

ANDREW KARMEN

CRIME VICTIMS

AN INTRODUCTION TO VICTIMOLOGY

NINTH EDITION





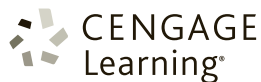
crime victims

AN INTRODUCTION TO VICTIMOLOGY

NINTH EDITION

ANDREW KARMEN

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

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PREFACE

In the early 1980s, I became interested in the victims' rights movement that was campaigning to reform criminal justice policies. I decided to develop an experimental course about crime victims, but I found that no comprehensive and up-to-date textbook existed. After discovering this absence of scholarly books appropriate for classroom use, I accepted the challenge and decided to write one.

When I began working on the first edition during 1983, it was difficult to locate reliable social science data or even well-informed speculation about a number of crucial aspects about people who experienced interpersonal violence and theft. When I prepared the second edition in the late 1980s, I encountered the opposite problem. Instead of a scarcity of material, there was too much. Large amounts of data and lengthy analyses were becoming available, especially about rape, spouse abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse. By the mid-1990s, when I prepared the third edition, this “knowledge explosion” had become even more difficult to manage. Entire issues of scholarly journals had been devoted to, and whole books had been written about, the plight of these victims. When I wrote the fourth edition, the most striking change that I encountered was how the recently developed Internet could provide readily available and continuously updated information about a wide variety of victims. As a result, I added an appendix of websites that faculty and students could check out periodically to view the latest statistics and the most recent developments concerning new laws, programs, and services. (Now there are too many to list.) The fifth edition introduced readers to the problems faced by victims of identity theft, cyberstalking, sexual abuse by clergy, drug-facilitated date rape, bias-driven hate crimes, and unfortunately, terrorist attacks. It also contained many more research findings as a growing number of studies about violence and theft found their way onto the information highway via government agencies, advocacy groups, and scholarly journals focused on specific types of victims. By the time the sixth edition was published, so many new topics and controversial issues had accumulated over the years that I had to break up 7 long chapters into 13 more

manageable ones; this repackaging of themes and issues has worked out very well for courses that run 14 or 15 weeks. The seventh edition featured a closer look at several groups of victims who faced special problems, such as college students, casualties of road rage, and feloniously assaulted police officers. In the eighth edition, this list expanded to include increased coverage of assaulted high school students, persons trafficked into the United States, and prisoners.

Ever since the seventh edition, a table right at the outset in Chapter 1 has assembled victimology-bashing quotes that show how the scientific study of victimization is often confused with the controversial political ideology of victimism. This misunderstanding of what victimology actually is all about has led some influential commentators to condemn the entire discipline and brand it with an undeserved bad reputation. Unfortunately this problem continues, and some students might enter the class with a negative impression of victimology.

WHAT'S NEW?

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

The most useful change in each of the 13 chapters is that I have reformulated clear and measurable learning objectives that will be useful for professors undertaking outcomes assessment. The questions at the end of each chapter, which encourage discussion and debate as well as critical thinking, can serve as the corresponding performance measures. I also provide ideas at the end of each chapter for hands-on research projects. These could form the basis for term papers that can serve as additional indicators of what students gained from taking your class.

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

As in the previous eight editions, I have sought out and highlighted the many controversies that involve victims as they interact with offenders, criminal justice officials and agencies, policy makers, the news media, social movements, and businesses selling security products and services. These contested issues are emotionally unsettling, hotly debated, and divisive, but they make a college course more meaningful and relevant to the real world of competing interests and polarized politics. I strive to be fair and balanced by presenting the strongest arguments of both sides in each controversy. I do not endorse some of the points of view that I present or their implications for social policy, of course. But I firmly believe that a textbook ought to call attention, whenever possible, to sharp clashes between well-meaning people with differing evidence-based views and divergent interpretations of the same data. Two examples of controversies featured in this ninth edition include whether individuals who sense that they are at risk would fare better if they were armed with concealed handguns for self-protection, as well as the best ways to address alcohol-fueled sexual assaults on campus.

