

DeBuse

THE ELDERLY AS VICTIMS OF CRIME: A STUDY
OF CRIME AGAINST THE ELDERLY IN
AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT

BY
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

NCJRS

DEC 3 1976

ACQUISITIONS

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1974

37932

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge Dean Rosenblatt, the College of Criminal Justice, and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration for providing the financial as well as the educational support for this study.

Also, I acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Carl Cunningham of the Midwest Research Institute for generously providing the Institute's data, and Mr. George Sunderland of the American Association of Retired Persons for providing valuable bibliographical information.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge Professor Stephen Schafer and Professor Joseph Senna for their support and suggestions in reviewing the study from its conception. It is through their inspiration and guidance that this study has been produced.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to explore the elderly as victims of crime and to generate a theoretical perspective for understanding their victimization. The paper attempts to review the elderly victim as he appears in the social environment of our time. It stresses the need for a new social awareness of the crime problem as it pertains to the plight of the elderly in our society. In sum, the paper reviews the types of crimes committed against the elderly, the offender who commits them, why the elderly are selected as victims, and the consequences of their victimization.

As a result of research findings, the study concludes that the elderly's victimization may or may not increase in comparison to other age groups because of various factors. These factors suggest a general hypothesis on environmental, economic, physical, and psychological vulnerability. Similarly, suggestions are made for reducing the elderly's vulnerability and thus minimizing the effect of crime.

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CHAPTER I

THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In criminological literature the theoretical framework for discussing the elderly as victims of crime has already been partially provided. Over twenty-five years ago von Hentig, in his book The Criminal and His Victim, suggested that because "the aged section of the population" is increasing "crime will be directed against it with new vigor and in new forms."¹ Benjamin Mendelsohn, who was probably the first to evolve the concept of victimology, noted¹ that there were certain "biopsychosocial" factors on the part of the victim which led to his or her criminal victimization.² Mendelsohn first published his observation of these factors in a study on rape in 1940. Henri Ellenberger in 1954 developed a psychoanalytic approach to the victim-offender relationship. Essentially Ellenberger affirmed the assumption that certain individuals are prone to criminal victimization because of their "psychological and biological constitution."³ Consequently, what he has developed is a typology which, according to Stephen Schafer, results in "biological qualities that indicate a more or less lasting vulnerability to crime."⁴

Despite the early work of Mendelsohn, von Hentig, Ellenberger, and a few others, it seems that criminology, until recently, has basically ignored the victim of crime. Instead it has concentrated its resources almost exclusively on the criminal offender, with little attention towards understanding the victim of the criminal act. However, it has been suggested that one ought to know and study the victim of crime

in order to facilitate the reduction of crime. According to Schafer, the study of the victim and their social situation might lead to the following positive results:

It might increase the defense of those who cannot compensate for their weakness through their own efforts; it might elucidate and explain characteristics of victimization; it might evaluate victim risks and accommodate crime control and social defense to them.⁵

Similarly, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice restated in 1967 the idea of turning to the victims as well as offenders for a better understanding of the crime problem:

If we knew more about the characteristics of both offenders and victims, the nature of their relationship, and the circumstances that create a high probability of criminal conduct, it seems likely that crime prevention and control programs could be made much more effective.⁶

Clearly, criminology is in need of finding out whether there are certain factors that invite criminal victimization. It is in need of knowing if these factors are limited to the social, physical, and psychological characteristics of the individual, and whether they aid or hinder the individual's criminal victimization. Without such knowledge there can be no understanding of the victim-offender relationship----- and, consequently, criminology would just be limited to the prevention, control and treatment of the criminal offender. What is suggested, therefore, is a broadening of criminological thought to include the significance of crime against certain persons which make up segments of our society.

Yet it might be assumed that there is no need to study the elderly since they have always had characteristics in any case which increased their victimization. However, the older person's weakness and

vulnerability has taken on a different perspective, since the elderly's social environment is in a process of change. It is the consequence of their changing social environment, as well as the increasing effect of the crime problem, that calls for a new approach to ^{the} elderly as a general class of victims. An approach seems to be desirable that is quite different from what criminology has assumed in the past.

CHAPTER II

WHO ARE THE ELDERLY

In view of the fact that there is no clear definition as to when one becomes an elderly person, it is important to explain various processes that occur to and in the aging person. These processes basically involve the complex subject of gerontology, which is comprised of the study of "describing and understanding older man."¹ However, it is not the exclusive purpose of this study to become involved with the intricate network of issues of gerontology. Rather it is the purpose to understand the elderly as a class of victims with certain "biopsychosocial" characteristics.² By approaching these characteristics one can better perceive of the aging person in our society.

The most obvious is probably the biological process that occurs to the individual in old age. Superficially it may involve wrinkles on the skin, graying of the hair, and a certain slowness of movement. However, its scope is much broader than what is physically observable. It deeply involves a deteriorative process in which the body decreases its vitality in reproducing essential cells that make up the body's internal system of organs. Thus a biological process of decay occurs in which the body ages internally as well as externally. Furthermore, this aging process decreases the body's ability to withstand disease; therefore, it becomes more vulnerable to death.³

According to biologists the process of "biological aging is called senescence,"⁴ which manifests itself with an increase in disease, injury, and death. It not only causes aging in terms of skin, bones, and muscular strength, but also in terms of the human body's nervous system. The process further causes hardening of blood vessels which creates circulatory problems. As a result of this, there is a reduction in the means by which psychomotor impulses travel through the brain. Consequently, there are psychological changes which occur as a result of senescence.⁵ Moreover, these changes may develop unevenly in that an individual may find himself with all of the physical as well as psychological characteristics of old age at the age of forty.

Accordingly, the psychological process decreases as the age of the individual increases. It often involves a decreased efficiency in the person's sight and hearing ability. This also further affects other segments of the individual's psychological functions; such as his or her drives, motives, emotions, and attitudes.⁶ However, it must be noted that in terms of adequate social functioning most people do not find themselves physically or psychologically disabled until their late seventies.⁷

As the psychological process is connected to the biological process, so is the sociological process that occurs to the individual in old age. This process is most notably illustrated in Elaine Cumming and William E. Henry's theory on disengagement.⁸ Essentially the theory suggests that as the individual withdraws from society, society retreats from the older person, consequently disengagement occurs:

In our theory, aging is an inevitable mutual withdrawal or disengagement, resulting in decreased interaction between the aging person and others in the social systems he belongs to. The process may be initiated by the individual or by others in the situation. The aging person may withdraw more markedly from some classes of people while remaining relatively close to others. His withdrawal may be accompanied from the outset by an increased preoccupation with himself; certain institutions in society may make this withdrawal easy for him. When the aging process is complete, the equilibrium which existed in middle life between the individual and his society has given way to a new equilibrium characterized by a greater distance and an altered type of relationship.⁹

The theory is validated by social structural evidence, which shows a decline in the social interaction of the older individual.¹⁰ Also statistical evidence is further used to validate the assumption that there is disengagement in the attitudes of the elderly individual as well.¹¹ In sum, what is presented is a number of assumptions that explain the basis of the social phenomenon of aging in our society.

The disengagement theory is particularly significant to an urban, industrial society in view of certain social factors, for example the individual's role, income, and environment. These factors are important in understanding the plight of the elderly in our society.

First, the individual's role may be changed once he reaches the chronological age of sixty-five. At this point in time the aging individual is usually asked to change his occupational role into the role of a "retired person."¹² For the individual it represents a socially forced and, at the same time, socially approved unemployment. According to social gerontologist Robert Atchley, "retirement marks the end of what is generally thought to be a close relationship between the kind of work an individual does and the kind of life style and livelihood he enjoys."¹³

As a consequence of changing roles, there is a dramatic gap between the income of the working and retirement years. According to the United States Senate's Special Committee on Aging, "many of the aged poor became poor after reaching old age because of the cut in income brought by retirement from the labor force."¹⁴ Furthermore, the inadequacy of retirement income is aggravated by increases in the costs of those goods and services on which older persons depend on for their survival. Eighty-eight percent of the current expenditures of older persons consists of food, clothing, housing, transportation, and medical care. With the prices of these basic essentials increasing at inflationary rates, the elderly person's purchasing power is decreasing because of his fixed income. The fact that three out of ten persons 65 and over were living in poverty dramatizes the inadequacy of the elderly's income.¹⁵

Just as the retirement concept is typical to an industrialized society, so too is the social environment which surrounds the aging individual. Basically industrialism has resulted in urbanization and a great deal of physical mobility. This consequently has caused the weakening of traditional ties with the family. No longer does the family or the local community feel the social responsibility for the plight of the elderly citizen. Rather it does become the responsibility of the government to care for the elderly through various bureaucratic outlets; such as, social security, medicare and public housing.

To further exemplify the process of aging in the American society, let us consider two case histories: The cases of Mr. K and Mr. S; both are elderly citizens, and both are quite typical of their social environment. Mr. K represents a rural, agrarian environment, while Mr. S represents an urban, industrialized environment.

