CHAPTER 3

Victimology
Exploring the Experience of Victimization

John Sutcliff's entire adult life has been devoted to the sexual seduction of teenage boys. At the age of 33 he was arrested and sentenced to prison for sexually assaulting a 13-year-old boy who was a member of his “Big Brother’s Club.” By his own admission he had sexually molested over 200 “members” of his club. John’s favorite activity with these boys was giving and receiving enemas. John became involved with the fetish while enrolled in a residential boy’s school where many of the boys were subjected to enemas administered in front of the entire dormitory.

After his release from prison, John became much more “scientific” in his efforts to procure victims. A “theoretical” paper he wrote indicated that father-absent boys were “ripe” for seduction, and he would entice them with his friendly ways and with a houseful of electronic equipment he would teach the boys to repair and operate. He weeded out boys with a father in the home and would spend at least 6 weeks grooming each victim. He used systematic desensitization techniques, starting with simply getting the boys to agree to type in answers to innocuous questions and escalating to having them view pornographic homosexual pictures and giving them “pretend” enemas, actual enemas, and enemas accompanied by sexual activity. With each successive approximation toward John’s goal the boys were reinforced by material and nonmaterial rewards (friendship, attention, praise) that made the final events seem almost natural.

John’s activities came to light when U.S. postal inspectors found a package containing pictures, letters, and tapes John exchanged with like-minded individuals. On the basis of this evidence the police raided John’s home and found neatly cataloged files detailing 475 boys that he had seduced. His methods were so successful that his actions were never reported to the authorities (indeed, some of the boys were recruited for him by earlier victims). Some of his earlier victims still kept in touch with him and were victimizing boys themselves. Only one victim agreed to testify, but John was allowed to plea to one count of lewd and lascivious conduct. He received a sentence of 1 year and was paroled after serving 10 months, thus serving 15.7 hours for each of his 475 known victims. This case illustrates how victims (totally innocent as children) can be turned into victimizers (totally responsible as adults) and how the distinction between victim and perpetrator can sometimes be blurred.
The Emergence of Victimology

Victims of crimes are very often the overlooked parties in criminology, but except for minor public order crimes, for every criminal act there is necessarily a victim. Criminologists have spent decades trying to determine the factors that contribute to making a person a criminal, but it wasn’t until German criminologist Hans von Hentig’s (1941) work that they began seriously thinking about the role of the victim. It turned out that although victimization can be an unfortunate random event in which the victim is simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, in many cases of victimization, there is a systematic pattern if one looks closely enough. Just as criminologists want to find out why some people commit crimes and others do not, and why some who commit crimes commit more crimes than others, victimologists want to discover why some people become victims and why some victims become repeat victims.

Victimology is a subfield of criminology that specializes in studying the victims of crime. Victimologists study the series of events that typically lead to victimization acts of various kinds in attempts to arrive at general theories of victimization and insights relevant to how victimization can be avoided. They also examine the way victims are treated in the criminal justice system in its attempts to compensate crime victims and attend to their practical and emotional needs (Karmen, 2005). Criminologists interested in perpetrators of crime ask what the risk factors for becoming involved in crime are. Criminologists interested in victims of crime ask pretty much the same question; i.e., why are some individuals, households, groups, and other entities targeted and others are not (Doerner & Lab, 2002)?

The labels “offender” and “victim” are sometimes blurred distinctions that hide the details of the interactions of the offender/victim dyad. Burglars often prey on their own kind, robbers prey on drug dealers, and homicides are frequently the outcome of minor arguments in which the victim was the instigator. As victimologist Andrew Karmen (2005) put it, “Predators prey on each other as well as upon innocent members of the public. . . . 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” (p. 14). Of course, we should not think of all victims, or even most victims, this way. There are millions of innocent victims who in no way contribute to their victimization, and even lawbreakers can be genuine victims deserving of protection and redress in the criminal courts.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the need for victimology both theoretically and practically
- Know why victims and perpetrators are often interchangeable
- Understand the extent of workplace and school violence
- Know the reasons behind and the extent of human trafficking and its devastating effects on its victims
- Be able to articulate the risk factors for child molestation
- Know the facts about domestic violence and the primary risk factors
- Be able to articulate the theories of victimization
- Know what the criminal justice system is doing (or not doing) for crime victims
Who Gets Victimized?

Becoming a victim is a process encompassing a host of systematic environmental, demographic, and personal characteristics, and rarely is it totally random. According to the 2013 NCVS study, the individual most likely to be victimized is a young black unmarried male living in poverty in an urban environment. Victimization, like criminal behavior, drops precipitously from 25 years of age onward and with increasing household income, and being married is a protective factor against victimization and crime (Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013).