Some highlights of the specific revisions, additions, and improvements I have made in each chapter are described below:

- Chapter 1, “What Is Victimology?” has been sharpened to make sure that students find the upcoming course and its reading assignments to be engaging, relevant to their career plans, and meaningful to their personal concerns. This lead-off chapter contains new real-life cases that dramatize the suffering of college students as the targets of ruthless offenders. That is followed by a streamlined discussion stressing the need for objectivity, and then a new section on the necessity of engaging in research. Bystander intervention, which is an insufficiently studied aspect of society’s reaction to victimization, is now covered in greater depth in a box that provides a typology, an example, and an up-to-date review of research findings. Another set of actual cases illustrates how the reactions of victims under attack and their resiliency in its aftermath often can be inspirational and uplifting. That leads to the observation that victimology’s unavoidable preoccupation with suffering can and should be balanced out by another more positive and upbeat line of inquiry, termed “survivorology.” A section asking “Why Study Victimology?” was expanded to further motivate students to consider the practical value of the course and the importance of the entire enterprise.
- Chapter 2, “The Rediscovery of Crime Victims,” provides a great many new references that will prove useful to students who want to investigate the plights of particular groups that have not yet received sufficient attention and assistance. The coverage of victims of human trafficking, a problem of great concern and outrage to many students, now more clearly illustrates how the rediscovery process goes through four distinct stages.
- Chapter 3, “Victimization in the United States: An Overview,” has been reorganized to better explain and illustrate how official statistics can provide preliminary answers to important questions. The graph showing historical

trends in homicides has been moved to the end of this chapter to round out the idea of the big picture. The extensive FBI Uniform Crime Report data as well as the findings from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS) National Crime Victimization Survey in the tables and graphs have been updated and simplified. The discussion of comparative risks (mortality due to illnesses and accidents) has been expanded and updated.

- Chapter 4, “A Closer Look at the Victims of Interpersonal Violence and Theft,” replaces the more narrowly focused chapter formerly entitled “Violent Crimes: Murders and Robberies.” It starts out with an examination of the latest United Nations statistics comparing murder rates for a great many countries and their leading cities in order to demonstrate the importance of location as a major determinant of risk levels. The chapter now also includes discussions about people who suffered near death experiences and other aggravated assaults, robberies, burglaries, vehicle thefts, and even identity theft. Engaging questions are posed, such as which individuals face the gravest chances of being murdered and which motorists should be most concerned when parking their cars. Throughout the chapter, differential risks are the focus of attention: how various demographic groupings experience much higher or much lower rates of victimization.
- Chapter 5, “The Ongoing Controversy over Shared Responsibility,” is a sharpened reformulation of the previous edition’s “Victims’ Contribution to the Crime Problem.” But as always, it presents all sides of this controversial topic. The debate over individual responsibility (in the form of facilitation, precipitation, and provocation) is characterized as victim blaming versus victim defending. The chapter now features enhanced coverage of the theories that account for the differential risks experienced by entire demographic groups. New material highlighted in boxes provides pragmatic advice from experts about how to avoid being burglarized, getting robbed, and being impersonated by an identity thief, and what to do if these unwanted events happen.
- Chapter 6, “Victims and the Police,” replaces “Victims and the Criminal Justice System: Cooperation and Conflict; Part 1: The Police.” This streamlined chapter contains updated tables, including the clearance rates for index crimes for the entire nation, and the homicide clearance rates for many big-city police forces (data that still does not appear in other victimology, criminology, or criminal justice textbooks, to my knowledge). The controversy surrounding charges that some police departments try to manipulate crime statistics downward by discouraging victims from reporting incidents is explored in greater depth. Other issues examined in more detail include efforts by victims to recover their stolen property and the filing of dishonest and false complaints.
- Chapter 7, retitled as “Victims’ Rights and the Criminal Justice System,” now provides a systematic review of the many recently enacted procedural rights (material that formerly appeared in the final chapter of the book). The enumeration and assessment of these rights is integrated into the

discussions about interactions with prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, juries, and corrections officials. This expanded chapter includes some new Supreme Court decisions impacting victims and a strengthened examination of the need for protection against intimidation and reprisals.