Mr. K lives with his wife and married children on a small farm in upstate New York. Although Mr. K does not do as much physical labor as he used to, he has taken a different role in helping run the small farm he started. He now does much of the bookkeeping as well as some light physical chores. His sons are actively involved with the daily task of the farming operation. One of his married sons shares the same house with him and his wife. Mr. K does not feel disengaged; if anything, he feels more engaged with life and his family because of his senior status. Also he feels secure in living in the same house for the last sixty years. As far as the problems of crime, according to Mr. K, "that's something that city folk worry about."

Less than ninety minutes away Mr. S lives in the South Bronx of New York City. The neighborhood's changed quite a bit and has become somewhat dangerous in the last ten years. Mr. S has been retired from his past employment for the last twelve years. He has been living in the Bronx for over forty years. When his family first moved in, it was the ideal place to live for someone on a moderately low income. The apartments were and are still rent controlled, and consequently his monthly rent has stayed about the same. Mr. S worries about crime.

Although he has not yet been victimized, he and his wife have heard and know of friends and neighbors who have been robbed and assaulted. Mr. S has a son who has asked them to move. However, Mr. S feels that he cannot afford the rents which are three times what he is paying now. Also, he does not want to be an added financial burden to his son who is struggling to support a large family on a very moderate income in New Jersey. And besides, Mr. S cannot bear to leave the neighborhood that he and his wife know so well.

Mr. S has the social characteristics of the average older person who is, according to social gerontologist Marvin Koller, "clustered in blighted areas of 'center' cities, unable or unwilling to make a change."¹⁶ It is Mr. S that this study is concerned with and not Mr. K, because the crime problem for Mr. S has a very special and different effect. It is an effect that perpetuates what some may consider to be a socially miserable condition.¹⁷

CHAPTER III

THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIAL AWARENESS

In considering the elderly as victims of crime, there is an essential need for a new social awareness. As mentioned before, the government has increasingly assumed responsibility for the elderly citizen in today's urban, industrialized society. Their attempts to meet this responsibility through various government services have resulted in public housing for the poor. Since older persons are disproportionately poverty stricken, in comparison to their younger counterparts, they are more affected by the construction of low--and high rise public housing.

Yet the problems of public housing have caused their tenants to become more vocal about their needs. And statistical evidence supports their claims that they are more likely to be the victims of crime than those living in higher income categories.

Consider the testimony of Mrs. Thelma Peters before the Subcommittee on Housing for the Elderly. Mrs. Peters is a resident of Boston's Columbia Point Housing Project, which is a federally funded project, with approximately 300 apartments for the elderly.

Many seniors live in seven-story buildings and are attacked while waiting for the elevators, or on many occasions, they are followed, and they are held up, and they are assaulted before reaching their floors.... If the elevators are not working, then there are two sets of stairways to climb, with doors both back and front on each landing, making it possible for anyone to jump them at any point along the way... There are not many visitors because cars have been stolen, or vandalized, and people have been grabbed in the hallways, when some of the seniors go to visit their relatives. Others communicate by telephone. There have also been occasions when families have moved relatives out of the project whether they wanted to go or not.... Contrary to the thinking of those people who are the decision-makers, all senior citizens do not prefer living in housing constructed solely for them.¹

Furthermore, consider the following hypothetical example which illustrates the daily effect of crime on the lives of the elderly in today's public housing project:

It's 6 o'clock on a winter evening. A 70 year-old woman named Mary is a tenant in a building also occupied by family tenants. She has had dinner at a friend's and comes to her building.

There are no outside lights because they have been stoned by vandals. Mary could trip on something in the dark. Tonight she is lucky and gets into the unlit hallway safely. Because it is winter, the only light is the thin line at the base of neighbors' doors. She gets to the elevator but it has been vandalized. Now she must start the five-story climb up the totally darkened stairwell. The climb is painful enough during the day, when she can at least see where she is going. At night, Mary is filled with the constant fear of assailants.

This night she is attacked. A 12-year-old boy, hooked on heroin, is desperate for money. He grabs her purse. She lunges for him, misses and falls down three stairs to the landing, breaking her arm.

Neighbors hearing her crying come out to help her. They cannot take her to the clinic at the development. They have closed by now because it is too dangerous to have staff work past 5 p.m. She is taken to a hospital and the broken arm is set and put in a cast. Because of her age, it may be 9 or 10 months before she has use of her arm again.²

This example perhaps characterizes the failure of many programs to bring a lasting benefit to their recipients. Further, it reflects the incorrect assumption that improved housing, in itself, can bring about lasting relief from the problems of poverty. Yet the social planners have not been able to bulldoze alcoholism, addiction, high rates of illegitimacy, unemployment, broken homes, crime and delinquency. What has occurred is the creation of modern 20th century slums, which too frequently become the worst "dumping grounds" for the "have nots" of society.³

Thus some residents of public housing have assumed that the government has an obligation to assure their safety, since the government has created their social environment.⁴ Similarly, an increase in government responsibility for the protection of all its citizens is a growing need with today's increasing crime problem.

Yet, society may not judge the elderly to be victims of crime. It may instead perceive of the elderly person as socially dysfunctional; and consequently, according to the general views of the larger society, there is a need to care about their victimization. According to Richard Quinney, "the victim is a social construction.... Why we conceive of some persons as victims and others not as victims is a consequence of our commonsense assumptions."⁵ In the same respect the reader may or may not consider the elderly to be victims of crime, because his morality does not perceive of any sort of special significance for the aging in our society. It is suggested, however, that one ought to ~~be~~ ^{go} beyond today's perception of crime to the broader social issues,

because victimization is not limited to just the consequences of the criminal act. It is believed, the criminal act has a broader effect on this generation and future generations to come. And, that the elderly have a special role in today's society and future societies to come. It is this role that must be protected.

Moreover, the importance of our conception of the nature and extent of crime must go beyond the general attractiveness of the victim. Society, as already mentioned, disengages the aging individual because his net worth is no longer needed. In the same respect the criminal justice system may disengage the elderly person as a victim of crime. In other words, the elderly citizen is often not appreciated as a victim, since his importance is limited. This can be exemplified by an interesting empirical experiment, done by David Landy and Eliot Aronson, on The Influence of the Character of the Criminal and His Victim on the Decisions of Simulated Jurors. The author's statistical data showed that jurors would sentence the criminal offender to an average of 10.55 years imprisonment where the victim was attractive. When the victim was unattractive, on the other hand, the offender would receive an average sentence of 8.48 years.⁶ Clearly, what is shown by this important study is that society considers the consequences of the criminal act based on the attractiveness of the victim. The same argument is further made in that society does not consider its elderly as victims because they represent the unattractive and the unneeded elements of today's industrialized environment.

CHAPTER IV

CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST THE ELDERLY

To merely comment and categorize the types of crimes committed against the elderly would be to ignore essential characteristics on the part of the elderly victim. Since crimes are events that happen to people in varying social conditions, there seems to be a need to know these conditions as well as the general characteristics of the victim. In other words, it is not enough simply to state that the elderly are victimized by a certain number of crimes, it is, perhaps, more important to look at the crimes as they relate to the victim.

As with other age groups, the elderly can be identified according to a number of variables; such as sex, race, income, and age. These variables are important in order to portray an accurate statistical profile of the elderly victim. By knowing the elderly victim, one can better understand the extent and nature of the individual's criminal victimization.

The Elderly Victim in Kansas City, Missouri¹

In a study presently being conducted on crimes against the elderly in Kansas City, Missouri, the principal investigator, Carl Cunningham, has researched and analyzed over 1,831 elderly victims of serious crimes as reported to official police records. The study began in June of 1972 at the Midwest Research Institute in Kansas City, Missouri, for the purpose of "reducing the effect of crimes against the aging."