Victim characteristics also differ according to the type of crime. Females were 4.3 times more likely than males to be victimized by rape/sexual assault, but males were 1.6 times more likely to be victimized by aggravated assault. Females are more likely to be victimized by someone they know, and males tend to be victimized by strangers. Blacks were 1.7 times more likely than “other races” (Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native) to be victims of aggravated assault but slightly

| Table 3.1  | Victimization Rates for Violent and Property Crimes Reported and Not Reported to Police in 2003, 2011, and 2012 |
| Type of Crime | Reported to Police | Not Reported to Police |
| Violent crime | | | | | | |
| Rape/sexual assault | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.9 |
| Robbery | 1.9 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 0.7 | 1.2 |
| Assault | 12.6 | 9.4 | 9.6 | 14.6 | 9.4 | 11.9 |
| Aggravated assault | 3.2 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| Simple assault | 9.4 | 6.6 | 7.2 | 12.2 | 8.2 | 10.6 |
| Domestic violence | 3.5 | 3.1 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 2.0 |
| Intimate partner violence | 2.6 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Violent crime involving injury | 4.7 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 1.9 | 2.4 |
| Serious violent crime | | | | | | |
| Serious domestic violence | 1.7 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| Serious intimate partner violence | 1.3 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.4 |
| Serious violent crime involving weapons | 4.2 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 1.4 | 2.3 |
| Serious violent crime involving injury | 2.5 | 1.8 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| Property crime | | | | | | |
| Burglary | 17.2 | 15.1 | 16.4 | 14.5 | 13.6 | 13.2 |
| Motor vehicle theft | 6.9 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 0.9 | 1.1 |
| Theft | 41.0 | 31.8 | 31.9 | 89.9 | 71.6 | 87.7 |

Source: Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013
less likely than whites to be victims of simple assault. Individuals 65 or older were 20 times less likely than individuals 20 to 24 to be victimized by any type of violent crime but slightly more likely to be victimized by a personal theft (Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013). Table 3.1 shows the rate of reported victimizations in 2012 compared with 2011 and 2003 in the 2013 NCVS survey and the percentage reported and not reported to the police.

**Victimization in the Workplace**

Two important demographic variables not included in the 2012 NCVS report are victimization at work and at school. It is important to consider these variables since most of us spend the majority of our waking hours either at work or at school.

Highlights of the United States Department of Justice (Harrell, 2011) report on workplace violence are shown in Figure 3.1. This report dealt with workplace violence from 1993 to 2009 and found that the rate declined by 62% during that time. Males were 62.9% of victims, 77.9% of all victims were white, and the age most likely to be victimized falls within the 35–49 category. The three occupations most at risk were security guards (a rate of 30.2 per 1,000), police officers (30.2), and corrections officers (33.0). Homicides were 21% of all occupational fatalities for women, with relatives or domestic partners committing 39% of female occupational homicide. Homicide accounted for only 9% of male workplace fatalities, which were most likely to be perpetrated by robbers. The most dangerous jobs are those in which workers must deal with the public in a protective (police officers) or supervisory (probation/parole and correctional officers) capacity. Those who work alone and are relatively isolated from others, who work at night, and who work with money (cab drivers, convenience store clerks) are also more at risk. The safest job category was university professor.

**Workplace Victimization Protection**

Many businesses and law enforcement agencies have instituted programs to prevent workplace violence that have gone a long way to reducing its occurrence and minimizing injuries when

- From 2002 to 2009, the rate of nonfatal workplace violence has declined by 35%, following a 62% decline in the rate from 1993 to 2002.
- The average annual rate of workplace violence between 2005 and 2009 (5 violent crimes per 1,000 employed persons age 16 or older) was about one-third the rate of nonworkplace violence (16 violent crimes per 1,000 employed persons age 16 or older) and violence against persons not employed (17 violent crimes per 1,000 persons age 16 or older).
- Between 2005 and 2009, law enforcement officers, security guards, and bartenders had the highest rates of nonfatal workplace violence.
- Strangers committed the greatest proportion of nonfatal workplace violence against males (53%) and females (41%) between 2005 and 2009.
- Among workplace homicides that occurred between 2005 and 2009, about 28% involved victims in sales and related occupations and about 17% involved victims in protective service occupations.
- About 70% of workplace homicides were committed by robbers and other assailants while about 21% were committed by work associates between 2005 and 2009.
- Between 2005 and 2009, while firearms were used in 5% of nonfatal workplace violence, shootings accounted for 80% of workplace homicides.
it does happen. These programs stress that workplace violence does not occur at random and that employers and employees should develop an awareness of indicators of possible threats and the implementation of action plans to deescalate potentially violent situations. Another component of a mind-set promoting survival entails employees becoming stakeholders in their own safety and security. The FBI recommends the development of “shooter” scenarios akin to that of fire drills to “inoculate” employees against the stress of such threats and to produce a more fluid and rapid response in the event of a real incident (Romano, Levi-Minzi, Rugala, & Van Hasselt, 2011). Figure 3.3 represents the FBI’s model of trained and untrained responses to the possibility of workplace victimization that emphasizes the necessity of potential victims to take responsibility for their own safety. In many ways this is a model we can all adapt to our own particular situations, whether at home, work, school, or play.
Victimization in the Schools

Public perceptions of victimization at the nation's schools are fueled by isolated but horrendous events such as Adam Lanza's fatal shooting of 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut in 2012. The truth is that our schools are some of the safest places to be. DeVoe, Bauer, and Hill's (2012) nationwide study of school crime and safety found that less than 1% of all juvenile homicides and suicides occurred at school during the period studied. Only 2.8% of students reported being victims of theft and 1.1% being victims of violence (mostly simple assault), with only 0.3% reporting a serious violent victimization. A larger percentage of males were victims of any crime at school (4.6%) than females (3.2%).

