentences that would keep her behind bars for 60 years. (Shepard, 2014)

In all three of these recent high-profile cases presented above, one other question arose: whether the race of the participants, and especially whether negative racial stereotypes, colors the thinking of various groups about which person should be designated as the genuine victim (see Ghandnoosh, 2014). Also, in all three of these cases, individuals perceiving themselves to be facing a threat of imminent bodily harm reached for their gun, triggering a debate between advocates of armed self-defense and supporters of gun control legislation (the arguments of both sides of this controversy appear in Chapter 13). Sharply different points of view were aired in dinner table discussions, news media columnists' interpretations, courtroom proceedings, and even political rallies about the role of race in decision making and about the use of deadly weapons for self-protection. These are the kind of issues that victimologists need to study scientifically.

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

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

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

Criminals Can Be Victims Too

To further complicate matters, impartiality is called for when the injured party clearly turns out to be an undeniable lawbreaker. To put it bluntly, predators prey upon each other as well as upon innocent members of the general public. Some assaults and slayings surely can be characterized as

"criminal-on-criminal." Researchers (see Singer, 1981; and Fattah, 1990) noted long ago that people who routinely engage in illegal activities are more likely to get hurt than their law-abiding counterparts. When an organized crime syndicate "puts out a contract" on a rival faction's chieftain, the gangster who gets "whacked" in a "mob rub-out" is not an upstanding citizen struck down by an act of randomly directed violence. Similarly, when a turf battle erupts between drug dealers and one vanquishes the other, it must be remembered that the loser aspired to be the victor. When youth gangs feud with each other by carrying out "drive-by" shootings, the young members who get gunned down are casualties of their own brand of retaliatory "street justice." Hustlers, con men, high-stakes gamblers, pimps, prostitutes, fences, swindlers, smugglers, traffickers, and others living life in the fast lane of the underworld often get hurt because they enter into showdowns with volatile persons known to be armed and dangerous. What could it possibly mean to be pro-victim in these rather common cases in which lawbreakers harm other wrongdoers? The designations "victim" and "offender" are not always at opposite poles but sometimes can be pictured as overlapping categories somewhere near the middle of a continuum bounded by complete innocence and full legal responsibility.

Of course, it is possible for people engaged in illicit activities to be genuine victims qualifying for protection and redress through the courts. For example, prostitutes who trade sexual favors for money are frequently beaten by sadistic johns, robbed of their earnings by exploitative pimps (see Boyer and James, 1983; and Brents and Hausbeck, 2005), and occasionally targeted by serial killers. The harms they suffer are more serious than the "offenses" they commit (see Coston, 2004). Similarly, drug addicts who get beaten and robbed merit assistance. Next, consider the possibility of the intergenerational transmission of misusing force—a cycle of violence over time that transforms a victim into a victimizer (see Fagan, Piper, and Cheng, 1987). For example, a child subjected to periodic beatings might grow up to parent his sons in the same excessively punitive way he was

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

Even more confusing are the situations of certain groups of people who continuously switch roles as they lead their messy and deeply troubled daily lives. For instance, desperate heroin addicts are repeatedly subjected to consumer fraud (dealers constantly cheat them by selling heavily adulterated packets of this forbidden powder). Nevertheless, after being swindled over and over again by their suppliers, they routinely go out and steal other people's property to raise the cash that pays for their habits (see Kelly, 1983). Similarly, teenage girls who engage in prostitution are arrested by the police and sent to juvenile court as delinquents, in accordance with the law. But reformers picture them as sexually abused by their pimps and by johns who actually commit statutory rape upon these underage sex workers. Are they victims who need help rather than offenders who deserve punishment (see Kristof, 2011)? To further complicate matters, offenders can morph into victims right under the noses of the authorities. For example, when delinquents are thrown in with older and tougher inmates in adult jail, these teenagers face grave risks of being physically and sexually assaulted ("New study," 2008). In penal institutions, convicts become victims entitled to press charges and to protection when they are assaulted, gang raped, or robbed by other more vicious inmates (who seek to stifle any complaining and reporting as "snitching"). About half of all inmates in state prisons told interviewers that they had been shot at in

their past lives on the street, and more than a fifth had been wounded by gunfire (Harlow, 2001).

Violence begets violence, to the extent that those who suffer today may be inclined to inflict pain on others tomorrow. For example, a group of picked-upon students might band together to ambush their bullying tormentors; or a battered wife might launch a vengeful surprise attack against her brutal husband.

Victims Can Find Themselves at Odds with the "Good Guys"

Striving for objectivity is important for yet another reason. Crime victims can and do become embroiled in conflicts with persons and groups besides the perpetrators who have directly inflicted physical wounds and economic losses. Injured parties might nurse grievances against journalists reporting about their cases; police officers and detectives investigating their complaints; prosecutors ostensibly representing them in court; defense attorneys working on behalf of the accused; juries and judges deciding how to resolve their cases; probation, parole, and corrections officers supervising convicts who harmed them; lawyers handling their lawsuits in civil court; governmental agencies and legislative bodies shaping their legal rights; social movements either speaking on their behalf or opposing their wishes; and businesses viewing them as eager customers for security products and services. Impartiality helps social scientists to understand why friction can develop in these situations and how to find solutions if these relationships become antagonistic.

First consider the situation in which some victims are pitted against others. This can arise in the aftermath of a Ponzi scheme collapse, when it comes to parceling out whatever funds remain to the many investors who were defrauded. Those investors who bought in and cashed out earlier made money at the expense of those who jumped in right before the pyramid scheme was uncovered (see Henriques, 2010). Which victims are truly the "good guys," and which are more deserving of inaccurate depictions than others? Objectivity

is needed to resolve this victim versus victim infighting.

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

Third, consider those situations where well-intentioned officials and groups put forward competing criminal justice policies, both of which claim to be pro-victim. For instance, prosecutors' offices have adopted one or the other of two alternative ways of responding to violence between intimate partners. One policy enables a battered woman to remain in control of "her" case and ultimately decide if she wants to press charges against her husband or lover whom she had arrested for assaulting her. Advocates of letting her choose whether to prosecute or not emphasize that this approach empowers her to weigh her alternatives and take her personal safety into account. The other policy mandates that the prosecution of the arrestee should go forward on the basis of the available evidence (police officer testimony, photos of bruises, eyewitness accounts, hospital records, and 911 recordings), even if the injured party wants to drop the charges (either because she fears reprisals or seeks rapprochement). Supporters of this policy believe that when batterers know they will be held responsible and punished, domestic violence will subside as a societal problem. In other words, her ability to determine what she wants to do about her individual situation must be sacrificed for the "greater good," which is to use cases like hers to generally deter would-be batterers from assaulting their partners. Only an impartial analysis of scientifically gathered evidence can determine which of these two ostensibly pro-victim approaches best serves the long-term interests of most domestic violence victims (see O'Sullivan, Davis, Farole, and Rempel, 2007; and Nichols, 2014).

The Pentagon has tried for several decades to reduce the number of sexual assaults inflicted by

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

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

The mission of police departments is to protect and serve the public, and most people respect and admire the courage of officers who risk their lives to rescue hostages taken by kidnapers. But who would a person who is pro-victim as well as pro-police side with when these well-intentioned officers accidentally kill by “friendly fire” a captive they are seeking to free from the clutches of a captor? Would they agree

with the distraught relatives who launch civil lawsuits for damages that criticize the department for inadequate training and an overreliance on military-style SWAT tactics rather than hostage negotiation techniques, or would they stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the police fraternal organizations that predictably insist that the courageous officer did nothing wrong? Clearly, objectivity is called for when examining the effectiveness of existing law enforcement strategies and departmental policies in these tragedies that periodically seize the attention of the news media and the public (for example, see Dewan, 2005; Rubin, 2008; Murphy, 2014; and Haake, 2014).

People who are pro-choice would agree that a girl or woman who has been compelled to submit to incestuous relations or a forced penetration that results in a pregnancy should not have to bear the rapist's child. But those who want to minimize the suffering of these females and yet are also passionately pro-life might find themselves torn between their conflicting loyalties. This dilemma is fought out in public whenever candidates running for office declare their support for strict antiabortion bills that would permit no exceptions, not even for terminating pregnancies resulting from incest or rape (see Redden, 2013). Evaluating the impact of these controversial policies and proposals about terminating desperately unwanted pregnancies requires an open-minded and even-handed approach to the arguments advanced by both sides about how many pregnancies each year arise from incest or rape, and what are the consequences for the mother who is compelled to bear the rapist's child and for that baby as it grows up. In many states, the man, unless he is convicted of rape, can sue for visitation and custody rights, like any other estranged father (see Chapter 10).

SOURCES OF BIAS THAT THWART OBJECTIVITY

To sum up the arguments presented in earlier sections, when choosing projects to research and when gathering and interpreting data, victimologists must put aside their personal political orientations toward

criminal justice policies (such as conservatism or liberalism); their allegiances to causes (such as preserving civil liberties or advancing women's rights or outlawing abortion); and any positive or negative feelings toward entire groups (such as being pro-police or hostile to gun owners). Advocacy, whether for or against some policy or practice, should be kept separate from assessing the facts or drawing conclusions based on the available data. Scientific skepticism in the face of claims ("Prove it! Where is the evidence?")—not self-interest or preconceived notions—must prevail when evaluating whether victims' rights legislation, prevention strategies, antitheft hardware, and recovery programs genuinely work or are ineffective or even counterproductive in reaching their stated goals. Expert opinion, in reports, in court testimony, or in the classroom, must be based on facts, not faith. Research, policy analyses, and program evaluations must tell the whole truth, no matter who is disappointed or insulted.

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

A second type of bias derives from the legacy of the discipline itself. The language, concepts, theories, and research priorities can reflect the collective preferences and priorities of its founders and their followers. For instance, it is widely acknowledged that the pioneers in this field of study introduced a victim-blaming orientation into the new discipline, but over the decades the tide has decisively turned. Today, the vast majority

of victimologists make no secret of their opposite commitments: not to find fault with those who are suffering but rather to devise more effective means of aid, support, and recovery.