It is supported by the Administration on Aging, Social and Rehabilitation Service under grant number 93-p-7519017-02. The study utilized the age of 60 as the bottom limit for defining the elderly victim. The following illustrates the basic characteristics of the elderly victim in the Kansas City area:

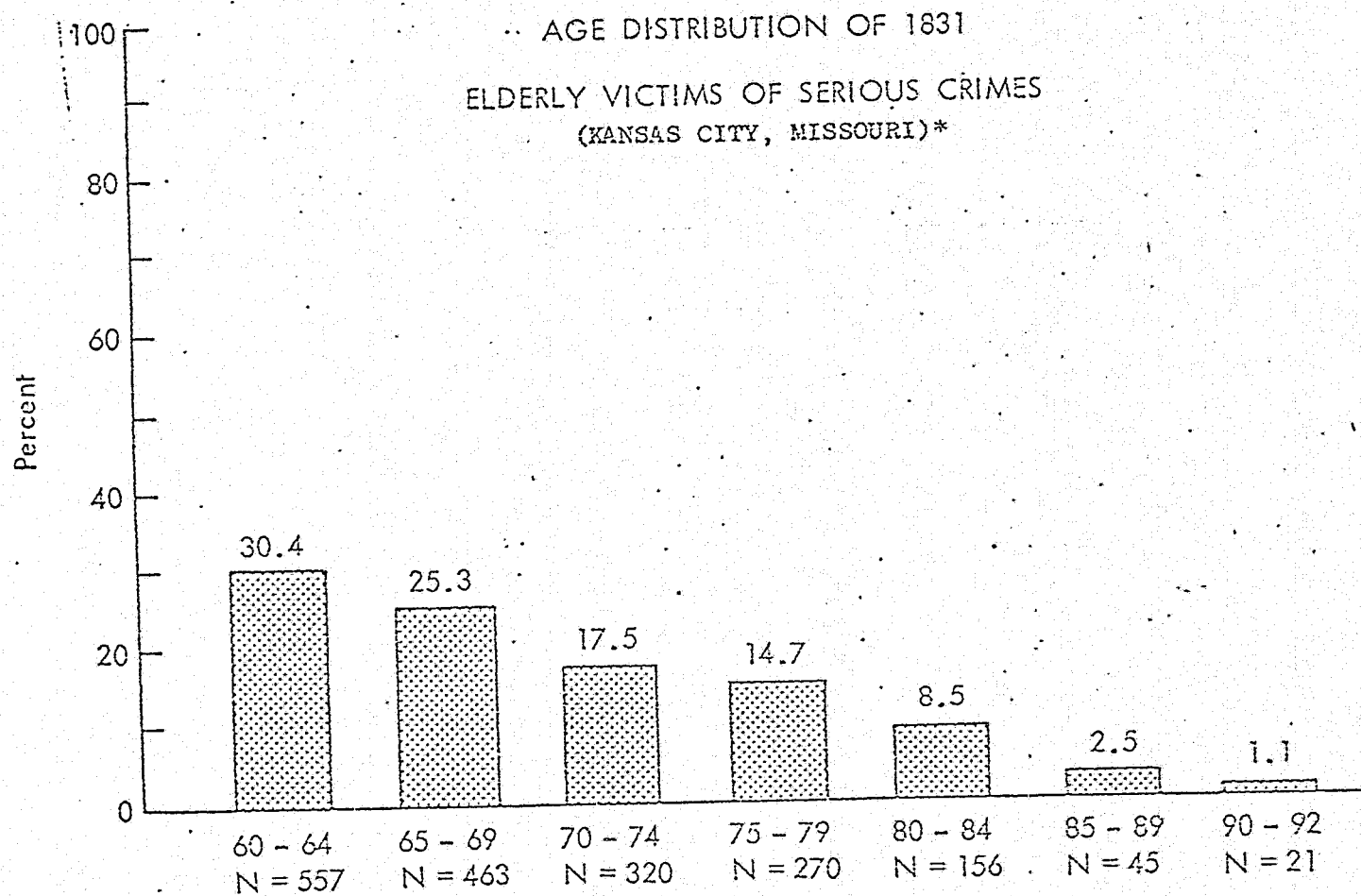
The Age of the Victim

As figure 1 shows, the age groups of the elderly victim is most notably concentrated in the 60-64 year category. The median age of all those persons victimized was 68.8 years. For black victims it was 66.3 years, as opposed to white victims with a median age of 68.3 years. Basically, this reflects a decrease in victimization as the disabilities of old age sets in.²

The Race of the Victim

Figure 2 illustrates the race of the elderly victim. In the area where the sample was taken, the 1970 census showed the population for those over age 60 to be 84 percent white, 15 percent black, and 1 percent other races. Clearly the fact that 22 percent were black victims is significantly higher than the proportion of black persons over 60 in the population at large.

Other characteristics in figure 2 show that there were more white females victimized than black females. As far as whether the victim lived alone, had serious physical handicaps, or lived in an apartment made little difference in comparing black and white victims. The higher percentage of Blacks being victimized, those that had incomes below \$3,000., reflects the fact that Blacks are generally poorer than Whites in the sample area.



N Total = 1831

Figure 1

*Cunningham, Reducing the Effect of Crimes Against the Aging, (Kansas City, Missouri: Midwest Research Institute, Interim Report, 1974). (unpublished)

PROFILE OF ELDERLY VICTIMS BY RACE
(KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI)*

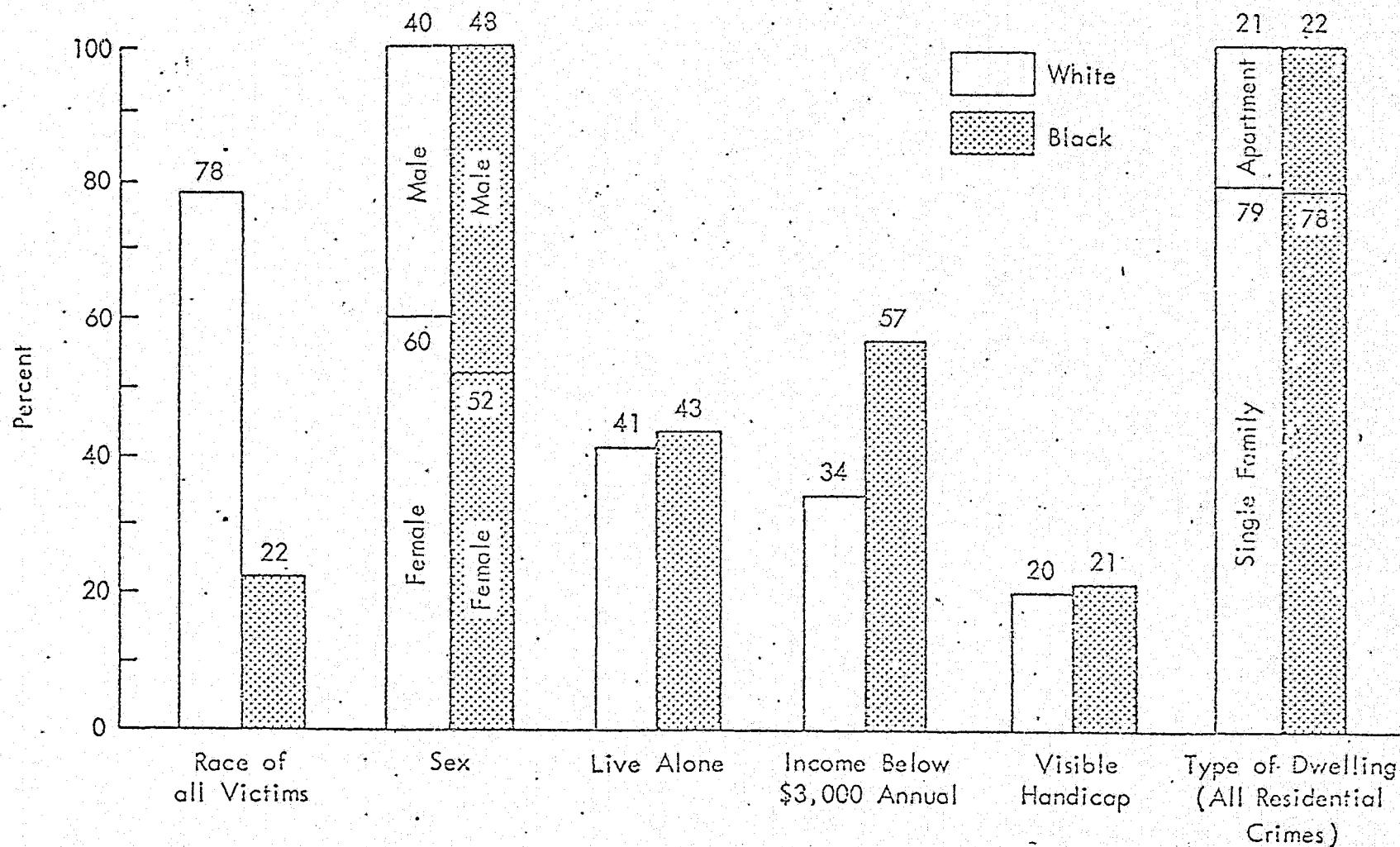


Figure 2

*Cunningham, Reducing the Effect of Crimes Against the Aging, (Kansas City, Missouri: Midwest Research Institute, Interim Report, 1974). (unpublished)

The Income of the Victim

In figure 3 a closer examination of the income of those elderly victims surveyed reveals that they generally have an annual income of less than \$3,000.; and that, those who have the least income are the most likely to be victimized. In fact the data illustrates that one out of every five black victims of a serious crime had an income of less than \$1,000. a year. If we consider black and white victims together, 47 percent had incomes of less than \$3,000.³