Bullying, which also gets a lot of press, is not as prevalent as we are sometimes led to believe (26.5% reported being bullied in some manner in 2008–2009). Figure 3.4 shows the percentage of students from 6th to 12th grade who reported being bullied during the 2008–2009 school year, broken down by self-reported types of crime victimization. For instance, 92% of students who said they had been victims of a violent crime reported that they had also been bullied versus 27% of those who reported no victimization at all. Note that “traditional” bullying means everything from insults and name calling to assault and destroying the victim’s property. “Electronic bullying” means anything designed to hurt sent by electronic means (e-mail, Facebook, text messages, and so forth).

Cyberbullying can have more devastating effects than physical bullying, especially if it is of a sexual nature, because it can be witnessed by anyone who logs on. For instance, high school freshman Kenneth Weishuhn committed suicide after being repeatedly electronically harassed and threatened after he “came out” as being gay. Similarly, college student Tyler Clementi committed suicide after a gay encounter with another man in his dorm was secretly videoed and streamed over the Internet by fellow students. Then there was high school senior Jessica Logan who killed herself after her ex-boyfriend sent a nude photograph of her around the school, precipitating a long stream of bullying in which she was called a “slut” and a “whore.” Figure 3.5 provides a breakdown of the various means by which people are electronically bullied.

Human Trafficking

The most horrible form of victimization is arguably slavery, although we have another name for it today—human trafficking. Human trafficking is defined by the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime in The Trafficking Protocol of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose

Photo 3.1
Cyberbullying can have potentially devastating effects, even leading to violence and suicide. What do you think this young cyberbullying victim is feeling right now?
of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitute of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (2004, p. 42)

It is quite bizarre to think that 200 years after the British fought costly wars to end the transatlantic slave trade that we are still talking about it happening in the 21st century. According to a U.S. Department of State (2013) report on human trafficking, “It is estimated that as many as 27 million men, women, and children around the world are victims of what is often described with the umbrella term ‘human trafficking.’"
Julia Davidson (2010) argues that this modern form of slavery is often worse than the old open legal slavery where slaves were given some degree of autonomy. Modern slavery is illegal and thus must be hidden. Because of the illegality and often severe criminal penalties attached to trafficking in first-world countries, the people that control modern-day slaves use a variety of methods to do so. According to the U.S. Department of State (2013), these include confiscating all identifying documents; isolating victims; constantly accompanying victims; restricting access to food, clothing, medical care, and sleep; requiring long work days; and otherwise abusing and intimidating their victims into becoming physically and psychologically dependent on their captors.

The source countries for human trafficking are almost invariably poor third-world countries with corrupt law enforcement and few employment opportunities, and the destination countries are usually, but not always, rich countries. Trafficked humans may be used in their own countries in brothels and sweatshops. Women and children are typically used as prostitutes; most males are used as forced labor. It is obviously a highly profitable enterprise for the traffickers, and it is no surprise that organized crime groups participate in smuggling humans, just as they are involved in smuggling drugs. It is estimated that human trafficking is second only to the illegal drug market in terms of profitability, netting the traffickers from $5 to $9 billion a year according to a United Nations (2004) report. Since that time, however, the number of victims has risen while costs have declined for the trafficker. As Heather Smith (2011) explains, “Coupled with the fact that trafficked sex slaves are the single most profitable type of slave, costing on average $1,895 each but generating $29,210 annually, [there are] stark predictions about the likely growth in commercial sex slavery in the future” (p. 271). Figure 3.6 offers a thumbnail sketch of human trafficking from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Department. ICE is mandated to control all kinds of smuggling into the United States, and Figure 3.7 gives trafficking figures specific to the United States.

Sexual Assault of Children: Who Gets Victimized?

The sexual assault of children is perhaps the most prevalent crime against humanity in the United States, with approximately two-thirds of incarcerated sex offenders having offended against children (Talbot, Gilligan, Carter, & Matson, 2002). It is problematic to accurately gauge the prevalence of child molesting, with rates depending on how broad or how narrowly molesting is defined. According to the National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC; 2010) the percentage of children in the United States experiencing sexual abuse sometime during their childhood is 20% for girls and 5% for boys. Girls are more likely to be abused within the family, and boys are more likely to be victimized by acquaintances outside of the family and by strangers (NCVC, 2010; Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2006). The strongest single predictor of victimization for girls is having a stepfather or mother’s live-in boyfriend in the house. Stepfathers are about five times more likely to sexually abuse their daughters than are biological fathers, and the strongest predictor for boys is growing up in a father-absent home (Turner et al., 2006). There are many other factors predictive of child sexual abuse, and the more factors present the more likely abuse is to occur.

Finkelhor (1984) developed a risk factor checklist for the likelihood of girls’ victimization containing the following predictors:

1. Living with a stepfather or mother’s live-in boyfriend
2. Living without biological mother
3. Not close to mother
Figure 3.6
Thumbnail Sketch of Human Trafficking
From ICE
Source: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2013

Human Trafficking
A Global Problem

Each year, hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children are exploited in human trafficking schemes.
ICE is a leader in the global fight against trafficking.
By targeting trafficking organizations while providing support to victims, ICE is working to dismantle the criminal infrastructure behind human trafficking.