Although subtle, a third type of bias can be traced back to the mood of the times. Victimologists, like all other members of a society, are influenced by their social environment. The events that shape public opinion during different periods of time can also affect scientific thought. During the 1960s and early 1970s, for example, many people demanded that the government devise ways to help victims get back on their feet financially, medically, and emotionally. This insistence about expanding the social safety net to cushion the blows inflicted not only by corporations laying off workers and hospitals and doctors charging exorbitant fees for medical treatments but also by criminals reflected the spirit of egalitarianism and mutual aid of this stage in American history. The belief that society—through the instrument of the government—could and should do more to help out inspired a great deal of research and policy advocacy. But these ambitious goals have been voiced less often ever since the 1980s, when the themes of "strive for self-reliance," "reduce social spending by government," and "cut taxes" gained popularity. This emphasis on individuals taking responsibility for their own well-being as opposed to holding the socioeconomic system accountable for its shortcomings and failings (especially chronically high rates of unemployment and a growing gap between the super rich and the desperately poor) has become the dominant ideology since the financial meltdown of 2008 and the onset of the "Great Recession." Consequently, research projects and proposals about government-funded victim assistance programs have shifted their focus to matters such as only providing seed money for demonstration projects, imposing "sunset provisions" (to phase out efforts that don't rapidly produce results), stressing cost effectiveness, and exploring the feasibility of self-help, privately financed, or faith-based charitable alternatives.

Clearly, inquiries into how victims suffer at the hands of criminals as well as other groups such as

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

For the purposes of a textbook, the best course of action is to present all sides of controversial issues. Nevertheless, space limitations impose hard choices. This book focuses almost entirely on victims of interpersonal violence and theft (street crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, assault, kidnapping, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft). There are many other categories of lawbreaking: crimes in the suites involving a betrayal of trust and an abuse of power by high government officials against their rivals or to the detriment of the general public, and by corporate executives who can illegally inflict massive losses and injuries upon their company's workers, customers, stock owners, or competitors. White-collar crimes such as embezzlement by employees against their employers or fraud by citizens against government programs also impose much greater financial costs than street crimes. Organized rackets run by mobsters (drug smuggling, gun trafficking, counterfeiting of documents and currency, gambling, extortion) generate millions of dollars, undermine everyday life, and stimulate official corruption (bribes to look the other way). Crimes without complainants—victimless activities to some, vice to others—are controversial because the social reaction and criminal justice response might be worse than the original deviant behavior involving transactions between consenting adults (such as prostitution, illegal wagering, and street-level drug selling and buying). Clearly these other categories of crimes are as serious and merit attention from scholars, law enforcement agencies, and concerned citizens.

But they are not the types of lawless deeds that come to mind when people talk about "the crime problem" or express fears about being harmed. Street crime scares the public, preoccupies the media, keeps police departments busy, and captures the notice of politicians. These conventional, ordinary, depressingly familiar, and all-too-common predatory acts have tangible, visible, and readily identifiable victims who are directly affected and immediately aware of their injuries and losses.

In contrast, in the other categories of crime, especially white-collar crime and crime in the suites, the deleterious consequences are experienced by abstractions (such as "a competitive economy" or "national security"), impersonal entities (such as the U.S. Treasury or multinational corporations), or vaguely defined collectivities (such as voters, taxpayers, investors, shareholders, or consumers). It is difficult to grasp precisely who has suffered in these cases, and it is nearly impossible to describe or measure the background characteristics or reactions of the injured parties. It is extremely tough to establish in court specifically who the flesh-and-blood victims are in cases of drug smuggling, money laundering, insurance scams, false advertising, bribe taking, software piracy, counterfeiting of trademarked goods, dumping of toxic wastes, insider trading, electoral fraud, illegal campaign contributions, and income tax evasion. But individuals hurt by assailants, robbers, and rapists can be easily identified, observed, contacted, interviewed, studied, counseled, assisted legally, and treated medically. As a result, a wealth of statistical data has accumulated about their wounds, losses, and emotional reactions. For these reasons, victims of interpersonal violence and theft will be the primary focus of attention and concern throughout this text, even though many of the illegal activities cited above inflict much more severe social and economic damage (see Naim, 2005). But note that this decision immediately introduces a bias into this introduction to the field of victimology, one that reflects the experiences of authors of articles and textbooks, the collective priorities of the discipline's founders and most prolific researchers, and the mood of the times!

Victimology's Undeserved "Bad Reputation"

Not very long after the term entered mainstream culture, *victimology* (undeservedly!) became a "dirty word." Some prominent and insightful people who ought to know better misuse "victimology" as an epithet spit out through clenched teeth. This disturbing trend emerged during the 1990s and unfortunately is becoming even more entrenched and pronounced during the twenty-first century. For example, in an article condemning a speech delivered by President Obama, an editor of a political journal used the term *victimology* in a negative way four times (such as "Obama has now put the presidential imprimatur on the crudest kind of racial victimology....") (MacDonald, 2013). Similarly, a former speechwriter for President Bush wrote an editorial headlined, "The Victimology of Hillary Clinton" (Frum, 2014). And a nationally syndicated radio talk show host, responding to a caller who characterized "victimology" as a mindset about feeling guilty for being privileged, responded, "But this whole notion of victimology, I totally get it" (Limbaugh, 2014)—but does he really? Some dramatic illustrations of how victimology has been bad-mouthed in the media as muddled thinking or even denounced as a contemptible point of view over the years appear in Box 1.2.

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

Evidently, those who condemn what they label "victimology" are railing at something other than scientific research focused on people harmed by criminals. The mistake these commentators are making is parallel to the improper usage of the phrase "sociological forces" rather than "social forces," and "psychological problems" instead of "mental problems." Victimology is just one of many "-ologies" (including such narrowly focused fields of study as volcanology, penology, or suicidology, or such broad disciplines as sociology and psychology). The suffix *-ology* merely means "the study of." If the phrase "the objective study of

crime victims" is substituted for "victimology" in the excerpts quoted above, the sentences make no sense. Victimology, sociology, and psychology are disciplines that adopt a certain approach to their subject matter or a method of analysis that maintains a particular focus, but they do not impose a partisan point of view or yield a set of predictably biased conclusions.

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

For example, in a well-known speech in 1964 (right before Congress passed civil rights legislation officially dismantling segregation), Malcolm X, the fiery spokesman for the black nationalist movement, adopted a victimist outlook when he proclaimed (see Breitman, 1966) "I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism ... victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy ... I'm speaking as a victim of this American dream system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare." A victimist review of the history of African Americans up to the present would stress how the evils of slavery were "perfectly legal"; how Jim Crow segregation and institutionalized racism in housing, employment, education, and public accommodations until the 1950s were permitted by a Supreme Court decision; how lynch mobs rarely got into trouble for their extrajudicial

BOX 1.2 Some Striking Examples of "Victimology Bashing"**The context and then the statement denouncing "victimology"***Concerning male/female relations:*

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

Concerning heterosexual/homosexual relations:

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

Concerning race and ethnic relations:

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

- A newspaper columnist and political activist (Kuhner, 2011) lamented: "Victimology and racial set-asides dominate large swathes of American life, from university admissions and government bureaucracies to big business and construction."

Concerning international relations:

- A former Soviet intelligence officer (Facepa, 2005) denounced the United Nations as a breeding ground for "a virulent strain of hatred for America, grown from the bacteria of Communism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, jingoism, and victimology."
- A prominent commentator (Brooks, 2006a) wrote about the public's perception of the Middle East: "What these Americans see is fanatical violence, a rampant culture of victimology and grievance, a tendency by many Arabs to blame anyone but themselves for the problems they create."
- A reviewer (Anderson, 2005) of a book about the war on terrorism wrote: "The Left's victimology now sickens (the author)."
- The secretary of defense in both the Bush and Obama administrations (Gates, 2009) told members of the armed forces: "I think most of our families don't regard themselves as victims and don't appreciate sometimes the victimology piece. They are very proud of the service of their soldiers overseas...."

Concerning "culture wars":

- In his syndicated column, a leading conservative partisan (Buckley, 1994, p. 30a) condemned the thinking of the 1960s Woodstock generation: "The countercultural music is the perfect accompaniment for the culture of sexual self-indulgence, of exhibitionism, of crime and illegitimacy, and ethnic rancor and victimology."

Concerning courtroom strategies:

- A news magazine columnist (Leo, 2002) took a swipe at certain lawsuits: "Yes, everybody is a victim now, but some breakthroughs in victimology are more noteworthy than others. The year's best example was the trio of supersize teens who sued McDonald's, claiming the burger chain made them fat by enticing them to eat its meals nearly every day for five years."
- In a critique of several jury verdicts that found defendants "not guilty," a news magazine commentator (Leo, 1994) complained, "We are deep into the era of the abuse excuse. The doctrine of victimology—claiming

(Continued)

BOX 1.2 (Continued)

victim status means you are not responsible for your actions—is beginning to warp the legal system.... The irony of this seems to escape victimologists. A movement that began with the slogan, 'Don't blame the victim' now strives to blame murder victims for their own deaths."

Concerning academia and life on college campuses:

- A columnist (Seebach, 1999, p. 28) berated liberal professors for producing college grads whom employers would reject because the students were "experts only in victimology or oppression studies."
- A political analyst (MacDonald, 2007) interpreted the selection of a new university president as evidence that "Harvard will now be the leader in politically correct victimology."

- Arguing that resentment against highly educated candidates might be going too far during the 2008 presidential campaign, a political analyst (MacDonald, 2008c) agreed with her allies: "I am as depressed as anyone by the university's descent into ignorant narcissism and victimology over the last 30 years."

Concerning everyday life:

- A Pulitzer Prize-winning conservative commentator (Will, 1998, p. 42) titled his syndicated column opposing the Clinton administration's antimoking campaign as "President feeds the culture of victimology."
- One journalist (Parker, 1999, p. 810) even insisted that "Americans are fed up with twentieth-century victimology."

murders; how Klan terror often went unpunished; and how injustices within the criminal justice process such as police brutality and racial profiling continue right up to the present.

Similarly, a leading figure in the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s analyzed "sexual politics" in a victimist way (Millet, 1970): "Oppressed groups have been denied education, economic independence, the power of office, representation, an image of dignity and self-respect, equality of status, and recognition as human beings. Throughout history women have been consistently denied all of these, and their denial today, while attenuated and partial, is nevertheless consistent." A victimist perspective about the history of female oppression would point out how in the past girls and young women who testified that they had been raped felt as if they were put on trial; how battered women's pleas for help were ignored by the men at the helm of the criminal justice system; and how females were barred from serving on juries and were strongly discouraged from pursuing various careers, such as becoming a police officer, lawyer, or judge.