- Chapter 8, “Victimized Children,” contains expanded discussions and updated statistics in tables and graphs that reveal the latest trends in child maltreatment cases and fatalities. Differential risks of being abused are explored in greater detail. The latest revelations about sexual abuse as well as cover-ups of systematic molestations are summarized. A summary of a study about the sudden rise and rapid fall of prosecutions and lawsuits based on repressed memories of childhood abuse helps to understand what happened to this formerly burning issue.
- Chapter 9, “Victims of Violence by Lovers and Family Members,” benefits from new real-life cases and updated research findings. The many ways that victims suffer now is explored in greater detail. The clash between maximalist and minimalist perspectives has been updated and sharpened. Theories that address “why does she stay with an abusive partner?” are presented more effectively. Orders of protection and gun surrender laws are described more clearly.
- Chapter 10, “Victims of Rapes and Other Sexual Assaults,” contains new real-life cases and updated statistics in the graph and the table. The discussion about sexual assaults on campus now appears here, rather than in Chapter 11, and a great deal of material has been added, including best practices for handling these cases. Coverage about sexual assaults in the military was added. Updated estimates about differential risks and unanalyzed rape kits enhance the analysis of these issues.
- Chapter 11, “Additional Groups of Victims with Special Problems,” has been reorganized and streamlined and benefits from many fresh real-life examples. New material has been added about cyberstalking, line-of-duty deaths of police officers, and murders and woundings attributed to terrorism. The analysis of offenses against high school and college students, of inmate vs. inmate violence, and of hate crimes has been updated and strengthened.
- Chapter 12, “Repaying Victims,” contains some new material about civil lawsuits and state compensation funds, as well as practical advice addressing the challenges of collecting insurance reimbursements in the wake of burglaries.
- Chapter 13, “Victims in the Twenty-First Century: Alternative Directions,” now features a greatly expanded and yet carefully balanced presentation of the controversy surrounding arming for self-protection, with a wealth of new material about victims using guns to defend themselves. Approaches to conflict resolution that seek to achieve restorative justice now stand out in sharp contrast to arming for self-protection because the discussion about legal rights and remedies has been moved to Chapter 7.

Once again, this edition accentuates the positive by repeatedly focusing on the unanticipated but much-welcomed trend that became evident by the late 1990s: an impressive nationwide drop in victimization rates. Across the country, fewer people are being murdered, robbed, raped, assaulted, or suffering losses from burglaries and car thefts than at any time in the past several decades. This improvement in public safety is well documented in the many tables and graphs throughout the text. Of course, no one knows how much longer the ebbing of the crime wave that began in the 1960s and peaked in the early 1990s will last because no consensus exists among criminologists and victimologists about why crime rates rise and fall.

USING THIS TEXTBOOK

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

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

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

I maintain a personal Web site (www.crimevictimsupdates.com) geared to this textbook's chapters that provides links to the very latest newspaper and magazine articles, radio and television interviews, and reports issued by government agencies and think tanks. The website can be useful for extra credit and make-up assignments and serves as a constant reminder that the subjects examined in the course are closely connected to the real world outside the classroom.

MY GROWING "CREDENTIALS" AS A CRIME VICTIM

Each time I revise this textbook, my credentials (unfortunately) broaden and deepen. Direct experience often is the best teacher and a source of sensitivity and insight about life's problems and the challenges imposed by misfortunes.

In the preface of each previous edition, I listed these credentials: I am not only a criminologist and victimologist, I am also a crime victim.

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

Before the first edition was written:

- I was held up twice (in one month!) by pairs of knife-wielding robbers.
- I lost a car to thieves. The police discovered it completely stripped, burned, and abandoned.
- I experienced a series of thefts of car radios and batteries.
- I suffered a break-in that left my apartment in shambles.