Common Trafficking Indicators

• Victim does not have ID or travel documents.
• Victim has been coached in talking to law enforcement and immigration officials.
• Victim is in forced labor situation or sex trade.
• Victim's salary is garnished to pay off smuggling fees.
• Victim is denied freedom of movement.
• Victim or family is threatened with harm if escape is attempted.
• Victim is threatened with deportation or arrest.
• Victim has been harmed or denied food, water, sleep or medical care.
• Victim is denied contact with friends or family.
• Victim is not allowed to socialize or attend religious services.

 Trafficking vs. Smuggling

Human Trafficking is defined as:
• Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act is younger than 18; or
• The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjecting to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

Human Smuggling is defined as:
• The importation of people into the United States involving deliberate evasion of immigration laws. This offense includes bringing illegal aliens into the country, as well as the unlawful transportation and harboring of aliens already in the United States.

Figure 3.7
Human Trafficking Figures Specific to the United States
Source: U.S. Department of State, 2012

- 14,500–17,500: estimated number of people trafficked into the United States each year
- 50% of people trafficked into the U.S. each year are children
- 800,000 people are trafficked worldwide each year
- East Asia/Pacific is the region that is the largest source of people who are trafficked into the U.S. each year
4. Mother never finished high school
5. Sex-punitive mother
6. No physical affection from (biological) father
7. Family income under $10,000 (in 1980 dollars; $28,416 in 2013 dollars)
8. Two friends or fewer in childhood

Finkelhor found that the probability of victimization was virtually zero among girls with none of the predictors in their background and rose steadily to 66% among girls with five predictors. Given the large number of divorces, out-of-wedlock births, and reconstituted families we are seeing in the United States, these risk factors for sexual abuse will be experienced by an increasing number of children. The victimization of children in domestic situations is particularly heinous, and we need to know under what circumstances it is most prevalent. It seems that every research program examining this problem finds that it is most likely to occur in homes in which children do not reside with both biological parents. A national representative sample of over 2,000 children ages 2 through 9 found that children of single parents were 6.7 times more likely to witness family violence, 3.9 times more likely to be maltreated, and 2.7 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than children with both biological parents present. The figures for stepparent families were even worse at 9.2, 4.6, and 4.3, respectively (Turner et al., 2006). This same study found that stepchildren were 9.2 times more likely to witness family violence, 4.6 times more likely to be maltreated, and 4.3 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than children living with two biological parents. A girl living with a stepfather or mother’s live-in boyfriend is approximately 65 times more likely to be fatally abused than a child living with both biological parents (Daly & Wilson, 1996)

**Domestic Violence Victimization**

Domestic violence victimization encompasses a variety of acts and refers to any abusive act (physical, sexual, or psychological) that occurs within a domestic setting. Family violence is the most prevalent form of violence in the United States today, and most of that is intimate-partner (spouse or lover) violence (Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2006). Except for minor forms of abuse, intimate-partner violence is overwhelmingly committed by males against females, although when females commit such violence they are more likely to use a weapon to equalize the size and strength difference between the sexes (Smith & Farole, 2009). However, while just over one-third of all murders of females in the United States are committed by intimate partners, less than 4% of males are killed by intimate partners (Rennison, 2003).

Violent victimization of spouses or lovers perpetrated by males is primarily driven by male sexual ownership, jealousy, and suspicion of infidelity. Evidence from around the world indicates that the single most important cause of domestic violence (including homicide) is
male jealousy and suspicion of infidelity (Lepowsky, 1994). DNA data indicate that from 1% to 30% (depending on the culture or subculture) of children are fathered by someone other than the presumed father (Birkenhead & Moller, 1992). The threat of cuckoldry (being fooled into raising someone else's child) is thus real, which suggests that male violence against spouses and lovers should be most common in environments where the threat of infidelity is most real. Such environments would be those in which marriages are most precarious, where moral restrictions on premarital and extramarital sexual relationships are weakest, and where out-of-wedlock birth rates are highest (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2009).

Although by no means limited to the lower classes, domestic violence is most often committed by competitively disadvantaged (CD) males (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2009). CD males have low mate value because they have less to offer in terms of resources or prospects of acquiring them, which tends to make their mates less desirous of maintaining the relationship with them and seek other partners. Lacking alternative means of controlling their partner’s behavior, CD males may turn to violently coercive tactics to intimidate them. This may be one of the reasons why intimate personal violence is two to three times more prevalent and more deadly among African American males than among males of other races (Hampton, Oliver, & Magarian, 2003). Hampton and his colleagues (2003) also list the anger and frustration born of poverty and unemployment, the reluctance of black females to report incidents, and the general fractious and antagonistic relationship that allegedly exists between black men and women as reasons. Figure 3.8 shows the victimization rates by annual household income of victims. Figure 3.9 offers highlights from the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ 2012 special report on intimate-partner violence.