Staunch critics of current conditions often connect the dots by tracing the roots of today's

social problems back through centuries of systematic subjugation. Activists believe that the unfair practices of the past persist right up to the present. But the commentators cited in Box 1.2 claim that adopting this kind of victimist orientation leads to an unhealthy preoccupation of dwelling on past wrongs that impedes efforts to make progress today.

This debate over who or what is to blame for persisting injustices surrounding sex, class, and race is part of an ongoing political battle for the hearts and minds of the American people—a continuing ideological struggle that is often categorized as "identity politics," which is part of the "culture wars." Unfortunately, victimology has become confused with victimism and as a result has been caught up in the cross fire between partisans of the Right and Left. But victimology, as an "-ology" and not an "-ism," is an objective, neutral, open-minded, and evenhanded scientific endeavor that does not take sides, play favorites, or speak with just one voice in these political debates. So there is no reason to condemn the whole scholarly enterprise of victimology and dismiss it as flawed, distorted, or slanted, as the commentators quoted in Box 1.2 did. To put it bluntly,

victimology has received a bum rap by those who mockingly equate it with victimism. Read on and this confusion will be dispelled. Victimology will take shape as a challenging, meaningful, balanced, enlightening, socially constructive, and relevant field of study that focuses on a very old problem from a fresh, new angle.

WHY EMPHASIZE RESEARCH?

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

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

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

Everyone knows what happened in the immediate aftermath, since—unfortunately—violence on college campuses has erupted many times in recent decades. Students in nearby classrooms heard a commotion and set up makeshift barricades while the 20 distraught students raced away in a panic from the scene of the potential slaughter and immediately sought out counselors provided by the administration, right? Wrong! Only a few were openly emotional and cried. Most were in a state

of denial and milled around the entrance to the building kidding each other about their near-death experience, dismissing it as though it was trivial. No one called the campus mental health center right away. Most sought out the company of friends or hung out in nearby bars, according to two researchers who interviewed some of the students who thought they were about to die that fateful day (Asmusen and Creswell, 1995).

Next consider what is "known" about robbers: They single out targets that they consider weak and vulnerable, who are easy prey and are unlikely to put up much of a struggle to escape or to try to overpower and capture them. Therefore, it seems predictable that elderly ladies would be robbed much more often than young men, right? Wrong. Data derived from a national survey of the public carried out by a government agency, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, each year reveals that robbers go after teenage boys and young men much more often than older women.

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

Research is always needed because unexpected findings often are uncovered. Victimologists rely upon the same methods used by all social scientists: case studies, surveys and polls based on questionnaires and interviews, carefully designed social experiments, content analyses of various forms of

communication (like movies and song lyrics), secondary analyses of documents and files, records of focus group interactions, and up close and personal ethnographic inquiries based upon systematic field observations.

COMPARING VICTIMOLOGY TO CRIMINOLOGY

Victimology is an interdisciplinary field that benefits from the contributions of sociologists, psychologists, social workers, political scientists, doctors, nurses, criminal justice officials, lawyers, spiritual leaders, and other professionals, volunteers, advocates, and activists. But academically and organizationally, victimology is best conceived of as an area of specialization within criminology, on par with other fields of intensive study, such as delinquency, drug abuse, and penology. All these subdisciplines merit elective courses and textbooks of their own in colleges and graduate programs. In other words, criminology is the older parent discipline and victimology is the recent offshoot.

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

The Many Parallels between Criminology and Victimology

Even though it is a rapidly evolving subdiscipline, victimology parallels its parent, criminology, in many ways. Criminologists ask why certain individuals become involved in lawbreaking while others do not. Their studies concentrate on the offenders' backgrounds and motives in order to uncover the root causes of their misbehavior. Victimologists ask why some individuals, households, and entities (such as banks) are targeted while others are not. Research projects aim to discover the sources of vulnerability to criminal attack and the reasons why some victims might act carelessly, behave recklessly, or even instigate others to attack them.

Criminologists recognize that most people occasionally break certain laws (especially during adolescence) but are otherwise law-abiding; only some who engage in delinquent acts graduate to become hardcore offenders and career criminals. Victimologists realize that anyone can suffer the misfortune of being at the wrong place at the wrong time but wonder why certain individuals are preyed upon over and over again.

Although the law holds offenders personally accountable for their illegal conduct, criminologists explore how social, economic, and political conditions "breed" or foster or generate criminal activity. Similarly, although certain victims might be accused of sharing some degree of responsibility with their offenders for the outbreak of specific incidents, victimologists examine personality traits, agents of socialization, and cultural imperatives that compel some people to take chances and put their lives in danger (like teenagers), while others seem to accept their fate. Just as aggressive criminal behavior can be learned, victims may have been taught to lead high-risk lifestyles or alternatively, even to play and accept their subordinate roles.

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

Criminologists apply their findings to devise local, regional, and national crime-prevention strategies. Victimologists scrutinize the patterns and trends they detect to learn from other people's misfortunes and mistakes. They then develop personalized victimization-prevention strategies and risk reduction tactics.

Both criminologists and victimologists study how the criminal justice system actually works, in

contrast to the way the system is supposed to operate according to agency regulations, official roles, federal and state legislation, court decisions, and politicians' promises. Criminological research reveals how suspects, defendants, and convicts are really handled, while victim-centered studies examine the way injured parties are actually treated by police officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges. Criminologists assess the needs of offenders for counseling, psychotherapy, additional education, job training, and drug treatment. In addition, criminologists evaluate the effectiveness of various rehabilitation programs offered behind bars or available to probationers or parolees that are intended to reduce recidivism rates. Similarly, victimologists want to diagnose the emotional problems that beset people after they have been harmed by offenders, and to test out the usefulness of programs designed to facilitate their recovery (see Lurigio, 1990; and Roberts, 1990). Criminologists try to calculate the social and economic costs that criminal activity imposes on a community or on society as a whole. Victimologists estimate the losses and expenses that individuals and businesses incur due to acts of violence, theft, or fraud.

Some Differences and Issues about Boundaries

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

Criminologists agree among themselves that they should limit their studies to illegal activities and should exclude forms of social deviance that do not violate any criminal law. For instance, the unwanted attention and advances that constitute sexual harassment at a workplace are no longer considered to be a private matter or a personal problem but are a type of discrimination that can lead to a lawsuit—but not an arrest. Similarly, certain aspects of bullying are clearly against the law (physical attacks), while other expressions (mocking, teasing, taunting) are upsetting and ought to be discouraged

but are not illegal acts. Both criminologists and victimologists would study bullying in those instances where the intentional acts of aggression rise to the level of criminal behavior and result in vandalism or theft, or, worse yet, erupt into violence (such as the object of scorn suffering a severe beating; or conversely, when the pushed-around individual switches roles by bringing a deadly weapon to school to fight back against his tormentors) (see DeGette, Jenson, and Colomy, 2000; Unnever and Cornell, 2003; and Lipkins, 2008).

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

However, the majority of victimologists believe that their studies should remain focused on criminal victimization so that there are precise, readily identifiable limits and clear directions for further research and theorizing. Actually, criminal victimization may not be more serious (financially), more injurious (medically), or more traumatic and longer lasting (emotionally) than other types of harm. But it is necessary to rein in the boundaries of the field in order to make it manageable for the practical purposes of holding conferences, publishing journals, writing textbooks, and teaching college courses. (For the pros and cons of these alternative visions of what the scope of victimology ought to be, see

Schafer, 1968; Viano, 1976, 1983, and 1990a; Galaway and Hudson, 1981; Flynn, 1982; Scherer, 1982; Schneider, 1982; Friedrichs, 1983; Elias, 1986; Fattah, 1991; and Dussich, 2009b.)

The dividing line between victimology and mainstream criminology is not always clear-cut. Invariably, the two fields overlap. Historically, much of criminology can be characterized as **offenderology** because of its preoccupation with the reasons why criminals behave as they do, a focus on the wrongdoers' personal motives and the underlying root causes of their antisocial behavior, and whether punishment or treatment will make them stop. Lawbreakers always have been under a spotlight while the people they harmed remained shadowy figures on the fringes. But now victimology enriches criminology by yielding a more balanced and comprehensive approach that sheds light on both parties and their interactions.

Another way to differentiate the priorities of criminology versus victimology is to examine the social reaction to crime as opposed to the social reaction to victimization.

Once again, it is difficult to try to draw a sharp line between what issues criminologists should explore in contrast to what parallel or comparable topics victimologists should scrutinize. Yet such an exercise might be worthwhile because it helps clarify how the two fields have different focuses and also points to areas where research about victims and victimization remains sparse.

Since the offender is of primary interest to criminologists, analyzing the social reaction to law-breaking might include issues like the public's willingness to pay for increased criminal justice expenses (hiring more police officers, supplying them with more powerful weaponry, and building more prisons in contrast to investing in job training, drug treatment, and inmate reentry programs) and the degree of voter support for tough new laws or for stiffening existing penalties (such as "three strikes" legislation or expanded use of electronic monitoring) or for police crackdowns (zero tolerance campaigns). The focus remains on the wrongdoers and how to best handle them, whether through punishment or rehabilitation. Long-term

crime prevention strategies that criminologists propose and debate include efforts to eradicate the social roots of street crime, such as poverty, unemployment, failing schools, and dysfunctional families.

For victimology, the emphasis shifts to the public's reaction to the plight of injured parties. Consequently, researching the social reaction to victimization translates to examining the degree of voter support for victims' rights initiatives and the willingness of taxpayers to earmark revenue for government-run assistance programs and compensation funds. Also of great interest are the many self-help and direct aid projects set up by former victims, such as child search organizations, shelters for battered women, crisis centers for rape victims, and similar advocacy organizations. Another dimension of the social reaction is the many steps fearful individuals might undertake to reduce their own risks of becoming targets. These victimization prevention efforts on a personal level (in contrast to crime prevention efforts on a community or societal level) include taking self-defense classes and buying guns for self-protection, purchasing antitheft devices (such as burglar and car alarms), and buying insurance policies for reimbursement of crime-inflicted losses (life, health, home, and car insurance as well as for identity theft and fraud protection).

One of the most intriguing aspects of the social reaction to lawbreaking behavior is how often and in what manner eyewitnesses respond while a crime is in progress. Criminology and victimology overlap whenever researchers focus upon the interaction between offenders, their intended victims, and onlookers, an emerging area of study that could be referred to as **bystanderology**, to coin a term (see Box 1.3).