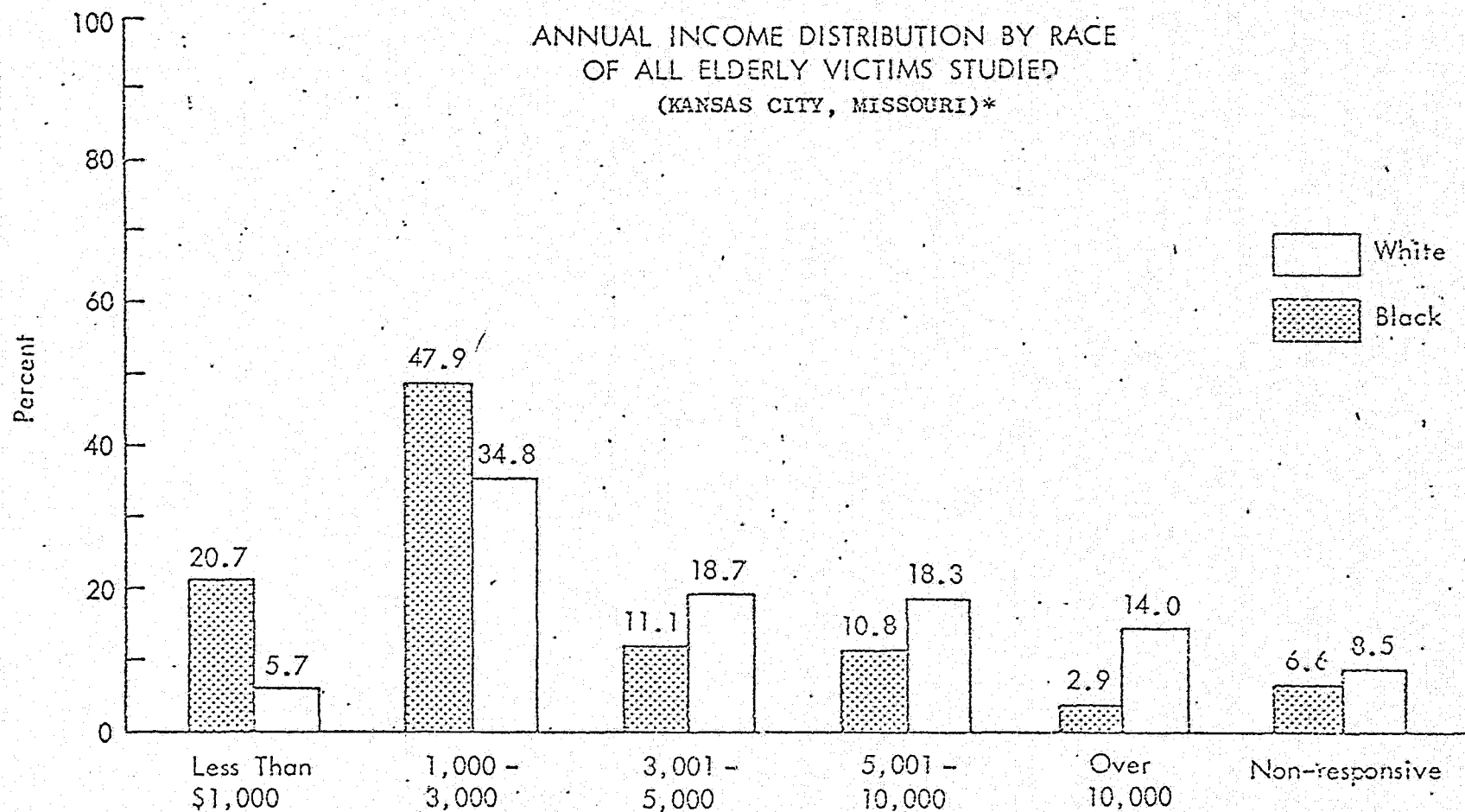
A General Profile of the Victim

A general profile of the elderly victim illustrates the following characteristics:

1. Nearly 65 percent of those persons who were victimized have been living in their present neighborhood for 10 years or more.
2. About 20 percent of those elderly persons surveyed had some sort of physical disability that restricts activity.
3. Forty-two percent of the victims depend primarily on social security for their income. Another 27 percent derive their income from some form of employment, full or part time.
4. About 13 percent of the victims were physically injured in some way as a direct result of crime committed against them.⁴

The Crimes Committed in Kansas City

Table 1 illustrates a breakdown of the types of crimes committed against the elderly victim in Kansas City. Burglary and Robbery are listed as the two most frequent crimes that are committed against the aging victim.



*Cunningham, Reducing the Effect of Crimes Against the Aging, (Kansas City, Missouri: Midwest Research Institute, Interim Report, 1974). (unpublished)

Figure 3

TABLE 1

BREAKDOWN BY TYPES OF OFFENSE OF 1,831 CRIMES AGAINST
THE ELDERLY IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI*

	Number	Percent
Burglary	1,024	55.9
Robbery	450	24.6
Larceny	256	13.9
Assault	45	2.5
Fraud	42	2.3
Rape	5	0.3
Homicide	4	0.2
Other	<u>5</u>	<u>0.3</u>
Total	1,831	100.0

*Carl Cunningham, Reducing the Effect of Crimes against the Aging, Midwest Research Institute, Administration on Aging and Social Rehabilitation, Interim Report, 1974, unpublished.

In comparison to other age groups, Cunningham notes the following:

In Kansas City, elderly persons living in the higher crime areas of the city were victimized in 1973 by burglary and robbery at a rate that was frequently three to four times that of the rate of victimization of the same crime for the younger population of the city at large.⁵

Crimes Committed against the Elderly
in Houston, Texas⁶

In June of 1972 a victimization survey was conducted of the aged in the Houston, Texas area. The study was conducted by Raymond Forston and James Kitchens, Professors in Sociology at North Texas State University. In the study the aging was defined as those persons 65 years and over. The survey consisted of interviews with 856 persons of which 538 were elderly.

Before proceeding it must be noted that the Texas survey uses data from a victim survey, which is based on a personal interview, using the interviewee's reports of having been criminally victimized. This is important since most people do not always report their victimization. It might have special significance for the elderly because they may, with age, be more alienated and frustrated with reporting their criminal victimization. Similarly they may be less likely to report their victimization because of a greater fear of retaliation than their younger counterparts. Consequently, the Texas study fills an important gap by utilizing the victim-survey method for studying the elderly as victims.⁷

The findings of the study allows a comparison of certain crimes between those under 65 years of age and those 65 years of age and older. The elderly as Table 2 illustrates are not over-victimized in comparison to their younger counterparts. But for certain crimes--robbery, swindling, purse snatching, and homicide--they are over-victimized.

The elderly's victim profile further illustrates the nature of their victimization. Blacks are more victimized than White and Mexican Americans. For each of the separate crimes, Blacks lead in victimization for robbery, burglary, swindling, assault and murder; Whites are highest for theft and purse-snatching victimization; and Mexican Americans have the highest victimization rate for auto theft.

TABLE 2

CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION OF THE AGED IN THE HOUSTON
MODEL NEIGHBORHOOD AREA

	under 65	65 and over
All Crimes	41.7	29.8
Robbery	4.7	5.6
Burglary	13.8	7.9
Auto Theft	4.7	3.0
Theft	10.0	4.9
Swindling	2.2	3.8
Purse Snatching	1.3	3.2
Assault	3.5	1.3
Rape	2.5	0.0
Murder	.03	.08

Furthermore Table 3 reveals that aged women are more often criminally victimized than elderly men for all crimes combined and for burglary and swindling. This is not because there are generally more elderly women, since the authors have selected their sample evenly between males and females.

In sum, it can be concluded that in the Houston area the elderly are not comparatively over-victimized for all crimes. However, for some crimes they are more likely to be the victims than their younger counterparts. It must be stressed, however, that the data presented can be generalized only to the Houston area.

TABLE 3

VICTIMIZATION OF AGED BY SEX IN HOUSTON
MODEL NEIGHBORHOOD AREA

	Aged Males	Aged Females
All Crimes	26.0	32.0
Robbery	5.1	3.7
Burglary	8.1	8.9
Auto Theft	4.3	1.3
Theft	5.1	4.7
Swindling	2.1	5.1
Purse Snatching	---	5.7
Assault	1.3	1.3
Rape	---	0.0
Murder	0.0	1.3

The Elderly in North Carolina

In North Carolina a victimization study was recently completed that included those persons over the age of 65. It shows that the elderly are less likely to be victimized than their younger counterparts. Also they are less likely to suffer multiple victimization. The results were found to be significant at the .001 level. The sample used was based on 1,145 randomly selected respondents.⁸ (See Table 4)

TABLE 4

VICTIMIZATION BY AGE IN NORTH CAROLINA

	Under 26 (N=139)	26-30 (N=126)	31-45 (N=336)	46-65 (N=368)	Over 65 (N=154)	Totals
0	30.2	34.1	40.8	54.9	(66.9)	46.9
1	28.8	31.7	25.9	29.3	19.5	27.2
2+	41.0	34.1	33.3	15.8	13.6	25.9

$\chi^2=84.96$, sign.=.001, v=19, c=.27

The Elderly in a Boston Housing Project

A study conducted by Deborah Blumin on a South Boston Housing Project showed that the elderly were generally the least to be victimized in comparison to other age groups. Furthermore, the elderly's multiple victimization was lower than other age groups.⁹ (See Table 5) Multiple victimization refers to the total number of crimes committed against the person.