**Identity Theft and Other Forms of Cybervictimization**

**Identity theft** is the use of someone else’s personal information without his or her permission to fraudulently obtain goods or services. According to a Federal Trade Commission (2010) report, 279,389 complaints of identity theft were filed in 2009, although it estimates that about 9 million people actually are victims of identity theft in some form. The cost to the economy is approximately $50 billion a year. Identity theft can range from a criminal’s short-term use of a stolen or lost credit card to the long-term use of a person’s complete biographical information.
Criminals gain access to the personal information of others in a variety of ways. They can steal it, buy it, or simply be given it by their unwary victims. People are continually providing confidential information to all sorts of businesses and agencies that goes into huge data banks that may be legitimately accessed by employees and stolen, or they can be “hacked” and have their information stolen. Credit card numbers can be copied during a financial transaction such as when a restaurant server takes your card for processing, or numbers can be surreptitiously recorded on a skimming device, which is typically a cigarette-pack-size device run across a credit card to record the electronic information in the magnetic strip. This information is then used to make duplicate cards. Thieves can also steal original checks left in mailboxes for pickup, copy the information on them, and buy duplicate checks from mail-order firms.

Most stolen identity information is not for the personal use of the thief but for sale to others. An organization of about 4,000 individuals called the Shadowcrew stole large volumes of personal information for many years and arrogantly advertised and sold it on websites worldwide. If you wanted to buy card numbers with security codes you could get 50 of them for $200; if you wanted the same thing complete with the original owner’s social security number and date of birth you would only have to pay $40 each (Levy & Stone, 2005). Leading members of the Shadowcrew were arrested by the U.S. Secret Service in 2004, effectively closing the business that authorities estimated had trafficked at least 1.5 million credit and bank cards, account numbers, and other counterfeit documents such as passports and driver’s licenses (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). The consequences of identity theft victimization are illustrated in the story of Michelle Brown.

THEORY IN ACTION: A Case of Cybervictimization and Its Consequences

With the advent of the computer age we are all victims in waiting. The ability to victimize someone without coming remotely within contact of that person means that the strongest among us can be viciously “attacked” by the weakest. One of the most terrifying fictional depictions of cybervictimization is provided in the movie The Net. In this movie, Angela Bennett, played by Sandra Bullock, is a computer expert who has her life turned into a nightmare (Continued)
Another type of cybervictimization is phishing, which as the name implies, involves thieves casting thousands of fraudulent e-mails into the cyberpond asking for personal information and waiting for someone to bite. Phishers may send out official looking e-mails with a bank logo asking recipients to “update” their information or telling them that their account may have been fraudulently used and that the bank needs to “verify” their personal information. One study indicated that 40% of recipients of one fraudulent bank e-mail believed it to be real (Kshetri, 2006).

A victim may also be literally scared into providing their information. Imagine receiving an e-mail from “Lolita Productions” telling you that your credit card has been billed $99.95 for the first two child pornography DVDs and that it will be automatically billed $49.95 each month for further DVDs. The message also says that if you want to cancel membership you should e-mail back with full credit card details “for verification.” Knowing the penalties for possessing child porn, you may be anxious to do anything to free yourself from the electronic embrace of Lolita Productions.

The most notorious phishers are the so-called Nigerian frauds run by Nigerian organized crime groups. E-mails have been received by millions of people the world over. A small number of people fall for it. These people are first asked to send a small amount of money (perhaps $200 or less) to “cover expenses” but are suckerized into sending ever-larger amounts as “complications”
arise. Some of the more gullible have even been lured to Nigeria with their cash and have been killed (Baines, 1996).

Victimization Theories

Victimization can occur at any time or place without warning. Who could have predicted someone gassing her car at the filling station would be gunned down by Washington, DC, Beltway snipers John Muhammad and Lee Malvo in 2002? Or that the typist at his desk in the World Trade Center would be obliterated seconds later by a passenger jet on September 11? There is no systemic way to evaluate events such as these from a victimology perspective. But as previously noted, many victimizing events are not random or unpredictable. Criminologists no longer view victims as simply passive players in crime who were unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time (as of course were the victims of 9/11 and the DC snipers). In the majority of cases, victims are now seen as individuals who in some way, knowingly or unknowingly, passively or actively, influenced their victimization. Obviously, the role of the victim, however provocative it may be, is never a necessary and sufficient cause of his or her victimization and therefore cannot fully explain the actions of the person committing the criminal act.

Victim Precipitation Theory

Victim precipitation theory was first presented by von Hentig (1941) and applies only to violent victimization. Its basic premise is that by acting in certain provocative ways some individuals initiate a chain of events that lead to their victimization. Most murders of spouses and boyfriends by women, for example, are victim precipitated in that the “perpetrator” is defending herself from the victim (Mann, 1990). Likewise, serious delinquent and criminal behavior and serious victimization are inextricably linked. Schaffer and Ruback (2002), for instance, found that violent offenders, all other things being statistically controlled, are about twice as likely as nonviolent offenders to be victimized themselves. Furthermore, past victimization is the best predictor of future victimization (odds ratio = 5.7, which means that if you were victimized in Year 1, the odds of you being victimized in Year 2 are 5.7 times greater than if you were not victimized in Year 1). Another study using data from the longitudinal Pittsburgh and Denver studies of delinquency risk factors (e.g., low SES, single-parent household, hyperactivity, impulsiveness, drug usage) showed that the same factors predicted victimization as well (Loeber, Kalb, & Huizinga, 2001). As seen in Figure 3.10, overall, 50% of seriously violent delinquents were themselves violently victimized, compared with 10% of nondelinquents from the same neighborhoods.