Interfacing with Other Disciplines

A number of academic orientations enrich victimology. Researchers who pursue a mental health/forensic psychology orientation might explore how victims react to their misfortunes. They ask why some injured parties experience

BOX 1.3 The Social Reaction to Victimization: A Look at the Interplay between Victims, Offenders, and Bystanders

Bystanderology

If a third party is present when an offender confronts his intended victim, this presence of an audience introduces a situational variable or contextual factor that can become the focus of what can be called "bystanderology."

One or more onlookers were watching in about 70 percent of all fights, around 50 percent of all robberies, and almost 30 percent of all rapes and other sexual assaults, according to an analysis of government surveys of victims' experiences during the 1990s (Planty, 2002).

Individuals who witness a crime in progress as it unfolds right before their eyes may react in essentially two ways. First of all, there is nonintervention: Bystanders may avert their gaze, steer clear of trouble, mind their own business, and not get involved in the dispute. Or they may simply watch, become confused and immobilized, and consequently not do anything to help out. In extreme cases, they may run away, as when shots are fired. Alternatively, onlookers could become engaged and intervene to some degree while a crime is in progress or in its immediate aftermath (see Shotland and Goodstein, 1984; and Takooshian, 2014).

The following example, which took place on a busy big city street, illustrates this spectrum of possibilities, as an onlooker who intervened in behalf of a victim becomes mortally wounded himself and then fails to receive any aid from other spectators:

A man angrily confronts a woman and threatens violence. A homeless immigrant who sometimes works as a day laborer comes to her aid and is stabbed. A nearby surveillance camera records how he collapses and lies face down in the gutter for over an hour. Passersby show some curiosity but hurry along. One man lifts the wounded Good Samaritan's body, sees a pool of blood, and then walks away. Another snaps a photo and then departs. By the time the police are summoned and help arrives, he is dead. (Sulzberger and Meenan, 2010)

Police officers are third parties who have a duty to intervene and can be counted upon to enter the fray in behalf of an innocent person under attack. Bystanders and onlookers have no such duty and may or may not take action as a robber, rapist, or assailant confronts a victim. A typology of possible responses by bystanders could include the following categories, ranked in terms of the desirability/undesirability of the outcome (making the situation better or worse for the person under attack):

- a) Effectively intervene to rescue the victim from harm and also apprehend the apparent offender by making a citizen's arrest until the police arrive.

- b) Minister to the victim after the attack is over by providing physical and emotional first aid until first responders like police officers, emergency medical technicians, and ambulance crews arrive.
- c) Scream for help and summon the authorities by calling 911; or at least take pictures that can later be used as evidence.
- d) In the aftermath of an attack, come forward and serve as a witness for the prosecution.
- e) Do nothing, take no action, look the other way, or melt away due to apathy or indifference; but also some non-interveners may be immobilized by fear.
- f) Become a victim: the **Good Samaritan** who steps in can get injured or killed by the offender.
- g) Accidentally injure or kill the victim while carrying out a rescue mission (this disaster can happen when a SWAT team tries to overpower a hostage-taker but the captive is killed during the raid).
- h) Intervene in behalf of the wrong party by erroneously siding up the situation, resulting in the injury or death of the genuine victim. This can happen when uniformed officers mistake an undercover officer for an "armed perpetrator" who is training a gun on a suspect, and they shoot the officer in disguise thinking they are rescuing a victim (a tragic mistake referred to by the military term "friendly fire").
- i) Intentionally join in on the side of the wrongdoer, undermining the victim's ability to effectively resist and inflicting additional losses and injuries, which may even be fatal (these bystanders who knowingly make things worse have been called "Bad Samaritans"). Bystanders who rally to the side of lawbreakers while a crime is in progress can get swept up into a type of crowd psychology that leads to the looting of stores, mob attacks, lynchings, race riots, and gang rapes.

The social reaction of the bystander(s) may decisively shape the outcome of an attempted crime. The presence of onlookers might cause the would-be offender to back down or cut short his attempt to inflict harm. On the other hand, the existence of an audience might cause both parties to escalate their conflict in order to save face and protect their reputations on the street. This might encourage the aggressor to deliver additional wounds in order to demonstrate his prowess, as in clashes between gang members.

When surveyed about whether the presence of a third party helped or worsened the situation, half of all victims reported "neither helped nor hurt." But when bystanders actively interceded, victims judged the impact of their

(Continued)

BOX 1.3 (Continued)

actions as “helpful” more often than as “harmful.” Passersby play a constructive role if they prevent further injuries and recover stolen property, and their intervention is counterproductive if they further enrage the attacker (Hart and Mieth, 2008).

A phenomenon known as the “bystander effect” has been studied extensively by social psychologists, often by simulating emergencies in an experimental setting. Their findings reveal that as the number of bystanders increases, the likelihood that any particular individual will intervene decreases. Also, as the number of onlookers increases, the time that elapses until someone takes action increases. Bystanders are more inclined to get involved if they are directly beseeched for assistance. When bystanders are slow or reluctant to make a move, it may be due to audience inhibition (each person is afraid of being publicly embarrassed if the effort fails) or because of the diffusion of responsibility (each onlooker assumes someone else will take charge of the situation and take the first step) (see Scroggins, 2009).

Passersby might have a moral duty to be “their brother’s keepers.” But in most states (except in Vermont since 1967, and later Minnesota and Wisconsin), they bear no legal obligation to undertake any risks (unless they are police officers, firefighters, and doctors, even when they are off-duty). Civil statutes shielding Good Samaritans from out-of-pocket expenses and lawsuit liability are meant to encourage

individuals to get involved. Criminal laws prevent people from harming one another, but they do not compel individuals to help one another, even if one knows that another person is in imminent danger or has sustained a serious physical injury (Silver, 2012).

Police departments and community organizations sometimes help set up civilian anticrime patrols and neighborhood watch committees. On college campuses, rape prevention campaigns include efforts to train potential bystanders (especially male athletes and sorority sisters) to step in to creatively outmaneuver aggressive classmates from crossing the line separating drunken partying from carrying out sexual assaults. Ever since the late 1980s, role playing exercises and poster campaigns have urged students, especially incoming freshmen, to “Do something” with slogans like “Don’t be a passive bystander,” “Don’t just stand there,” and “If she can’t stop him, you can” (Winerip, 2014). Intervention by onlookers (playing the role of “capable guardians”) is counted upon by some victimization prevention strategies (such as alerting the authorities if an alarm goes off). Heroing those who didn’t stand idly by and placed themselves at risk as “heroes” demonstrates the public’s appreciation for coming to the assistance of victims when a crime is in progress (also see Hart and Mieth, 2008; Lateano, Ituarte, and Davies, 2008; Reynald, 2010; Gidycz et al., 2011; Moynihan, 2011; and Banyard, Arnold, Eckstein, and Stapleton, 2011).

post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (occasionally feeling very frightened long after a dangerous “fight or flight” situation has passed) while others who suffer through comparable calamities do not. Professionals engaged in therapeutic relationships with patients who endured vicious violence need to discover which crisis intervention techniques work best (see Roberts and Roberts, 2005). Researchers who take an historical perspective trace developments from the past to better understand the present, while those who adopt an economic perspective try to measure individual and collective costs, losses, and expenses that result from criminal activities. The anthropological orientation compares victimization in other societies far away and long ago in order to transcend the limitations of analyses rooted in the here and now. Victimologists

who adopt a sociological perspective develop profiles (statistical portraits) of the characteristics of people who are harmed, analyze the interactions within the victim-offender relationship, examine the way other people and social institutions (such as the public welfare and health care systems) deal with injured parties, and seek to evaluate the effectiveness of new policies and programs. Scholars who apply a legalistic/criminal justice orientation (that focuses on department regulations, Supreme Court decisions, and legislation) explore how victims are supposed to be handled by the police, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, probation officers, and parole boards, and they scrutinize the provisions of recently enacted laws designed to empower victims as the adversary system resolves their cases.

Divisions within the Discipline

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

The conservative tendency within victimology focuses primarily upon street crimes. A basic tenet of conservative thought is that everyone—both victims and offenders—must be held strictly accountable for their decisions and actions. This translates into an emphasis on self-reliance rather than governmental assistance. Individuals should strive to take personal responsibility for preventing, avoiding, resisting, and recovering from criminal acts and for defending themselves, their families, and their homes from outside attack. In accordance with the crime control model of criminal justice, the primary purpose of the legal system is to protect the innocent from those who want to harm them. As a result, lawbreakers must be punished in proportion to the suffering they inflicted on their victims (the philosophy of retribution, or **just deserts**). Making criminals pay also is supposed to accomplish the goals of general deterrence (to make a negative example of them, to serve as a warning to other would-be offenders that they should think twice and decide not to break the law), as well as specific deterrence (to teach them a lesson so they won't repeat this forbidden conduct in the future). Incapacitating predators behind bars keeps them away from the targets they would like to prey upon.

The liberal tendency sees the scope of the field as stretching beyond street crime to include criminal harm inflicted on persons by reckless corporate executives and corrupt officials. A basic theme within liberal thought is to endorse societal intervention through the instrument of government to try to ensure fair treatment and to alleviate needless suffering. This position leads to efforts to extend the

"safety net" mechanisms of the welfare state to cushion shocks and losses due to all kinds of misfortunes, including crime. To "make the victim whole again," aid must be available from such programs as state compensation funds, subsidized crime insurance plans, rape crisis centers, and shelters for battered women. Some liberals are enthusiastic about restorative justice experiments that, instead of punishing offenders by imprisoning them, attempt to make wrongdoers pay restitution to their victims so that reconciliation between the two estranged parties might become possible.

The radical left/critical/conflict tendency seeks to demonstrate that the problem of victimization arises from the exploitative and oppressive relations that are pervasive throughout the social system. Therefore, the scope of the field should not be limited simply to the casualties of criminal activity in the streets. Inquiries must be extended to cover the harm inflicted by industrial polluters, owners and managers of hazardous workplaces, fraudulent advertisers, predatory lenders (for example, of mortgages with deceptive provisions for repayment of the loan), brutally violent law enforcement agencies, and discriminatory institutions. Victims might not be particular individuals but whole groups of people, such as factory workers, minority groups, customers, or neighborhood residents. From the radical/critical/conflict perspective, victimology can be faulted for preferring to study the more obvious, less controversial kinds of harmful behaviors, mostly acts of personal violence and crude theft by desperate individuals, instead of the more fundamental injustices that mar everyday life: the inequitable distribution of wealth and power that results in poverty, malnutrition, homelessness, family dysfunction, chronic structural unemployment, substance abuse, and misplaced aggression toward potential allies who are in similar circumstances. The legal system and the criminal justice apparatus are considered part of the problem by criminologists as well as victimologists working within this tradition because these institutions that supposedly promote fairness actually primarily safeguard the interests of influential groups and privileged classes (see Birkbeck, 1983; Friedrichs, 1983; Viano, 1983;

Elias, 1986, 1993; Fatah, 1986, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Miers, 1989; Reiman, 1990; Walklate, 1991; and Mawby and Walklate, 1993).