The Elderly's Victimization in Three Types of Housing in the Boston Area

A recently conducted survey of the elderly in three types of housing in the Boston area resulted in the following table:

TABLE 6

ELDERLY'S VICTIMIZATION BY TYPE OF RESIDENCE IN PERCENTAGES

Total No. of Crimes	Elderly Project	Family Project	Area Non Project
0	79.6	45.1	69.8
1	12.1	25.2	20.3
2	4.0	15.3	3.4
3	0.8	4.5	2.97

TABLE 5

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF VICTIMIZATIONS BY AGE WITHIN CRIME CATEGORIES
IN A BOSTON HOUSING PROJECT*

WEIGHTED SAMPLE = 598

Number of Crimes	All Crimes			Crimes against the Person			Crimes not against the Person			Property Damage/ Destruction		
	19-39	40-59	60 or Older	19-39	40-59	60 or Older	19-39	40-59	60 or Older	19-39	40-59	60 or Older
0	75 40%	59 32%	94 53%	173 87%	166 84%	166 90%	113 55%	123 63%	152 81%	115 59%	92 49%	117 65%
1	36 19%	30 16%	32 18%	13 7%	19 10%	12 6%	38 19%	23 12%	21 11%	31 16%	31 17%	25 14%
2	9 5%	23 12%	12 7%	6 3%	1 1%	1 1%	26 13%	13 7%	2 1%	9 5%	15 8%	9 5%
3 of more	68 36%	73 39%	41 23%	8 4%	12 6%	5 3%	27 13%	37 19%	12 6%	41 21%	49 26%	30 17%
Total	188 100%	185 99%	179 101%	200 101%	198 101%	185 100%	204 100%	196 101%	187 99%	196 101%	187 100%	181 101%

*Blumin, Deborah, Victims: A Study of Crime in a Boston Housing Project (Boston: Mayor's Safe Street Act Advisory Committee, 1973). (unpublished)

The general conclusion is that those older persons living in family projects are more affected by crime than those living in exclusively elderly housing projects, or area non-public housing. The reason for this can be summarized as a consequence of increased exposure to delinquency in the family project.

The Elderly's Victimization Nationally

Finally, Table 7 illustrates a national victimization survey conducted by Philip Ennis for the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. Again the elderly are shown to be the least victimized on a national basis.¹⁰

TABLE 7

NATIONAL CRIME RATES PER 100,000
POPULATION BY SEX AND AGE

Crimes	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
<u>Males</u>						
Part I	951	5,924	6,231	5,150	4,231	3,465
Part II	1,656	10,408	11,172	10,565	7,979	4,343
<u>Females</u>						
Part I	334	2,424	1,514	1,908	1,192	1,052
Part II	1,460	4,989	4,540	4,152	3,396	2,102

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to illustrate the crimes committed against the elderly by introducing data from various studies. The data, in total, suggests that the elderly are not over-victimized in comparison to other age groups. A closer look at victimization, however, has revealed that the older person is more likely to be victimized for certain crimes than the younger person in an urban environment.

Yet it has not been the exclusive purpose to simply show the significance or insignificance of crimes against older persons. Rather, the data has been utilized to illustrate and introduce the reader to the varying characteristics of the victim, the types of crimes that are committed, and the elderly's comparative victimization with other age groups. In the remaining chapters the data will be further utilized, in addition to other statistical evidence, to illustrate the elderly's victimization.

CHAPTER V

WHO IS THE OFFENDER?

The most distressing aspect to crime against the elderly is the fact that it is the young who are victimizing the old. It is the adolescent male who finds the elderly person a suitable victim for his delinquent behavior. Perhaps the juvenile delinquent seeks the easiest possible victim because he is so unprofessional. Certainly it is the elderly that has all the characteristics for an easy "mark."

In the Kansas City study, statistics show over half of all the suspects, in the 1,831 cases studied, were known or estimated to have been still in their teens. Another 24 percent of the suspects were in their twenties. In sum, 77 percent were under 30 years of age.¹ (See figure 1)

The statistics for youthful offenders that commit crimes against the elderly are higher than the national average percentage for crimes committed against all age groups. According to the Uniform Crime Reports, 35.4 percent were under 18 years of age for cities with a population of 2,500 or more persons.² Thus, a comparison of the Kansas City offender profile with the national offender profile leads to a different picture as to who commits crimes against the elderly. Clearly there is something very significant about the Kansas City data, since such a high proportion of crimes are committed by the adolescent.

Again if we look at the Kansas City data in figure 1, burglars seem to be younger than robbers. Robbery may require more courage and preparation, which can reflect an older and more professional criminal.

AGE OF OFFENDERS (CASES IN WHICH SUSPECTS DEVELOPED)

(KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI)*

Figure 1



Figure 2

*Cunningham, Reducing the Effect of Crimes Against the Aging, (Kansas City, Missouri: Midwest Research Institute, Interim Report, 1974). (unpublished)

However, some of that preparation may be reflected in purse snatching, which consists of 68 percent of the larceny figures shown. In part, this is further confirmed by the Uniform Crime Reports which indicate that young people are generally involved in vandalism, burglary, and larceny; versus violent crimes against the person.³ Also, it is the older offender who is more likely to become involved with crimes of fraud against the elderly.

TABLE 1
CITY ARRESTS BY AGE, 1972*

Offense Charged	Ages under 18	Ages 18 and over	Total
Total	1,526,201	4,430,106	5,956,307
Percent	25.6	74.4	100.
Violent Crime No.	60,601	193,708	254,309
Percent	23.8	76.2	100.
Property Crime No.	485,661	462,051	947,712
Percent	51.2	48.8	100.

*Uniform Crime Reports for the United States, 1972 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, 1973, p. 135.

To illustrate, it is the typical young offender who is more inclined to work with friends or in gangs. In general he travels on foot to commit his offense, which means that he is likely to operate in or around his neighborhood. Usually the decision to commit the criminal act was done on the spur of the moment. "I'm just walking down the street and a couple of friends say, Hey do you want to break into a house with us, I say OK if it's a good hit."⁴ Usually he is not desperate for money, and probably not very experienced. His inexperience makes the elderly person his ideal victim.

Clearly, to the adolescent, the act of victimizing the elderly represents an easy "mark." In Boston's family public housing project, where many elderly persons are located, the juvenile delinquent does not have to travel too far to commit his criminal offense. This is confirmed, in part, by Schafer when he notes the significance of the radius between the criminal and his victim: "When spatial factors are considered in connection with the relationship of the victim to his criminal, victim-risks are indicated."⁵

As far as the race of the offender involved with crimes against the elderly, figure 2 reveals that in the Kansas City area the offenders were predominantly Black.⁶ It must also be noted that the victims were also predominantly Black. Furthermore, it is important to note that this chart represents the percentage breakdown by racial categories of known suspects. In the majority of burglary cases, there were no suspects developed at all. Consequently the statistical profile of the offender's race does not present a startling effect of the crime problem, because the assumption that Blacks are likely to victimize other Blacks is confirmed here.⁷

Yet besides the race of the offender involved with crimes against the elderly, there is something very significant about the number of offenders that are in their teens. This relationship has caused one Boston Housing Authority Policeman to observe that 90 percent of the crimes he has seen and investigated are "committed by kids."⁸

In short, what seems to be confirmed here is that most crimes against the elderly are committed by the youthful offender. The typical crime might involve a youth snatching the purse of an