Victim precipitation theory has been most contentious when applied to rape victims ever since Menachem Amir’s (1971) study of police records found that 19% of forcible rapes were supposedly victim precipitated. Amir defined victim-precipitated rape as a case in which the victim initially agreed to sexual relations and then reneged. A number of surveys of high school and college students have shown that a majority of males and a significant minority of females believe that it is justifiable for a man to use violence to obtain sex if the victim had “led him on” (Herman, 1991). For this reason many criminologists have disparaged victim precipitation theory as victim blaming, although it was never meant to be that. Hopefully, the attitudes revealed in these 1980s surveys have diminished with the greater awareness of the horrible nature of this crime and a greater awareness that women have every right to change their minds even if they have “excited” their partners by mild petting.
Figure 3.11 provides four scenarios illustrating various levels of victim/offender responsibility from the victim precipitation perspective. In the first scenario, the woman who stabbed her husband after suffering years of abuse is judged blameless, although some lacking a little in empathy and understanding of the psychology of domestic abuse may argue that she must take some responsibility for remaining in the relationship. In the second scenario, both the offender and the victim were engaging in a minor vice crime and both are judged equally responsible for the crime (morally he should not have been there and was careless with his wallet). In the third scenario, the victim facilitated the crime by carelessly leaving his keys in the car. In the last scenario, the child is totally innocent of any responsibility for what happened to her. We want to strongly emphasize that whatever the degree of responsibility, “responsibility” does not mean “guilt.”

Routine Activities Theory/Lifestyle Theory

Routine activities theory and lifestyle theory are separate entities, but in victimology they are similar enough to warrant being merged into one (Doerner & Lab, 2002). Routine
activities theory stresses that criminal behavior takes place via the interaction of three variables that reflect individuals’ everyday routine activities: (1) the presence of motivated offenders, (2) the availability of suitable targets, and (3) the absence of capable guardians. The basic idea of lifestyle theory is that there are certain lifestyles (routine activities) that disproportionately expose some people to high risk for victimization. Lifestyles are the routine patterned activities that people engage in on a daily basis, both obligatory (e.g., work related) and optional (e.g., recreational). A high-risk lifestyle may be getting involved with deviant peer groups or drugs, in just “hanging out” or frequenting bars until late into the night and drinking heavily. Routine activities/lifestyle theory explains some of the data relating to demographic profiles and risk presented by Loeber et al. (2001) discussed earlier. Males, the young, the unmarried, and the poor are more at risk for victimization than females, older people, married people, and more affluent people because they have riskier lifestyles. On average, the lifestyles of the former are more active and action oriented than the latter.

These lifestyles sometimes lead to repeat victimization. Prior victimization has been called “arguably the best readily available predictor of future victimization,” and it “appears a robust finding across crime types and data sources” (Tseloni & Pease, 2003, p. 196). Lisa Bostaph (2004) reviews the literature on what she calls “career victims,” and among the various interesting research findings on this phenomenon she lists the following attributable to lifestyle patterns:

- A British crime survey that found that 20.2% of the respondents were victims of 81.2% of all offenses
- A study that found 24% of rape victims had been raped before
- A study of assault victims in the Netherlands that found 11.3% of victims accounted for 25.3% of hospital admissions for assault over 25 years
- A study reporting that 67% of sexual assault victims had experienced prior sexual assaults

Photo 3.3

It’s never a smart idea to run around with peers “with an attitude”—victimization is often just around the corner.
Why we see so much repeat victimization is an important question on victimology’s research agenda. The explanations offered by various theorists almost inevitably revolve around routine activities theory—a motivated offender taking advantage of a suitable victim lacking capable guardians. The repeat victimization of domestic partners or children occurs because the perpetrator is typically supposed to be the capable guardian, and the “suitable targets” are often trapped in the same household as the motivated offenders. Over time, such victims may come to accept victimization as normal and inevitable.

Repeat victims of violent assault are often found to frequent places known to have violent reputations, such as going to certain bars with the stated intention of getting drunk and involved in fights (Farrell, Phillips, & Pease, 1995). These individuals can be either or both repeat offenders and repeat victims.

Most of the research in routine activities/lifestyle theory has been done on rape victimization. Bonnie Fisher and her colleagues’ (2001) national sample of college women found that 2.8% had been raped, although 46.5% of this 2.8% whom Fisher and her colleagues defined as rape victims said that they did not experience the event as rape. Fisher and colleagues (2001) report that four lifestyle factors are consistently found to increase the risk of sexual assault: (1) frequently drinking enough to get drunk, (2) being unmarried, (3) having previously been a victim of sexual assault, and (4) living on campus (for on-campus victimization only). A later study by Daigle, Fisher, and Cullen (2008) among 4,452 college females found that a mere 3.3% of them experienced 45.2% of all the forcible sexual incidents reported in the study. The major factor that appears to distinguish one-time from repeat victims is that one-time victims take steps to avoid circumstances that led to their victimization whereas repeat victims tend not to. It is also possible that repeat victims suffer from what has been called traumatic sexualization, which is the result of prior victimization by someone the victim trusted. This can lead to risk taking and provocative behavior. Such victimization can also undermine trust in others and lead to feelings of powerlessness. All of these symptoms increase the risk of revictimization (Reid & Sullivan, 2009).