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

- A thief stole the bicycle that I used to ride to the train station by cutting the fence to which it was chained.
- Someone ran off with a fishing rod I had left unattended for a few minutes on a pier while I was buying more bait. (It surely was not pulled over the railing by a big fish).
- A teenager singled out my car in a crowded parking lot for some reason and smashed the rear window with a rock. An eyewitness pointed out the young man to the police, and his foster parents volunteered to pay my bills for the damage. (I minimized their expenses by going to a salvage yard to find a low-cost replacement window.)
- A thief broke into the trunk of my car and stole my wallet and my wife's pocketbook while we spent an afternoon at the beach. Our wallets were later recovered from a nearby mailbox, emptied of our cash and credit cards.
- One hot summer night, an intruder entered our kitchen through an unlocked screen door. He ran off with a purse while we talked to guests in the living room.
- A car I was riding in was sideswiped by a vehicle driven by a fugitive who was being hotly pursued by a patrol car. No one was hurt, and the offender escaped.
- A thief smashed the side window of my car, which was parked at a meter a block away from the college where I teach. Sitting in the passenger seat, he

began to pry out the radio. When the alarm went off, he fled, leaving his screwdriver behind (it is now my favorite tool).

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

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

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

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

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

- Like many other New Yorkers, I knew some victims of terrorism who barely escaped death by evacuating the World Trade Center before the Twin Towers collapsed.
- My daughter’s backpack was stolen by a thief who pried open the trunk of our automobile after watching her park the car and walk away.
- More importantly, I received just a taste of what it is like to be a victim of identity theft. The fraud detection unit of a credit card company called one morning and asked if anyone in my family had recently charged exactly \$400 at a department store and \$200 at a computer software store about

40 miles away. When I answered no, and wondered aloud how such round number amounts could be charged for merchandise that is taxed, they simply said, “Don’t worry, just fill out an affidavit.” When the paperwork finally arrived weeks later, I did what they asked and never heard anything about these peculiar financial transactions again.

By the time the sixth edition came out, I had received plenty of fraudulent e-mails (called “phishing”—see the discussion of identity theft in Chapters 4 and 5) warning me to immediately update my account at some bank or credit card company or eBay before it was frozen. Besides these pathetic attempts to con me, very little else happened, which probably reflected the nationwide drop in crime that has lowered virtually everyone’s risks of being victimized (see Chapter 3).

However, while preparing the seventh edition, my family was victimized twice—in other countries! My daughter’s car was broken into near a museum in Montreal, Canada, and her husband’s digital camera was stolen (and we paid a hefty bill for a new door lock and rear window for the damaged vehicle). In London’s theater district, a pickpocket deftly removed my wife’s wallet from her backpack (see Chapter 1). Fortunately, although she lost some cash and her driver’s license, whoever ended up with her credit cards was not able to purchase anything or steal her identity. Meanwhile, back home, I suspected that someone entered our car one night while it was parked unlocked in our driveway because the glove compartment was open the next morning. As far as I could tell, nothing was taken. Sure enough, the next night the thief returned and stole the remote for our garage door opener from the car’s sun visor while we were eating dinner. Fortunately, just an hour later I discovered that the remote was missing due to my habitual carelessness about not locking my car’s doors (see Chapter 5), so I disconnected the garage door opener. I did not report these two minor matters to the police. The incidents in Montreal and London were reported to the authorities, but they never contacted us, so presumably the car thief and the pickpocket were never caught and our stolen property was not recovered (see Chapter 6).

One other incident is worth recounting because it is humorous: I keep my canoe chained to a rack at the town beach during warm weather. I came down one hot summer day to do some paddling and fishing and discovered that someone had stolen the chain and the padlock—but left the canoe behind, undamaged. Go figure!