WHAT VICTIMOLOGISTS DO

The current parameters of the field are evident in the kinds of questions victimologists try to answer. In general, these questions transcend the basics about “who, how, where, and when,” and tackle the questions of “why?” and “what can be done?”—Victimologists explore not only the interactions between victims and offenders, but also victims and the criminal justice system as well as victims and the larger society.

A selection of some intriguing and imaginative studies that illustrate the kinds of issues concerning offender–victim relationships addressed by researchers over the decades appears in Box 1.4.

Victimologists, like all researchers, must adopt a critical spirit and a skeptical stance to see where the trail of evidence leads. In the search for truth, myths must be exposed, unfounded charges dismissed, and commonsense notions put to the test. The following guidelines outline the step-by-step reasoning process that can be followed when carrying out research (see Parsonage, 1979; Birkbeck, 1983; and Burt, 1983).

Step 1: Identify, Define, and Describe the Problem

The most basic task for victimologists is to determine all the different ways that a violation of the law can inflict immediate and long-term harm: the extent of any physical injuries, emotional damage, and economic costs, plus any social consequences (such as loss of status). For example, as they grow up, severely abused children might suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, dysfunctional interpersonal relationships, personality problems, and self-destructive impulses (see Briere, 1992).

Sometimes a group is difficult to study because there isn't an adequate expression that describes its common misfortune or captures the nature of its

plight. Now that terms like date rape, stalking, cyberstalking, carjacking, battering, elder abuse, identity theft, and bias crime have entered everyday speech, government agencies and researchers are exploring in what manner and how frequently people are harmed by these offenses. On occasion, victimologists help break the silence about situations that long have been considered taboo topics by studying activities such as sibling abuse, incestuous sexual impositions in stepfamilies, and marital rape (see Hines and Malley-Morrison, 2005).

Victimologists analyze how the status of being a “legitimate victim” is socially defined. They explore why only some people who suffer physical, emotional, or economic harm are designated and treated as full-fledged, bona fide, and officially recognized victims and as such, are eligible for aid and encouraged to exercise rights within the criminal justice process. But why are other injured parties left to fend for themselves? One key question is, “Is the social standing of each of the two parties taken into account when government officials and members of the general public evaluate whether one person should get into legal trouble for what happened and the other should be granted assistance?”

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

Step 2: Measure the True Dimensions of the Problem

Because policy makers and the general public want to know how serious various kinds of illegal activities are, victimologists must devise ways to keep track of the frequency and consequences of prohibited acts. The accuracy of statistics kept by government bureaus and private agencies must be critically examined to ferret out any biases that might inflate or deflate these estimates to the advantage of those who, for

BOX 1.4 A Sampling of the Wide Range of Studies about the Interaction between Offenders and Victims

Identifying the Cues that Trigger a Mugger into Action

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

Explaining Public Indifference toward Victims of Fraud and Con Games

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

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

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

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

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

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

Examining How Pickpockets View their Targets

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

(Continued)

BOX 1.4 (Continued)

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

Exploring the Bonds between Captives and their Captors

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

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

some self-serving reason, wish to either exaggerate or downplay the real extent of the problem.

In order to make measurements, victimologists have to **operationalize** their concepts by developing working definitions that specify essential characteristics and also mark boundaries, clarifying which cases should be included and which should be excluded. For example, when trying to determine how many students have experienced school violence, should youngsters who were threatened

with a beating be counted, even if they were not actually physically attacked?

Once victimologists measure the frequency of some unwanted event per year, they can begin to search for changes over time to see if a particular type of criminal activity is marring the lives of a greater number or fewer people as time passes. To grasp the importance of making accurate measurements, consider the problem of child abuse. Suppose that statistics gathered by child protection agencies

indicate a huge increase in the number of reported instances of suspected abuse. How can this upsurge be explained? One possibility is to interpret this spike as evidence that parents are neglecting, beating, and molesting their children these days like never before. But another explanation could be that new compulsory reporting requirements recently imposed on physicians, school nurses, and teachers are bringing many more cases to the attention of the authorities. Thus, a sharp rise in reports might not reflect a genuine crime wave directed at children by their caretakers but merely a surge in official reports because of improvements in detecting and keeping records of maltreatment. Victimologists can make a real contribution toward resolving this controversy by devising ways to estimate the actual dimensions of the child abuse problem with greater precision. Other pressing questions that can be answered by careful measurements and accurate statistics include the following: Are huge numbers of children being snatched up by kidnapers demanding ransoms? Or are abductions by strangers rare? Are husbands assaulted by their wives about as often as wives are battered by their husbands? Or is female aggression of minor concern when compared to male violence? Is forced sex a common outcome at the end of an evening, or is date rape less of a danger than some people believe (see Loseke, Gelles, and Cavanaugh, 2005)?

Once injured parties have been identified, and their ranks measured, researchers can carry out a **needs assessment** through interviews or via a survey to discover what kinds of suffering they are experiencing and what sorts of assistance and support they require to resolve their problems and return to the lives they were leading before the crime occurred. Such studies might reveal their unmet material and emotional needs, and weaknesses in existing programs and policies.

Step 3: Investigate How Victims Are Handled

Researchers scrutinize how victims actually are treated by the criminal justice and social service

systems that are ostensibly designed to help them. Their studies can pinpoint the sources of tension, conflict, mistreatment, and dissatisfaction that alienate victims from the agencies that are supposed to serve them. Program evaluations determine whether stated goals are being met. For instance, many victimologists have studied how well or how poorly the police, prosecutors, judges, and family therapists are responding to the plight of abused children, sexually assaulted persons, and also battered women (see Hilton, 1993; Roberts, 2002; Hines and Malley-Morrison, 2005; Roberts and Roberts, 2005; and Barnett, Miller-Perrin, and Perrin, 2005).

Step 4: Gather Evidence to Test Hypotheses

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

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

For example, will the "dos and don'ts" tips offered on websites for women who are being stalked by ex-lovers actually work to reduce the risks of violent outbursts; or are these bits of advice largely ineffective; or could following these instructions actually be counterproductive, escalating tensions and heightening dangers?

In order to illustrate each of the four steps that victimologists might follow when researching a particular type of suffering, a systematic analysis of the problem of "road rage" is presented in Box 1.5.

BOX 1.5 An Illustration of How to Analyze a Specific Type of Victimization: Road Rage

Step 1: Identify, Define, and Describe the Problem

The analysis begins with a brief history that recounts when the problem was recognized and the way in which the victims' plight was originally portrayed.

For decades, concern about the risks surrounding automobile travel centered on accidents caused by hazardous road conditions, speeding, and drunk driving. Although flare-ups between motorists with short fuses must have been taking place since the onset of the automobile age well over 100 years ago, they remained under the radar until the news media began to report on a spate of "freeway shootings" (in California in 1977, in Houston in 1982, in Los Angeles in 1987, and in Detroit in 1988). Newspaper headlines originally dubbed the frightening situations as "road assaults," "freeway free-for-all," "highway violence," "highway hostility," "motorist mayhem," and even merely "unfriendly driving." Yet concerns about becoming a casualty of one of these confrontations on wheels did not mount until a media account coined the phrase "road rage" in 1988; the catchy alliteration was meant to capture the essence of an armed attack in which a Florida driver shot a passenger in a car that had cut him off (see Best, 1991; and Roberts and Indermaur, 2005). During the 1990s, the sudden emergence and rapid diffusion (across the country and around the globe) of substantial media attention to this "new crime" demonstrated how large audiences of frazzled commuters and anxious travelers considered this amorphous yet omnipresent threat to be of great relevance. Colorful accounts—about 10,000 stories between 1990 and 1996, and nearly 4,000 in 1997 alone—described a "spreading epidemic" of "ugly acts of freeway fury" in which cursing, seething, and stressed-out motorists were "driven to destruction," because it was "high noon on the country's streets and highways." Roads were pictured as "resembling something out of the Wild West," "highways to homicide," "shooting galleries," "war zones," and even "terror zones." Journalists, reflecting the popular movies of their day, originally branded offenders as "road warriors" and "Ramboes," who rejected the prevailing outlook of "have a nice day" in favor of a "make my day" chip-on-the-shoulder approach to dealing with strangers. Drivers lost their tempers and took their frustrations out on each other in numerous ways, ranging from fistfights to intentional collisions to gunfire (see Best, 1991; Mizell, 1997; Fumento, 1998; and Roberts and Indermaur, 2005).

Today, cases like this one are widely recognized to be examples of "road rage":

A man in a SUV with his wife and two-year-old daughter is driving down a big city highway known for its traffic jams when he suddenly finds himself surrounded by a swarm of men on motorcycles. He panics and bumps one of the motorcyclists; another dismounts and he accidentally runs over him. Fearing for his safety and the well-being of his family, he races down an exit ramp with the motorcycle riders in hot pursuit. They catch up with him on a busy street, smash his vehicle's windows, and drag him from his SUV. A video of the beatdown goes viral, drawing a great deal of international attention, as viewers ask, "Where were the police—what took them so long to break up this attack on this besieged motorist?" (It turns out that one of the "bikers" actually was an undercover officer infiltrating the gang, but he is indicted for assault, along with 10 others.) (Loag and Teitz, 2013)

Step 2: Measure the True Dimensions of the Problem

The analysis proceeds by estimating the frequency of occurrence of this sort of incident and examining the victim-offender interaction in order to draw evidence-based portraits of the typical aggressors and their usual targets, and of the amount of harm done.