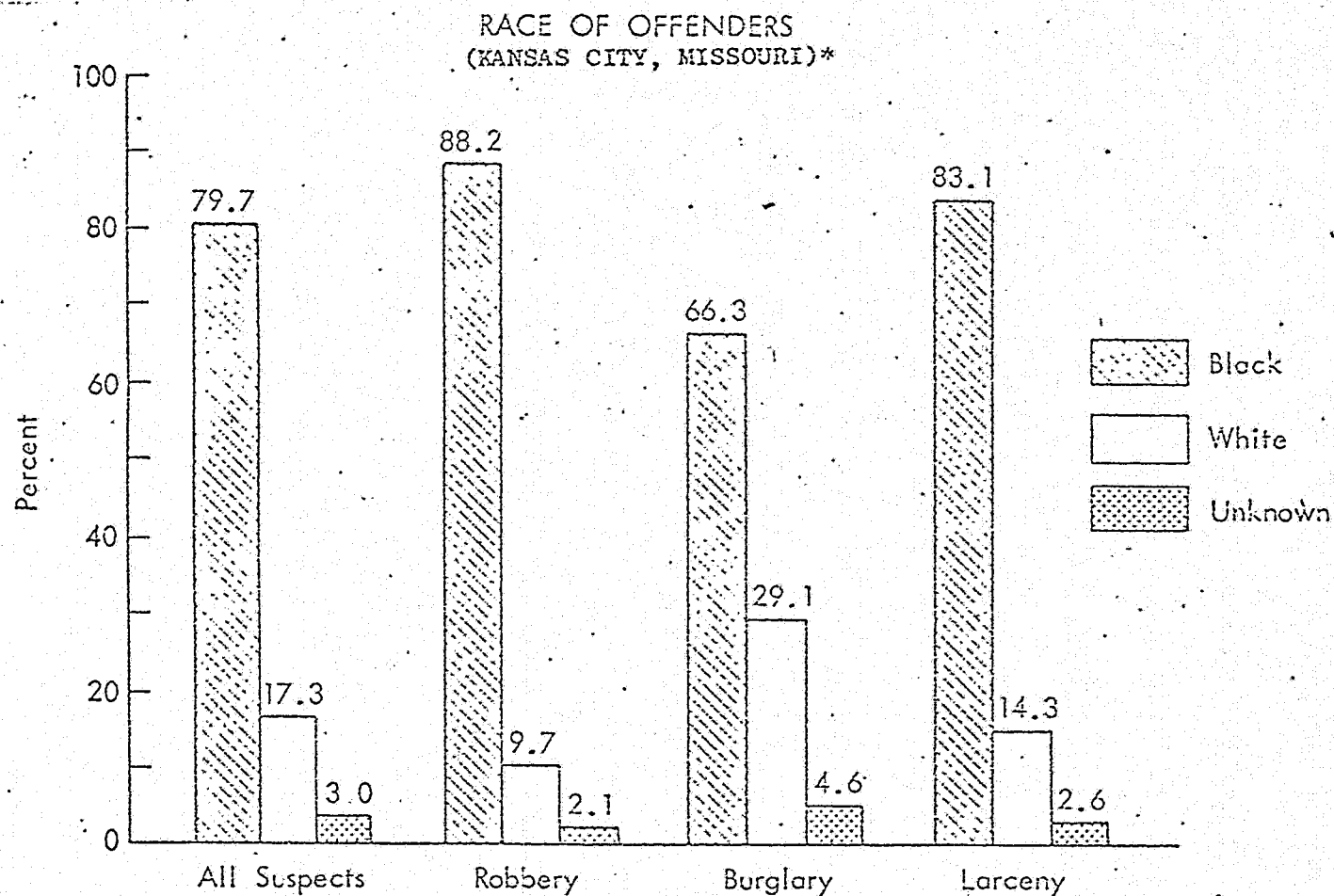


Figure 2

*Cunningham, Reducing the Effect of Crimes Against the Aging, (Kansas City, Missouri: Midwest Research Institute, Interim Report, 1974). (unpublished)

elderly woman. However, where the typical criminal motive is involved, there is perhaps something even more significant than the youth's age. That is, the juvenile involved with the purse snatching is not simply satisfied with obtaining the purse. There is an added compulsion to push the elderly person in the process of obtaining the item sought. The unusual senselessness of this type of crime is further exemplified by other deviant acts committed by the juvenile against the elderly person. Clearly there is something significant about the relationship between today's adolescent and the older individual.

CHAPTER VI

THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL BASIS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE JUVENILE DELINQUENT AND THE ELDERLY VICTIM

In order to begin the understanding of the relationship between the aging victim and the juvenile delinquent, one ought to review Talcott Parson's theory on aggression. The psycholo-social elements involved is discussed by Parson in an article entitled "Certain Primary Sources and Patterns of Aggression in the Social Structure of the Western World."¹ Essentially Parson develops a theory which bases the individual's aggression on the relationship between the mother and child. According to this theory, the son grows up feeling a parental bond between him and his mother.² When puberty arrives, he strives for masculine identification. But, characteristically, the male adolescent in the lower class does not usually have a father immediately available in which he can identify with. Instead he seeks masculine identification through various psycho-social functions. Socially he may seek qualities which are considered to be tough and masculine.³ Psychologically, he may seek a replacement for the hostility that he feels toward the parental bond between him and his mother. The adolescent male at this point is rebelling against the female qualities of his mother. This usually occurs by seeking a "scapegoat" for the adolescent's aggression towards his mother.⁴

According to Parson:

If the father or mother or sibling cannot be overtly hated, a symbolically appropriate object outside the circle of persons who must be loved is chosen and gratification of the impulse indirectly secured.....The result is that the individual tends either to react aggressively, without being able to control himself, in situations which do not call for it at all, or to overact far more violently than the situation calls for.⁵

Clearly, among other factors, the psycho-social elements of the juvenile delinquent's development attracts him to some sort of substitute figure, which Parson refers to as the "displacement" of aggression on a "scape-goat." It is viewed, consequently, that the scapegoat is often the elderly person. And that it is a result of the juveniles psycho-social environment that he feels a deep resentment against the older person.

Lewis Yablonsky, in his book The Violent Gang, observes and somewhat validated Parson's theory on the displacement of aggression. It has particular significance since Yablonsky's observations relate to the relationship between the juvenile delinquent and the elderly victim:

Although the evidence is inconclusive, there are indications that violent-gang attacks upon adult "strangers" are a displacement of aggression toward the youths' own parents. I ran a series of role-playing sessions with a violent-gang youth who apparently "enjoyed" mugging and purse-snatching from old women. At one point the boy commented that the women he selected, "....all looked like my old lady".⁶

In addition to Parson's theory, Simone de Beauvoir in her book "The Coming of Age"⁷ develops a psycho-social perspective for viewing society's resentment, and consequently its aggression, against the elderly. Accordingly, Freud is cited in discussing the relationship that exists between the young and the old:

The son respects his father, admires him, would like to identify himself with him and even take his place: this last wish gives rise to hatred and fear. The heroes of myth always rise up against their father and end by killing him. In real life the killing is symbolical..... Where the antagonism exists, it is not mutual; it is active in the son, taking the form of aggression and resentment, but generally speaking it does not appear in the father. This aggressive sexual resentment undoubtedly provides the framework for the development of the one-way relationship of the young with the old.⁷

In other words, it may be this "one-way relationship" that exists between the young and the old that contributes to aggressive behavior. The concept is not new, since Schafer mentions that resentment may be one of the factors that contribute to the elderly's victimization, because "they may be egotistic and thus irritate the younger generation."⁸ Furthermore, the adolescent may resent that the elderly person is non-conforming in his dress and manners. The adolescent is socialized to look up to youthfulness and that which is beautiful. Also, he is perhaps socialized to look down upon the older person, who is weak and in his point of view "ugly." The conditioning effect that an industrialized society places on its adolescents deeply relates to the resentment that is aggressively committed on those who are unfortunate enough to be old.

Resentment, therefore, is rationalized as one of the elements that contribute to the adolescent's selection of the elderly victim. The resentment is furthermore a product of the juvenile's environment, which contributes to the psycho-social characteristics on the part of the delinquent individual. Thus one can further suggest that there is a special relationship that exists based on two factors in the development

of the juvenile delinquent. The first factor is that of external socialization; whereby the child is exposed to elements outside of the family. The second factor consists of internal socialization; whereby the family influences the psycho-social development of the child.

In the external socializing condition, the adolescent is almost bombarded with society's attitudes toward the elderly. This is most commonly achieved through the media, which features the young and not the old. It is also achieved by the child witnessing society's rejection of the elderly person in which the older individual is forced into a deprived and hopeless situation.

In the internal socializing condition, the adolescent male is subjected to resentment and aggression against his parents, because of various alienating factors which result in a breakdown in communication. As a result of this, the adolescent seeks a substitute for his deep-seated aggression by seeking the elderly person.

Other theorists, in part, confirm the effect of external and internal socialization in producing aggression and resentment by the juvenile delinquent towards the elderly victim. Albert Cohen in his book Delinquent Boys⁹ views the working class boy as frustrated with the dominant middle-class value system. In order to achieve success among his peer-group, the working class youth seeks an alternative value system that rejects the respectable middle-class value system. The value system, therefore, causes the youth to adopt the antithesis of middle-class values:

The middle-class value system rewards and encourages the rational cultivation of manners, courtesy and personality.

The middle-class ethic emphasizes the control of physical aggression and violence, which are subversive, on the one hand, of good personal relations with as many people as possible.¹⁰

Therefore, one can suggest that crimes committed against the elderly person display a lack of "rational cultivation of manners and courtesy." Also, it further reflects the youth's inability to control his physical aggression.

Similarly, Cloward and Ohlin classify delinquent gangs according to the subculture concept.¹¹ In their view: "A delinquent subculture is one in which certain forms of delinquent activity are essential requirements for the performance of the dominant roles supported by the subculture."¹² One of the types of delinquent gangs that develop is the "conflict gang"; whereby participation in acts of violence becomes an important means for securing status. It is this type of gang that probably has its most dramatic effect upon the elderly victim.