After finishing the eighth edition, I had only one additional trivial incident to report. Someone stole a small anchor from my motorboat while it was moored in a nearby bay. I reported this petty larceny to the harbor patrol.

Now that this ninth edition is complete, I have just one more minor incident to share. Someone used my credit card to purchase stuff I would never buy and enroll in various costly Web-based services of no interest to me. The credit card security department flagged these peculiar transactions and notified me. I did not have to pay for the expensive goods and services this identity thief charged in my name.

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

ANCILLARIES

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

Online Instructor’s Manual

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

Online Test Bank

The Test Bank contains multiple choice and essay questions to challenge your students and assess their learning.

Online PowerPoints®

These vibrant, Microsoft PowerPoint® lecture slides for each chapter assist you with your lecture, by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook!

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Andrew Karmen, February 2015

1



What Is Victimology?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Focusing on the Plight of Crime Victims

Studying Victimization Scientifically

Why Objectivity Is Desirable

Sometimes It Is Difficult to Distinguish Victims from Villains

Criminals Can Be Victims Too

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

Sources of Bias that Thwart Objectivity

Victimology's Undeserved "Bad Reputation"

Why Emphasize Research?

Comparing Victimology to Criminology

The Many Parallels between Criminology and Victimology

Some Differences and Issues about Boundaries Interfacing with Other Disciplines

Divisions within the Discipline

What Victimologists Do

Step 1: Identify, Define, and Describe the Problem

Step 2: Measure the True Dimensions of the Problem

Step 3: Investigate How Victims Are Handled

Step 4: Gather Evidence to Test Hypotheses

Why Study Victimology?

Recognizing Exemplary Behavior Under Very Difficult Circumstances

"Survivorology:" Toward a More Inspiring and Uplifted Trajectory within Victimology

Summary

Key Terms Defined in the Glossary

Questions for Discussion and Debate

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Research Projects

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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)

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

First responders and rescue workers who race to crime scenes (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 Bober, 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)

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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)

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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, down-trodden, 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 lifers. (Berns, 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 unarmed youth who was tragically and needlessly killed, telling journalists that, “If I had a son, he’d look like {the victim}.” A jury of six women acquits the defendant of charges of second

degree murder, and even of the lesser charge of manslaughter. The jurors reject the prosecution’s version of the events: that the man had deliberately pursued the hoodie-clad black teenager and instigated the fight that led to the fatal shooting. The jury accepts the injured man’s contention that the teenager knocked him to the ground, punched him and repeatedly slammed his head against the sidewalk; and that he was justified in firing to protect himself because he feared grave bodily harm or death. The testimony and evidence at the trial does not clearly resolve key questions about what really happened that rainy night: who initiated the confrontation and started the fight by throwing the first punch, who screamed for help, and at what point was the handgun drawn? 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)

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At around 4:30 am, a 55-year-old white man hears loud pounding and shouting at his front door and then at his side door. He grabs a shotgun and fires a blast through his locked screen door into the face of a teenage black girl standing on his front porch, killing her instantly. He is arrested and put on trial. Although he initially told the police that his weapon discharged accidentally, he tells the jury that he thought his home was about to be invaded by several intruders and, fearing for his life, vowed that “I wasn’t going to cower in my house, I didn’t want to be a victim.” The prosecution contends that he went to the door armed because he wanted to confront and frighten vandals who had defaced his vehicle with paintballs a few weeks earlier. The jury rejects his claim of firing in self-defense, and finds the man guilty of second degree murder 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)

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A 29-year-old mother of 3 enters her home to gather her belongings so she can escape from her abusive estranged husband, whose periodic beatings have inflicted injuries that have sent her to a hospital. But he returns home unexpectedly, accompanied by two of her stepsons. The 10-year-old and 13-year-old watch in horror as he beats and strangles her. She runs into the garage to get into her car but finds herself trapped, so she grabs her licensed handgun and returns to their house. When he curses and charges towards her, she fires what she contends are three warning shots into the kitchen 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 jails, 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