Is Victimology “Blaming the Victim”?

Some victim advocates reject victimology theories as “victim blaming.” Victimologists counter by emphasizing that victimologist do not “blame” victims and that they simply explore the process of victimization with the goal of understanding and preventing it. Although victimology research is used to develop crime prevention strategies, not to berate victims, some victim advocates even reject “as ideologically tainted” crime-prevention tips endorsed by victimologists (Karmen, 2005, p. 129). Victimologists maintain, however, that crime prevention tips and strategies are ignored at our peril. We all agree that we should be able to leave our cars unlocked, sleep with the windows open in summer, leave our doors unlocked, frequent any bar we choose, and walk down any alley in any neighborhood at any time we please, but we cannot. The essence of the workplace violence prevention strategies recommended by the FBI and implemented by companies around the United States is that we must take some responsibility for our own safety. If we do not, we will be helpless and passive pawns in the hands of those who would victimize us (Romano et al., 2011).

It is agreed that it is indicative of a double standard when we warn our young women not to get drunk lest they become victims of rape, and I can appreciate the point of those who say we should be loudly warning our young men not to take advantage of impaired women instead. Of course, it is never wise to get drunk whatever one’s gender, because it opens everyone to possible victimization (not to mention accidents). Common sense demands that we take what steps we can to safeguard ourselves and our property in this imperfect world.
Crime prevention tips are really no different from tips we get all the time about staying healthy: eat right, exercise, and quit smoking if you want to avoid health problems. Similarly, avoid certain places, dress sensibly, don’t provoke, take reasonable precautionary measures, and don’t drink too much if you want to avoid victimization. Victims deserve our sympathy even if they somehow provoked or facilitated their own victimization. Victimologists do not “blame”; they simply remind us that complete innocence and full responsibility lie on a continuum.

**The Consequences of Victimization**

Some crime victims suffer lifelong pain from wounds and some suffer permanent disability, but for the majority of victims the worst consequences are psychological. We all like to think that we live in a safe, predictable, and lawful world in which people treat one another decently. When we are victimized this comfortable “just world” view is shattered. With victimization come stressful feelings of shock, personal vulnerability, anger, fear of further victimization, and suspicion of others.

Victimization also produces feelings of depression, guilt, self-blame, and lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy. Rape in particular has these consequences for its victims (“Did I contribute to it?” “Could I have done more to prevent it?”). The shock, anger, and depression that typically afflict a rape victim are known as *rape trauma syndrome*, which is similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (reexperiencing the event via “flashbacks,” avoiding anything at all associated with the event, and a general numbness of affect) often suffered by those who have experienced the horrors of war (van Berlo & Ensink, 2000). Victimization also changes one’s perceptions of and beliefs about others in society. It does so by indicating others as sources of threat and harm rather than sources of support” (Macmillan, 2001, p. 12).

Victims of property crimes, particularly burglary, also have the foundations of their world shaken. The home is supposed to be a personal sanctuary of safety and security, and when it is “touched” by an intruder some victims describe it as the “rape” of their home (Bartol, 2002, p. 336). A British study of burglary victims found that 65% reacted with anger and 30% with fear of revictimization, and 29% suffered insomnia as a consequence. The type and severity of these reactions were structured by victims’ place in the social structure, with those most likely to be affected being women, older and poorer individuals, and residents of single-parent households (Mawby, 2001). Finally, note the trauma, stress, wasted time, and lost relationships suffered by Michelle Brown (see Theory in Action box) after being victimized by a person she neither knew nor had ever seen. This underlies the contention that each one of us is a victim in waiting.

In summing up the consequences of victimization, we note that just as offending behavior shapes the life course trajectories of offenders, violent victimization helps to shape the life course trajectories of victims. Scott Menard’s (2002) study of the National Survey of Youth samples, a longitudinal study involving individuals from age 11 to 33, found that violent victimization during adolescence has pervasive effects on problem outcomes as adults. Figure 3.12 shows that the expected probability of a variety of negative outcomes in adulthood is much greater for victims of violence during adolescence than nonvictims during the same period.

**Victimization and the Criminal Justice System**

Until fairly recently the victim had been the forgotten party in the criminal justice system. In the United States crime is considered an act against the state rather than against the individual
who was actually victimized. In 2004 the Senate passed a crime victim's bill of rights that has
gone some considerable way to recognizing the previously discounted victim. Although these
rights apply only to victims of federal crimes, all 50 states have implemented constitutional
amendments or promulgated bills guaranteeing similar rights. We owe much of this increased
attention to victim issues to the women's movement and to feminist criminologists.