Unfortunately, chilling accounts often were laced with hyperbole and sensationalism. Consequently, heated discussions erupted about whether fears were out of proportion to actual threats. Investigations that attempted to estimate the actual toll that road rage imposed on motorists adopted definitions that were way too broad: media coverage, and even some of the earliest research undertakings, characterized road rage as synonymous with extremely aggressive driving habits that embodied hostility toward other motorists. Part of the continuum included noncriminal acts, such as screaming curses out the window, making threatening or obscene gestures, flashing headlights on and off, honking horns repeatedly, weaving in and out of traffic, cutting others off, tailgating in a way that resembles stalking, and getting out of the vehicle to argue face-to-face. From the targeted motorist's point of view, as well as from a police and traffic safety perspective, this inclusive definition that ranged from trivial to life-threatening actions seemed to make sense, in terms of recognizing all the different dimensions of an infuriating and ominous encounter. But from the standpoint of both criminology and victimology, the definition should be much more restrictive and exclude insults and

implied threats as well as bad driving maneuvers that at most result in summonses for moving violations in traffic court. A more limited and precise definition of road rage would count only those interpersonal conflicts that are matters for the criminal justice system to resolve: outbreaks of violence in which either one of the drivers—or one of the passengers—intentionally or recklessly injures or kills another driver, passenger, cyclist, or even a pedestrian, or damages a vehicle on purpose; or uses the vehicle to make a serious attempt to do harm to another party embroiled in the fracas (see Smart and Mann, 2002). A driver who is threatened can be considered a victim of harassment, and if a gun is pointed, the crime becomes “menacing.” If a shot is fired, an assault with a deadly weapon has taken place. One difficult methodological decision confronting researchers is whether to include or exclude incidents in which the two warring parties were not complete strangers. For example, some car chases are really extensions of ongoing quarrels that fall under the category of “domestic violence” (Mizell, 1997). Upon investigation, other clashes could turn out to be drive-by shootings involving members of warring street gangs or competing drug-dealing crews. But putting these exceptional cases aside, road rage generally constitutes a type of physical attack perpetrated by a stranger in a vehicle who approaches a victim just by chance in an anonymous public space—a street or highway (Roberts and Indermaur, 2005).

Criminologists zero in on the perpetrator’s possible mental problems, anger and aggression, drug and alcohol use, and risk-taking propensities while victimologists focus on the characteristics of the injured parties and how they respond to the incidents. Both sets of researchers seek to discover how often punishable acts of road rage break out. Not all cases are considered newsworthy by editors and journalists, so scholarly studies must be based on access to “official sources of data”: the arrest records of police departments and the transcripts of court proceedings, perhaps supplemented by the files of insurance companies. However, descriptions of the events leading up to the confrontation may be fragmentary or incomplete, or the versions of who did what to whom could be completely one-sided. Furthermore, just as with media coverage, official statistics present an underestimate. Some criminal acts that could lead to arrest and prosecution go unreported because the authorities were not notified by either party or by eyewitnesses. On the other hand, accounts from unofficial sources could yield overestimates because the working definition of road rage used by the general public and the media has expanded far beyond the original narrower

notion of violence on wheels. Other unofficial sources of data, including the findings of surveys, that ask motorists if they were ever subjected to or eyewitnesses to road rage may be cluttered with huge numbers of judgmental interpretations about incidents that would not wind up in the criminal justice system. For example, using a broad definition, an annual survey estimated that the most afflicted cities in 2009 were New York, Dallas/Fort Worth, Detroit, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Atlanta; far fewer incidents reportedly took place in Portland, Cleveland, Sacramento, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh (AP, 2009).

Several websites that welcome postings by motorists infuriated by encounters with inconsiderate, rude, careless, or just plain inept drivers also use a definition that is too vague and inclusive. Overly broad definitions tend to generate exaggerated estimates. The prevalence rate of ever experiencing, perpetrating, or witnessing road rage can approach 100 percent if the database includes motorists’ complaints about drivers who suddenly cut in front of them, honked incessantly, braked hard without warning, swerved dangerously, hurled insults, or even forced them on to the shoulder. These experiences might be unnerving and insulting, and some might be violations of traffic ordinances, but as merely subjective and undocumented accusations, they don’t rise to the level of criminal matters, so the aggrieved parties are not genuine “victims” of physical violence or deliberate property destruction.

The task for scholarly researchers is to sort through this collection of media and police reports about aggressive and reckless driving and focus on the incidents of intentional collisions, assaults, shootings, and even murders. For example, a comprehensive review of over 10,000 records of events that took place from 1990 through 1996 yielded an estimate of over 200 deaths and about 12,600 injuries directly attributable to road rage, or about 1,500 casualties a year resulting from collisions arising from dangerously aggressive driving (see Mizell, 1997; and Garase, 2006). On the other hand, as real as the threat may be, criminal acts of road rage seems to be a relatively infrequent event, statistically speaking, at least according to self-report surveys of drivers (Roberts and Indermaur, 2005). Pedestrians and cyclists felt the most vulnerable; believed that they were specifically targeted; suffered more physically and mentally; and were more likely to alter their behavior after the incidents, according to a survey of a small sample of self-identified victims (Cavacuiti et al., 2013).

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Road rage needs to be operationalized (precisely defined so that it can be measured) in a restrictive manner to include only incidents in which one driver knowingly injures or kills another motorist, passenger, or pedestrian or uses a vehicle as a weapon to attack someone or something. Then criminologists could focus their attention on the defendants who get arrested and prosecuted for their angry outbursts, by asking questions like: Do people who pick fights when driving also start altercations in everyday life? Do they drive as they live? Do these hyperaggressive drivers differ demographically and socially from average motorists? Psychologically oriented criminologists could ask whether these belligerent drivers are burdened with pent up anger, poor impulse control, short fuses, and hair triggers that reflect deep-seated personality problems (and maybe even mental disorders) that make them a danger to themselves and anyone who strays into their path. These emotional disturbances might include an obsession with minimizing travel time to the point of always being in a great rush; a need to try to come in first in a highly competitive environment; a tendency to perceive the driving mistakes of others as personal attacks on themselves or their vehicles; and even a sense that they need to punish others to teach others a lesson to improve their driving skills (see Ayar, 2006).

But these issues about the presumed shortcomings of offenders are not the immediate focus of victim-centered investigations, which seek to expand and balance out the inquiry into the hostile encounter by paying close attention to the injured party and to the behaviors of both individuals during their confrontation. The victim-offender interaction must be carefully reconstructed. Two strikingly different possibilities arise. The first scenario is that road rage casualties were innocent travelers who were cruising along and just minding their own business when they were randomly targeted by belligerent drivers. This image of a routine activity being interrupted "out of the blue" by senseless violence is especially chilling because automobile travel unavoidably brings strangers from very different social backgrounds into close proximity as they attempt to share the road with one another. Road rage is a serious problem that must be addressed immediately if ordinary motorists can become embroiled in a feud without warning; if some hothead's wrath can be vented on anyone who is unlucky enough to get in his way; and if any motorist—just like getting into a collision—can find himself under attack at anytime.

But the alternative scenario paints an entirely different picture: that the injured party was a violence-prone individual himself. He was spoiling for a fight and was easily inflamed and incited into action. These mutual combatants overreacted to each other's overtures. The initial event was misperceived as embodying a hostile intent, and this presumed threat was countered with an inappropriately belligerent response, thereby escalating the incident to the point of bloodshed or a crash. The misbehavior of the victim can be as important a catalyst in this interaction as the aggressive actions of the assailant. In essence, offenders and victims "find each other" as they interact within a vast pool of fellow drivers. The question arises, in what proportion of cases are the injured parties not totally innocent victims? How often do those who get wounded or killed share some degree of responsibility with the complete strangers who attacked them? Presumably, the violations of traffic laws would not have spiraled into a criminal matter were it not for the victim's inadvertent triggering of the aggressive driver's violent response; or worse yet, the victim's furious overreaction to the offender's bad driving led to the next round of escalating hostilities. Researchers who examine the victim-offender interaction can provide estimates of the percent of cases in which victims are totally innocent of any incitement to violence, and the remaining percent in which those who wind up hurt are partially at fault for triggering the aggressive driver's illegal response.

Media accounts portray road rage victims as tending to be young males in their twenties and thirties (Ashbridge, Smart, and Mann, 2003). Some researchers who have studied both parties suggest that they have uncovered situations that illustrate the **principle of homogeneity**: that both offenders and victims share a great deal in common, socially and demographically (according to surveys about aggressive driving that asked about lesser skirmishes in addition to violent episodes). The picture they have painted from their data is that the two persons caught up in the confrontation tend to closely resemble each other. Both usually are males; often in their twenties and thirties; generally of lower socioeconomic status; frequently with drug and drinking problems; perhaps exhibiting a "macho" personality; sometimes driving around in a high-performance vehicle or sports car with tinted windows; and most disturbingly, all too often going around armed with guns (see Ashbridge et al., 2003, 2006; Roberts and Inderman, 2006; Hemenway, Vintrotis, and Miller, 2006; and Fierro, Morales, and Alvarez, 2011).

These angry young men, who have poor impulse control and a propensity to get into fights while trying to share the road, seem to be one and the same as those who spend a lot of time away from home and get into brawls on street corners and in bars. Additional studies that derive profiles of both parties from police files and court proceedings could settle this question about the possibility of homogeneity. The research hypotheses would be that both the offenders and their victims would tend to be low-income, young, urban males, rather than females, older persons, suburbanites or rural residents, and more affluent people (Asbridge et al., 2003). Furthermore, those whose routine activities involve a great deal of driving may have more opportunities to become embroiled in confrontations (Asbridge and Butters, 2013).

Step 3: Investigate How Victims Are Faring

Zero in on the criminal justice system's response.

Motor vehicle collisions are a major cause of injury, disability, and death, especially of young people. On a societal level, vehicle crashes are a major source of shattered lives, emotional damage (including phobias, and in extreme cases, post-traumatic stress disorder), truncated opportunities, missed work, and other losses and expenses. Since some unknown proportion of highway carnage is attributable to road rage, this societal problem may impose serious unrecognized consequences for public safety and social well-being. How are the police, courts, and insurance companies addressing these issues of?

Criminologists and criminal justice officials debate whether offenders might need to be punished (through stiff fines and time behind bars) to teach them a lesson not to drive recklessly again (specific deterrence), and to hold them up as negative role models to serve as a warning to other would-be road warriors (general deterrence). Incapacitation (through license suspensions and incarceration) will serve to protect other motorists by removing them from the driver's seat. Treatment (such as anger management, time management, and stress management) might be called for if that is the source of their dangerously aggressive behavior behind the wheel. But what could and should be done for the objects of their wrath? If the homogeneity thesis is correct, then victims might be negatively stereotyped as potential perpetrators themselves. The authorities might automatically handle the "cotenable targets" of road rage differently than other innocent victims of physical violence because these

individuals might bear some responsibility for the breaking of laws this time—and the next time, they could be the offenders.