Furthermore, Bloch and Niederhoffer related the adolescent period as "a phase of striving for the attainment of adult status."¹³ The adolescent's identity crisis and his accompanying parental rebellion leads to delinquent behavior. This behavior, because of the youth's rejection, conflict, and stress with an adult figure, may manifest itself by seeking the elderly person as a victim.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CRIME AGAINST THE ELDERLY

This chapter is an attempt to review the consequences of crime against the elderly victim by looking at (1) the economical impact, (2) the physical impact, (3) the psychological fear, and (4) the desire for migration.

The Economical Impact

Consider the case of Mrs. R, an elderly woman living on \$2,000. a year. She recently lost \$20. when her purse was snatched in a busy downtown area of Boston. The loss amounts to one percent of her income. In contrast, if we were to compare her loss with someone earning \$20,000. a year, it would equal \$200. The person making \$20,000. could probably absorb the loss without any great financial difficulties, but Mrs. R is not as fortunate. She is barely making ends meet and is consequently at a much greater loss. What will probably occur, because of Mrs. R's victimization, is that she will be forced to do without basic essentials. Furthermore, the person making \$20,000. probably has some sort of insurance to cover the loss; if not, he can deduct it from his income taxes. But Mrs. R, unfortunately, does not have those options.

In the Kansas City study, the median loss from burglary, for example, is estimated as \$96. for the elderly victim. This consequently has quite serious implications, since 67 percent of the black victims, and 47 percent of the white victims, have an annual income of below \$3,000. annually.¹

Cunningham makes the following observation in relating the significance of the amount of cash in the home as related to the burglary:

The nature of the losses from burglary.... reflect a prevailing tendency of the elderly poor to keep amounts of cash in the home that are large, relative to their income and total worth. There seems to be working here two major factors: general lack of familiarity with or trust in banks, and the difficulty of many of the elderly who need the service most in reaching a bank. Some of the victims report difficulty in cashing personal checks in the inner city, which adds to the difficulty.²

Similarly robbery resulted in a median loss of \$37.70 in the Kansas City area. In over half of the victimization cases cash was the property stolen. However, especially in the case of robbery the crime is not limited to just the theft of property, it also includes some sort of physical injury.

Another type of crime, that is mainly economic in impact, is the crime of fraud. According to the Houston study, persons 65 and over were likely to be victimized at a rate of 3.8 percent. That rate is somewhat higher than those under 65, who were victimized at a rate of 2.2 percent. As with other crimes, fraud probably rates high in its economic impact, since the older individual is actively sought by the professional swindler.⁵

The Physical Impact

Robbery by definition is a crime of violence since it is directed against the individual. It is the stealing or taking of anything of value from a person by force, violence, or fear.⁶ According to the Kansas City data, Table 1, robbery victims suffered physical injury quite frequently. Of the 450 robberies that occurred to the elderly,

48 percent were with weapons and 52 percent were by strongarm methods. The sad fact is, however, that about 40 percent of the elderly citizens victimized suffered from some sort of physical injury as a result of the crime.⁷

TABLE 1

NATURE OF ROBBERY OFFENSES AND PHYSICAL INJURIES
RESULTING TO THE ELDERLY VICTIM*

	No. of Victims	Percent of Victims
<u>Nature of Robbery</u>		
Strongarm robbery	206	45.8
Armed robbery	186	41.3
Attempted armed robbery	30	6.7
Attempted strongarm robbery	<u>28</u>	<u>6.2</u>
Total	450	100.0
<u>Injuries Received by Victim during Robbery</u>		
None	266	59.2
Minor	98	21.8
Moderate	54	12.0
Severe	29	6.4
Death	2	.4
Undetermined	<u>1</u>	<u>.2</u>
Total	450	100.0

*Cunningham, Carl, Reducing the Effect of Crimes against the Aging (Kansas City, Missouri: Midwest Research Institute, Interim Report, 1974).

Yet, it would be a mistake to simply interpret the raw statistics as is because of the great physical consequences for the elderly as a result of the injury. In comparison to their younger counterparts, the older person is less likely to recover from the physical brutality of the criminal act. And just as the economical impact is different for a working person than it is for a retired person, so too is the physical impact. For example, if an elderly person is knocked to the ground, he is likely to suffer a broken bone as a result of the act. He is also likely to require extensive hospitalization due to his victimization. In contrast, the younger person, if knocked to the ground, is less likely to suffer the effects of the criminal act. Rarely will extensive hospitalization be required for the younger victim. Thus, because of the elderly's physical vulnerability, they are more likely to be affected by the consequences of the physical impact of crime.

The Psychological Fear

It seems to be quite apparent that one of the end results of burglaries, robberies, and assaults is a psychological fear which is deeply imbedded in the minds of the elderly.⁸ This fear consequently restricts the elderly's freedom of movement and activity. Fear is obviously one of the most serious effects of crime that is generated from the elderly's victimization.

Table 2 lists the extent of voluntary restriction in activity as a result of the generalized fear of the burglary experience in Kansas City. Specifically 45 percent of the total 860 burglary victims interviewed reported that they did not go places anymore or engage in certain activities because of crime.⁹

TABLE 2

THE ELDERLY VICTIM'S REACTIONS TO THE
BURGLARY EXPERIENCE IN KANSAS CITY*

Do Not Go Places for Fear of Crime	No. of Victims	Percent of Victims
No	473	55.0
Yes	378	45.0
Total	860	100.0

*Carl Cunningham, Reducing the Effect of Crimes against the Aging, Midwest Research Institute, Administration on Aging and Social Rehabilitation, Interim Report, 1974, unpublished.

The victim's reaction to the robbery experience is shown in Table 3. About 39 percent of the victims reacted with general fear and nervousness. Furthermore, 62.8 percent increased security precautions as a result of the fear created by the victimization experience.¹⁰

In contrast the National Opinion Research Center's national survey shows that personal experience with criminal victimization apparently tends to heighten the individual's concern about the robbery and burglary experience.¹¹

TABLE 3

THE ELDERLY VICTIM'S REACTIONS TO THE ROBBERY
EXPERIENCE IN KANSAS CITY*

Reactions	No. of Victims	Percent of Victims
Nervous/General fear	104	38.8
Effect of injuries sustained	77	28.7
Increased personal security	43	16.0
Moved or sold business	23	8.6
Concern for property	6	2.2
Angry and resentful	5	1.9
Acquired weapons for defense	2	.8
Afraid of being alone	2	.8
Unspecified	6	2.2
Total	268	100.0

*Carl Cunningham, Reducing the Effect of Crimes against the Aging, Midwest Research Institute, Administration on Aging and Social Rehabilitation, Interim Report, 1974, unpublished.

TABLE 4

CONCERN OF VICTIMS AND NON-VICTIMS ABOUT BURGLARY OR
ROBBERY -- AS LISTED IN THE NATIONAL
OPINION RESEARCH CENTER SURVEY*

Worry about Burglary or Robbery	Victim	Nonvictim
<u>Males</u>		
Worried	69	59
Not worried	31	41
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
<u>Females</u>		
Worried	84	77
Not worried	16	41
	<u>100</u>	<u>118</u>

*Philip Ennis, Criminal Victimization in the United States, A Report of a National Survey, National Opinion Research Center, Chicago, 1967, pp.77-79.

However, it might be assumed that the comparison with NORC (National Opinion Research Center) is somewhat unfair, in applying it to the elderly victim, because the elderly's socialization to crime is quite different than their younger counterparts. The younger person who grows up in today's urban environment might be socialized to accept crime as one of the many hazards in life. In a sense, many younger Americans have been conditioned to live with crime and not to fear it. But the older American, who may remember the "good old days," might not be socialized to accept crime. To him crime is a phenomenon which has recently occurred with the younger generation. Therefore, the elderly individual may feel that he is in great danger as a consequence of the times.

This may further relate to the elderly's stereotyped image of the offender. In any center city area, it can be observed that older persons will generally avoid walking on the same side of the street as a younger person of the opposite race. This is confirmed by Yablonsky when he related one youth's experience with the elderly's fear: "I was walking across the street and this old lady started to run as if she was scared to death."¹²

In sum, as a consequence of crime, the elderly person may experience a significant amount of fear. The fear may result in what may be called as "death at an early age"; whereby the older person barricades himself in his apartment during the day as well as at night.

The Desire for Migration

According to the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, the fear of crime may result in the following:

Fear of crime makes many people want to move their homes. In the four police precincts surveyed for the Commission in Boston and Chicago, 20 percent of their citizens wanted to move because of the crime in their neighborhoods, and as many as 30 percent wanted to move out of the highest crime rate district in Boston.¹³

For the elderly citizen migration may represent two dimensions: First, a long standing attachment with the neighborhood which prevents him from leaving a high crime area; and second, a desire to leave but a lack of financial resources to afford to move from one's neighborhood. It is because of this that in any urban area where a migration pattern develops, because of increasing crime, the elderly are often the last to move.

For the elderly person who has spent six decades in his neighborhood, a change represents a sudden departure from how things used to be. The elderly person consequently ignores the gradual decay of the community with its increase in crime and delinquency.