**Crime Victim's Bill of Rights**

1. The right to be reasonably protected from the accused
2. The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any public proceeding involving the
crime or of any release or escape of the accused
3. The right not to be excluded from any such public proceeding
4. The right to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding involving release, plea, or sentencing
5. The right to confer with the attorney for the government in the case
6. The right to full and timely restitution as provided in law
7. The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay
8. The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy

Source: Senate Bill S2329, April 21, 2004

Crime victims are eligible for partial compensation from the state to cover medical and
living expenses incurred as a result of their victimization. All 50 states and all United States
protectorates have established programs that typically cover what private insurance does not, assuming the state has sufficient funds. According to the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Board (NACVCB; 2005), in 2004 victims of violent crime nationwide received a total of $426 million in compensation, with the majority (51%) going for medical expenses.

**Victim-Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORPs)**

VORPs are an integral component of restorative justice philosophy. Many crime victims are seeking fairness, justice, and restitution as defined by them (restorative justice) as opposed to revenge and punishment. Central to the VORP process is the bringing together of victim and offender in face-to-face meetings mediated by a person trained in mediation theory and practice (Walsh & Stohr, 2010). Meetings are voluntary for both offender and victim and are designed to iron out ways in which the offender can make amends for the hurt and damage caused to the victim.

Victims participating in VORPs gain the opportunity to make offenders aware of their feelings of personal violation and loss and to lay out their proposals for how offenders can restore the situation. Offenders are afforded the opportunity to see firsthand the pain they have caused their victims and perhaps even to express remorse. The mediator assists the parties in developing a contract agreeable to both. The mediator monitors the terms of the contract and may schedule further face-to-face meetings.

VORPs are used most often in the juvenile system but rarely used for personal violent crimes in either juvenile or adult systems. Where they are used, about 60% of victims invited to participate actually become involved, and a high percentage (mid- to high 90s) result in signed contracts (Coates, 1990). Mark Umbreit and his colleagues (1994) sum up the various satisfactions expressed by victims who participate in VORPs:

1. Meeting offenders helped reduce their fear of being revictimized.
2. They appreciated the opportunity to tell offenders how they felt.
3. Being personally involved in the justice process was satisfying to them.
4. They gained insight into the crime and into the offender’s situation.
5. They received restitution.

However, VORPs do not suit all victims, especially those who feel that the wrong done to them cannot so easily be “put right,” and want the offender punished (Olson & Dzur, 2004).
Summary

- Victimology is the study of the risk factors for and consequences of victimization and criminal justice approaches dealing with victims and victimization. The risk factors for victimization are basically the same as the risk factors for victimizing in terms of gender, race, age, SES, personal characteristics, and neighborhood.
- Although the NCVS tells us much about victimization in the United States, there is little information relating to victimization occurring in the two places we spend most of our time—at work or school. Workplace violence usually occurs against people who deal with the public in a protective or supervisory capacity or against those who work alone with money.
- Serious physical victimization in our schools is relatively rare, but electronic bullying is ever growing and can have even more hurtful consequences (including suicide) than physical bullying.
- The most insidious form of victimization today is arguably human trafficking, which in effect is a modern form of slavery. People of all ages and sexes are trafficked, but the vast majority are girls and women who are used primarily as captive prostitutes.
- The sexual assault of children is possibly the most prevalent crime against humanity in the United States, with estimates of 20% of girls and 5% of boys being victimized. The greatest risk for child victimization is living with a male who is not the biological father of the child.
- Domestic violence (mostly intimate-partner violence) is the most prevalent form of violence in the United States today. Much of it is driven by jealousy and real or imaged infidelity and is most likely to be committed by competitively disadvantaged males.
- Theories of victimization such as victim precipitation theory and routine activities/lifestyle theory examine the victim's role in facilitating or precipitating his or her victimization. This is not “victim blaming,” but rather an effort to understand and prevent victimization. Victimologists apportion responsibility within the victim/offender dyad on a continuum from complete victim innocence to victim precipitation.
- The consequences of victimization can be devastating both physically and psychologically. Although the severity of the psychological consequences of the same sort of victimization can vary widely according to the characteristics of the victim, consequences can range from short-lived anger to post-traumatic stress disorder, especially for victims of rape.
- Until fairly recently victims were the forgotten party in a criminal justice system that tended to think of them only as “evidence” or witnesses. Things have changed over the last 25 years with the passage of a victim’s rights bill by the federal government and all 50 states. There are also various victim-centered programs designed to ease the pains of victimization, such as victim compensation.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

1. Interview a willing classmate or friend who has been victimized by a serious crime and ask about his or her feelings shortly after victimization and now. Did it change his or her attitudes about crime and punishment?
2. Is it a surprise to you that perpetrators of crimes are more likely to also be victims of crime than people in general? Why or why not?
3. Discuss the various ways that human trafficking is like slavery.
4. Go to your state’s official website and look up funding levels and what services are available to crime victims.
5. Discuss how learning about victimology helps you to further understand offending behavior.
6. Domestic violence has been falling dramatically over the last 10 to 20 years. Is this attributable to mandatory arrest policies or to some other factor?
7. In your opinion, does the criminal justice system do enough to guarantee victims’ rights? What other steps can be taken to lessen the harm suffered by victims in the aftermath of being victimized?
Useful Websites

International Victimology Website. www.victimology.nl.

National Incident-Based Reporting System Resource Guide. www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/NIBRS.

Chapter Terms

Domestic violence  
Human trafficking  
Identity theft  
Rape trauma syndrome  
Routine activities/lifestyle theory  
Victim precipitation theory  
Victimology