Victim-centered questions that researchers need to address include these: What happens in police stations, courtrooms, and in insurance offices when the authorities believe that both parties are partially to blame? Are charges against the defendant reduced or dismissed if it appears that the injured party contributed in some way to the escalation of the confrontation? Do insurance companies reduce the amounts of reimbursement for damages or medical treatment, or deny the applications entirely, in cases of mutual combat? In contrast, in cases where the injured parties are blameless, are the sentences harsher on those convicted of highway mayhem than of comparable street brawls? Do innocent targets of road rage get the same assistance and exercise the same rights as innocent victims of violent street crimes? How these victims' cases actually are handled ought to be a prime concern of victimologists.

Step 4: Gather Evidence to Test Hypotheses

See if this criminal activity is linked to other social problems and whether effective responses have been devised and implemented.

Now that the term road rage is firmly entrenched in the vocabulary of law, criminal justice, and journalism, discussions of the problem generate many interesting hypotheses. For example, a number of possible societal causes have been suggested. Can increases or decreases in road rage be correlated with other indicators of changes in the pace of life and the level of tension, frustration, alienation, and cutthroat competition in an area at a given time and place? Does the problem have deeper societal roots than just the chance encounter of two fool-tempered/short-fused individuals? To what extent is road rage the outgrowth of underlying social problems, such as alcohol consumption and drug abuse; overall levels of aggression, rage, and untreated mental illness; as well as increases in commuting time, road traffic, construction delays, and rush-hour congestion (see Smart and Mann, 2002; and Asbridge et al., 2003).

Another interesting hypothesis that needs investigation is: Does the yearly incidence of highway violence closely track the level of violence on the streets—in other words, if public safety improves and the streets become more peaceful, does the occurrence of road rage also decline?

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The next set of hypotheses to be tested is whether the measures to curb road rage are working effectively. Legislatures in a number of states passed tough new laws against recklessly aggressive driving, hoping to deter or weed out the problem drivers who are at high risk of causing road rage incidents. Police departments and state highway patrol agencies devised new ways of monitoring and videotaping traffic flow and accidents, and launched crackdowns to vigorously enforce traffic laws. Criminologists need to evaluate whether these crime control strategies are bringing roadway violence under control.

At the same time, the National Safety Council, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, insurance companies, and government agencies such as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration developed awareness and education campaigns, warning the public about how quickly minor traffic confrontations could escalate into dangerous show-downs. Is there much that fearful motorists can do to minimize their chances of becoming the target of another driver's wrath, or at least to halt the up-and-back interplay before it spirals out of control? As soon as the problem was recognized, articles in the popular press and road safety educational materials alerted motorists about "How to avoid getting shot at" and "How to handle on-the-road hostility" plus other practical suggestions for those on the receiving end of aggressive driving (see Best, 1991; and Minell, 1997). In 2007, the governor of Michigan, and in 2009, the governor of Alabama, responding to an educational campaign against "emotional driving" sponsored by a self-help group founded by a parent of a woman killed in an incident, proclaimed the

middle of July as "Road Rage Awareness Week" (Targeted News Services, 2009). Are the pragmatic tips disseminated in driver education campaigns really effective as a way of preventing victimization? If road rage incidents decline after practical advice is widely disseminated, then these victim-oriented countermeasures might deserve some credit for helping concerned motorists stay out of trouble. Comparisons of changes in the levels of reported road rage crimes in similar jurisdictions that did and did not implement these strategies should shed light on this matter.

Finally, what have been the long-term trends over the decades? Is road rage (as distinct from changes in media coverage) genuinely increasing or decreasing as the years roll by? In 1997, the House Subcommittee on Surface Transportation held hearings about a reported epidemic of "auto anarchy" that was "transforming the nation's roadways into crime scenes." In the midst of all this publicity, however, skeptics pointed out that statistics showed that the numbers of accidents, highway deaths, and crash-related injuries actually were trending downward, especially when the increases in the number of drivers, registered vehicles, and the total miles traveled were taken into account. Perhaps the entire road rage problem had been blown way out of proportion right at the outset by journalists trying to attract large audiences, politicians seeking campaign donations and votes, therapists looking to profit from heightened fears of a newly recognized emotional "disorder," and lobbyists representing publicity-hungry agencies and organizations (see Drivers.com staff, 1997; Fumento, 1998; Rathbone and Huckabee, 1999; Hennessy and Wisenthal, 2002; and "Rising Rage," 2005).

WHY STUDY VICTIMOLOGY?

One last parallel between criminology and victimology merits highlighting. Criminology and victimology are not well-paying fields ripe with lucrative opportunities for employment and advancement. Studying the modus operandi of criminals and the mistakes made by the individuals they injured certainly doesn't make a person invincible to physical attacks, thefts, or swindles, although this heightened awareness might reduce the risks a student of human behavior and criminal conduct faces. Yet for several good reasons a growing number of people are investing time, energy, and money to study victimology in training academies and college courses.

First of all, those who study the plight of victims benefit intellectually, as do all social scientists, by gaining insights into everyday life, solving puzzling and troubling issues, better appreciating life's subtleties, seeing phenomena more clearly, and understanding complex situations more profoundly. Second, intellectually curious individuals can profit from pursuits that expand their horizons, transcend the limits of their own experiences in the familiar routines of everyday life, free them from irrational fears and unfounded concerns, and enable them to overcome gut reactions of fatalism, cynicism, emotionalism, and deep-seated prejudices. Third, the findings generated from theorizing and applied research have practical applications that

simultaneously ease the distress of others and foster a sense of purpose, self-worth, accomplishment, and satisfaction that comes from combating social injustices.

Those who study how individuals shape and in return are influenced by the realities around them are developing their "sociological imagination" (Mills, 1959)—a recognition of how their particular personal troubles usually are outgrowths of and can be traced back to larger social problems (like poverty, unemployment, dysfunctional families, and failing schools). Specifically, by exercising their "criminological imagination" (see Young, 2011), those who focus on lawbreaking can raise their consciousness about the connections between individual difficulties, historic injustices, prevailing social institutions and ideologies, contemporary culture, and the shortcomings of academic research and theorizing in order to recognize the sharp contrast between what is and what could be.

Besides paying these dividends, it's possible to profit in other ways by studying various aspects of victimization.

Scrutinizing victim-offender interactions can shed light on how miscommunication, misunderstandings, desires, obsessions, demands, stereotypes, reckless behavior, and provocative acts can trigger harsh reactions that can lead to needless conflict and avoidable tragedies.

Analyzing the way that certain victims are criticized and blamed for their own downfall raises vital questions about the degree to which individuals are able to determine their own fate as opposed to the extent to which larger social forces and pressures shape a person's behavior and social circumstances.

Exploring how some victims are assisted by social programs while others are left to fend for themselves raises profound issues about the proper role of government and its collectively funded and organized safety net meant to cushion the fall of individuals reeling from the impact of serious losses and major expenses.

Examining how some individuals and groups stress self-reliance and taking responsibility for one's well-being, especially in terms of arming in self-defense against troublemakers, while others

emphasize relying on police protection and collective undertakings meant to eradicate the social roots of crime, helps to clarify the differing assumptions and values that underlie political conflicts between those believing in right wing as opposed to left wing ideologies.

Delving into the dark side of family life—child abuse, spouse abuse, and elder abuse—sheds light on the all-too-common dysfunctional relationships that undermine the notion of being "safe at home" as a sanctuary from the cruelties of the outside world, and suggests ways to prevent or correct these difficult situations.

Investigating how the police and courts handle the casualties of interpersonal violence uncovers the criminal justice system's priorities, and the extent to which agencies that are supposed to deliver "blind justice" and treat persons equally actually take into account the victim's social class, race, sex, and age. It also reveals how injured parties define the elusive ideal of "justice" in terms of varying beliefs about vengeance, penitence, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Examining the way victims were treated in the past and how they are responded to in other societies reveals what has been, what might be, what should be avoided, and what ought to be emulated and adopted.

RECOGNIZING EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOR UNDER VERY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Criminologists generally study people who are labeled as "predators" and "convicts" because of the most antisocial and harmful acts they are known to have committed. Those who are sympathetic to offenders as troubled souls argue that people should not be judged solely by the worst things they have done. Victimologists generally study individuals at the most vulnerable and miserable points in their lives. But examining the range in reactions of persons under attack sometimes provides an opportunity to see people at their very best, not just at

their low points. Consider how these individuals who were targeted by offenders responded in ways that are worthy of respect, even admiration:

A mother visiting a friend's house logs in to her sophisticated home-surveillance system to see if a snowstorm has started yet, and using her infrared camera trained on her backyard is startled to spot an intruder climbing into her house. As he begins to ransack her home, she watches in real time video, and then hurriedly calls 911. When the burglar spies the flashlight beams of the responding officers, he panics and bolts outside. She directs the police to his hiding spot, and after a brief chase, he is captured. (Yan, 2014)

A 15-year-old girl opens the door to what appears to be a deliveryman in uniform. She recognizes him as her former uncle who is furiously looking for his ex-wife, and tries to slam the door shut, but he kicks it in. He pulls out a gun and ties her up, along with her four sisters and brothers. When her parents return home, the man ties them up too and orders all seven members of the family to lie face-down on the floor and to tell him where he can find his ex-wife. When his former in-laws and their children insist they don't know where she is, he methodically shoots each one in the head. The girl is wounded but plays dead until he runs out. Then she quickly calls 911, tells the police that her parents and siblings have been murdered, and warns them that the killer is on his way to his ex-wife's parents' home. He is intercepted and apprehended before he can shoot anyone else. (Fredericks, 2014)

A 27-year-old woman who stands four feet, five inches and weighs 90 pounds is behind the counter of her family's suburban convenience store when a six-foot-tall man wearing a mask pulls a gun and brandishes it in her face. The angry gunman screams, "Hurry up! Give me the money!" but she stalls and makes believe she can't open the cash register. When the robber turns to see if anyone is looking, she grabs a three-foot ax hidden behind the counter and starts

swinging it wildly, yelling, "Get out of here!" He flees empty-handed. She confides to detectives and a reporter that "I was scared, I was shaking. I didn't want to hit him, I just wanted him to get out." (Crowley, 2007)

A 31-year-old social worker is about to go to dinner after a long day on a cold night when he is suddenly confronted by a teenager wielding a knife. He hands over his wallet to the young robber and then offers him his coat too, summing, "If you are willing to risk your freedom for a few dollars, then I guess you must really need the money." Then he takes the emotionally confused adolescent to a restaurant. When it is time to pay for the meal, the teenager gives back his wallet, and even hands over his knife. The social worker sums up their encounter to an interviewer: "If you treat people right, you can only hope that they treat you right. That's as simple as it gets in this complicated world." (NPR, 2008)

A "gentleman" holds a lobby door open for a 101-year-old woman who is on her way to church. But then he hits her so hard that blood spurts out her mouth and nose. A surveillance camera in the hallway shows the robber striking her over and over until she finally relinquishes her grip on her handbag containing \$23. Her face bleeds for two weeks and her right arm never heals properly. But nearly a year later, she hobbles into a courtroom to identify the 45-year-old defendant as the man who mugged her. Her testimony at this special evidentiary hearing is preserved on videotape just in case she is unable to appear as a witness for the prosecution at the trial. (Farmer, 2008)

A 35-year-old woman is beaten, robbed, and repeatedly raped for two hours in a dingy garage. In court, the courageous single mother testifies that while the gunman kept sexually assaulting her, "I had to keep myself from going crazy. I just hummed to myself." Realizing that the humming also calmed the rapist, she begins to give him a massage and to talk

soothingly to him. As they converse, the 45-year-old assailant apologizes, and then discloses his name and even his date of birth, which later enables detectives to track him down. (Shifrel, 2007a)

A 45-year-old teacher is kidnapped in a shopping mall parking lot by a gun-toting teenage carjacker. She secretly turns on a micro-cassette recorder to gather evidence just in case she can't convince the youth to let her go. During her final 46 minutes, she persuades the carjacker to discuss his childhood and his experiences in the military, descriptions which later provide detectives with valuable clues. She also reads passages to him from a psychology textbook; urges him to live a meaningful life and to find God; promises to help him land a job; and sobbs as she describes how she treasures being a mother to her young son. But it is all to no avail. He doesn't shoot her, but smothers her with her own coat, which contains the tape recorder in a pocket that leads to his capture. (Jones, 2007)

Victimology is not the cold or dismal discipline it might appear to be at first glance. Victimologists are not morbidly curious about or preoccupied with misfortune, loss, tragedy, pain, grief, death, and mourning. Of course, because of its inherently negative subject matter, the discipline is problem-oriented by nature. However, victimologists also take part in furthering positive developments and constructive activities when they seek to discover effective ways of coping with hardships, transcending adversity, reimbursing financial losses, speeding up the healing process, promoting reconciliation between parties enmeshed in conflicts, and restoring harmony to a strife-torn community.

What insights that could advance an understanding of resilience in the struggle to fully recover from a shattering, life-threatening experience might be gleaned from these cases?

A mentally deranged 60-year-old woman shoots a member of a sheriff's department SWAT team in the neck. Formerly known as "the most in shape" deputy by his fellow officers, he wakes up as a quadriplegic, confined to a wheel chair. But with great

determination he remains focused on his goal of returning to work at a desk job in the narcotics squad, observing "Your future is kind of bleak when you've got tubes coming out of you and everyone is saying you'll never walk again.... But if you stay mad about it all the time, you're not doing anything good for yourself." Supported by his family and colleagues, he optimistically reports signs of progress. "There have been a lot of little instances, like being able to pick up a ... potato chip and eat it with my hands." (Young, 2008)

As part of a gang initiation ritual, a thirteen-year-old boy is given a gun and told to use it. He confronts a young mother, yells, "Give it up!" and shoots her in a panic when she screams. The bullet rips through her jaw and teeth, requiring her to undergo ten years of agonizing reconstruction surgery. When he is caught, he is prosecuted as an adult and sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. And yet, when he telephones her from prison after several years, she accepts the collect charges, even though she still is in terrible pain and can't eat. He apologizes for his "mistake" and for decades afterwards, they write letters to each other. She becomes friends with her assailant's mother and brother, and despite concerns by her husband and friends, urges the judge (unsuccessfully) to release him from prison (Kristof, 2014).

A member of congress is shaking hands with constituents at a supermarket, when a deranged college student emerges from the crowd and opens fire. Six people are killed, and thirteen are wounded, including the congresswoman, who is shot in the forehead. Doctors estimate she has a one in ten chance to live, but she pulls through. At her lowest ebb, she is not even able to smile, and experts doubt that she will ever speak or walk again. But with the help of her astronaut husband, her family, and dedicated members of the hospital staff, she summons up astonishing tenacity and one breath and one hard fought word at a time, recovers from her catastrophic head wound better than expected. When asked in a television

interview if she was ever angry about what happened to her, she replies haltingly, "No. No. No. Life. Life." A few years later, she tells a crowd "I am working hard, lots of therapy: speech therapy, physical therapy, and yoga too." She insists, "My spirit is strong as ever"... and "I am still fighting to make the world a better place and you can too." (Curry, 2011; Freking, 2011; and Walsh, 2014)

Evidently, studying how injured parties respond to their plight can yield some unanticipated benefits. Victimologists can gain a more complete understanding and appreciation of the full range of possible reactions to attacks. Some individuals cope with their misfortunes in ways that are clever, bold, even courageous, and demonstrate a determination to behave with dignity and to pursue an unwavering commitment to justice. These persons can serve as positive role models for other wounded people who are seeking to recover from setbacks and overcome hardships.

"SURVIVOROLGY:" TOWARD A MORE INSPIRING AND UPBEAT TRAJECTORY WITHIN VICTIMOLGY

Some people who have been seriously harmed by criminals prefer to be called **survivors** rather than victims because of the term's positive connotations—that they are rebounding are exercising "agency" to take charge of their lives and demonstrating their resiliency to adversity. They see the term "victim" as carrying a lot of unwanted baggage, such as being "bested," "vanquished," and a "loser." Already, the expressions "survivors of incest, rape, intimate partner violence, and child abuse" are widely used (but not of robberies or shootings—at least not yet).

Similarly, some people initially attracted to the discipline of victimology may begin to fear that it is mired in negativity and preoccupied with pain, loss, sorrow, hostility, and recriminations. Learning bitter lessons from mistakes and feeling empathy toward those who are suffering may not be sufficient incentives to study victimology. What advocates, members of the helping professions, and injured parties

themselves need to find out more about is how certain seriously wounded persons are able to go beyond "just coping." As it is put glibly in everyday language, some seem able to "get over it," "get past it," "put it behind them," and "get on with their lives." How do they do it? What is the secret of their success? What personality traits, coping skills, inner resources, and belief systems enable individuals who have endured shattering experiences to emerge from a period of bereavement, depression, and anger, reconsider their priorities, and return to their previous lives or perhaps reorient themselves to new lifestyles (see Ai and Park, 2005; and Underwood, 2009).

This potentially upbeat tendency within victimology could be termed **survivorology**. Just as gravely ill persons, refugees from war-torn countries, captives who were cruelly tortured, or severely wounded soldiers can demonstrate great resolve to make the most out of their remaining time on earth and make impressive strides to piece back together their disrupted lives, so too might individuals who sustained vicious attacks want to make the transition from victim to survivor. Researchers—and the general public—can find the outlooks and actions of certain exemplary individuals who have suffered through shocking ordeals to be admirable, uplifting, and even inspiring. Within victimology, survivorology could focus on these success stories, in which individuals whose lives looked so bleak in the immediate aftermath of a terrible crime made great progress, surmounted obstacles, overcame severe limitations, and transformed a crisis into an opportunity.

The overarching theme of survivorology could be to "discover the common threads that underlie the secrets of their success" and determine how they did it: Was their recovery and new trajectory built upon faith and spirituality, inner strengths and outstanding character traits, the crucial support provided by others (family members, close friends, volunteers and mentors, or perhaps fellow sufferers in self-help groups), government-funded social programs, immersion in activism, or some other source of courage and perseverance? And what special opportunities would other individuals in similar dire straits need to make a successful reentry back into society? To spur the

BOX 1.6 Questions to Spur the Development of Survivorology

- How can the concept of “survivor” be operationalized so that it is not too restrictive and yet not too inclusive?
- What is resilience, and how can it be measured as a matter of degree?
- What is recovery, and how can it be measured as a matter of degree?
- Which groups of victims (such as those who have endured repeated beatings, childhood sexual abuse, rapes, shootings, or the loss of a loved one who died violently) have the most success—and the most difficulty—recovering from their ordeals?
- Which groups of victims show the most resilience in terms of characteristics such as age, sex, race and ethnicity, education, income, and occupation?
- What forms of social support (such as strong family ties, close bonds with friends, financial reimbursement, government programs, individual and group counseling, and camaraderie from a self-help group) improve the prospects for as well as the rate of recovery?
- What aspects of an individual’s character and which personality traits foster resiliency and recovery?
- What can crime victims learn about resiliency and recovery from the travails of individuals who endured devastating losses due to political oppression, natural disasters, life-threatening illnesses, and other near-death experiences—and vice-versa.

development of survivorology as an area of concentration within victimology that accentuates the positive, two key concepts need to be operationalized: resiliency (roughly speaking, the ability to rebound after a serious setback) and recovery (basically, regaining control over one’s life, recuperating, restoring, returning to the condition the person was in before the crime took place). Once these two concepts of resiliency and recovery are

operationalized as variables whose magnitude can be estimated numerically and not designated simply as a dichotomous all or nothing situation, then different degrees of resilience and rates of recovery need to be investigated for various groups of victims.

The more survivorology is developed, the less victimology will be preoccupied solely with suffering, loss, and negativity (see Box 1.6).

SUMMARY

Victimization is an asymmetrical relationship that is abusive, parasitical, destructive, unfair, and illegal. Offenders harm their victims physically, financially, and emotionally. Until recently, the plight of crime victims was largely overlooked, even by most criminologists. When some researchers began to study victims, their initial interest betrayed an antivictim bias: They sought evidence that the victims’ behavior before and during the incidents contributed to their own downfall. Since the 1960s, the majority of the social scientists attracted to this new discipline have labored to find ways to ease the suffering of victims and to prevent future incidents. But a commitment to strive for objectivity rather than to be

reflexively pro-victim is the best stance to adopt when carrying out research or evaluating the effectiveness of policies.

Victimology is best viewed as an area of specialization within criminology. Both criminologists and victimologists seek to be impartial in their roles as social scientists when investigating lawbreaking, its social consequences, and the official responses by the justice system. But much of criminology in the past can be characterized as “offenderology,” so the new focus on those who are on the receiving end of interpersonal violence and theft provides some balance and rounds out any analysis of problems arising from lawbreaking behavior.