The elderly person who has been affected by crime, and because of the experience is desirous of leaving, cannot leave due to the fact that costs for him are prohibited. If the elderly person should own his own home, he cannot afford to sell it--since its worth would be minimal due to the depressed nature of the community. If he rents, it is likely that the apartment will be rent controlled, since he

has occupied the same dwelling for a long period of time. In short, the sad consequences of crime against the elderly is further reflected in the fact that the older individual is the least able to migrate from his crime-engaged community.

In conclusion one may suggest that the elderly's victimization is not limited to the criminal act itself. Victimization does have broader consequences for those who may suffer from the brutality of the criminal act. An act which may cause serious financial loss; an act which may further instill psychologically damaging fear; and an act which causes the elderly to desire the abandonment of their homes in which their most cherished memories may exist. The act is by no means limited to the above examples; because, there are other consequences of crime which have yet to be uncovered. Thus, the criminal act itself is a broad and quite serious source of suffering for the elderly citizen in today's society.

CHAPTER VIII

A GENERAL HYPOTHESIS ON VULNERABILITY

This is a chapter on vulnerability in general and how it applies to the elderly victim. It is based in part on the previous chapters which consistently suggests that the elderly are more often victims of crime because of their vulnerability. The hypothesis is that an elderly person will be susceptible to victimization because of various factors that attract him to the criminal offender. It is thus an attempt to explain a criminological phenomenon that occurs to the elderly person in today's urban, industrialized society.

As with any hypothesis, there are factors which conform to the general rules of the model presented. These factors suggest that the elderly's victimization may or may not increase due to certain factors. For example, it will be cited that the elderly may be less victimized because they are less exposed to the criminal element, since they spend more time indoors than their younger counterparts. What is examined here is the factor of exposed-environmental vulnerability; one of the many factors that will be used to illustrate the varying aspects of vulnerability.

In a sense, the hypothesis that is suggested is not really that new. For instance, insurance companies have developed detailed analyses of risk-factors in setting rates for insurance policies. However, there has yet to be a detailed analysis on the individual's victim-risk which entails his vulnerability to various criminal acts.

Therefore, in order to complete the gap that exists between identifying a phenomenon, and explaining it, a general hypothesis on vulnerability is suggested.

The hypothesis of vulnerability is divided into four main categories: (1) Environmental vulnerability, which consists of exposed, social and structural factors; (2) economic vulnerability, which consists of the motivating factors in committing crimes against property; (3) physical vulnerability, which consists of the individual's weakness in preventing the criminal act; and (4) psychological vulnerability, which may increase the person's susceptibility to victimization.

Environmental Vulnerability

In this section we will discuss three factors to environmental vulnerability: (1) exposed, (2) social, and (3) structural.

Exposed Vulnerability

If one is in the presence of a criminal offender, there is the essential elements of exposed vulnerability. The concept of exposure is essential towards formulating a hypothesis on vulnerability, because without being exposed the criminal act cannot be performed. Therefore, exposed vulnerability refers to the physical presence of the criminal offender.

It must be noted, to offset any sort of confusion, that the criminal offender can be the victim himself--if he is responsible for the criminal act.¹ Without getting into the technicalities of the interaction between victim-precipitated crime, it can be assumed that there are certain physical requirements inherent to the criminal act.

These physical requirements require the victim to be exposed to a door in order that the criminal act can occur. Reckless suggests "the door-victim model," which accordingly, illustrates that "the door seems to gravitate to vulnerable persons or to seek them out."²

In relation to the elderly, the chances for exposed vulnerability are greatest because their cumulative years of exposure are greater than that of younger persons. In other words, 65 years of exposure to a criminal element in a community is likely to increase their lifetime vulnerability over a person who has been exposed for twenty-five years. As a result, crime is increasing for one's lifetime, because one's life is being prolonged. And, consequently, the chances of exposed vulnerability is greater.

The exposure element to a hypothesis of vulnerability has another facet to it. This aspect states that the elderly are less victimized because they are less exposed to the criminal element. The Boston and North Carolina data in part seems to confirm this hypothesis. Basically the assumption is that because an elderly person spends less time on the street, he is likely to be victimized. The elderly person usually does not have to go to and from work. The older person may be physically less capable of leaving the house as often as his younger counterparts. As a result, there is clearly less exposed vulnerability on the part of the older individual. If anything, one might assume that exposed vulnerability is probably at a minimum for the older person when compared to the more active life of the younger working individual.

Nevertheless, the unfortunate fact is that exposed vulnerability is increasing for the elderly because they are situated in the center cities, which are the areas with the highest crime rate, while the younger person is usually located in the suburbs where exposed vulnerability is not as great. In general the poor suffer from greater exposed vulnerability than the middle-class or the rich.³

Despite this, the elderly person in an urban area has systematically regulated his exposed vulnerability, because of his increasing awareness of crime. The regulating may consist of no longer going out at night, riding buses and subways less frequently, and generally avoiding any sort of contact with what may be considered the criminal element.⁴ For instance, in Boston's downtown area, it can be generally observed that women today do not carry handbags. The reason for this may be partially due to the changing styles on the part of younger women. But for older women, it clearly represents a desire to avoid exposed-environmental vulnerability.

In contrast another factor to exposed vulnerability, which increases the elderly's victimization, is their perception of the criminal element in their community. If the older person has not yet been traumatized by the criminal act - he may perceive of his neighborhood as being devoid of crime.⁵

An excellent example of how an elderly person may not perceive of his exposed vulnerability is illustrated by Morton Hunt in his book The Mugging - which is the study of the murder of an elderly man, Alexander Holmer: (The scene described takes place in the South Bronx of New York.)

He had continued to live and to wander around in an area where predators were coming to abound, and where his personal traits marked him out as potential prey. The Melrose neighborhood had become distinctly dangerous during the past five to ten years particularly that part of it a few blocks to the south of his residence, but he stubbornly (or perhaps blindly) remained in the apartment he has been in for twenty-five years and, in search of his meager ration of social contact and his bargain groceries, kept taking long walks down Melrose Avenue, past the decaying side-streets, past groups of street-corner loungers, and past the dark, urinous doorways and vacated stores that were the hangouts of local pushers and junkies.....⁶ Even if the thought of robbery did occur to him from time to time, he had little personal reason to think of it as involving physical brutality, for years ago, in his rounds as a milkman, he had been robbed twice without being hurt.⁷

Clearly it is the exposed vulnerability that increased the chances for Alexander Helmer's criminal victimization, because he perceived of his community as being like the good old days---relatively safe, he could not and did not relate to his exposed vulnerability.

The reverse may also be true. Elderly persons who have no reason to believe that their exposed vulnerability is increasing--may act as if there is a change in the community which heightens their susceptibility, when there really is not. The reason for this may be due to the media which has increased their awareness of crime in general. Consequently, they are more fearful--and will generally avoid being exposed to anyone who might possibly commit a criminal act. A good example of this is noted by Yablonsky in observing the following comment by one youthful gang member: "I was walking across the street and this old lady started to run. I didn't do anything. I just looked at her and she started to run as if she was scared to death....She almost fell down running away."⁸

In criminological literature, many of the theoretical principles in victimology are based on the concepts involved with exposed vulnerability. Reckless notes for example that the availability of "certain categories of persons...seem to attract criminal victimization."⁹

Similarly, Schafer suggests "that intense and frequent contact among people increases the likelihood of clashes," which results in a "relatively high frequency of criminal homicides and aggravated assaults in smaller communities."¹⁰ As a result, many have assumed that the time of day, the day of the week, and the season of the year relate to the extent of criminal victimization.

In relation to the elderly, the Boston data as well as the Kansas City data has resulted in some preliminary conclusions that show the extent of exposed vulnerability the greatest on check day, which occurs on Friday of each week. It is then that the elderly person is out on the street walking to and from the bank, in order to cash his check. As a result, exposed vulnerability is heightened by that day of the week.

The family public housing project is another example of increased exposed vulnerability of the elderly, because the housing project contains a large proportion of families with adolescent children. Thus, there is an increase in the amount of exposure between the older person and the juvenile delinquent. Public housing exclusively for the elderly have, on the other hand, had the effect of reducing exposed vulnerability. The reason for this is simply that the elderly are

less exposed to juvenile delinquency because their housing consists exclusively of elderly persons. The Boston data consistently confirms this aspect to the theory.

It must be noted finally that the concept of exposed vulnerability is one that is continually used. People do not go into certain areas of town because the exposed vulnerability is greatest. Furthermore, they do not buy houses in areas where crime is likely to occur. Instead, they move to suburbia if they are middle-class. If they are poor, white, and working class, they may move to a mobile home park outside of the city in order to avoid exposed vulnerability.

Social Vulnerability

The analysis has thus far revealed that the victim must be exposed to the criminal offender in order to be victimized. His exposure has been called exposed vulnerability; however, it is not by all means limited. The criminal offender, in order to commit his act successfully, must have an environment that is conducive towards victimization. For example, a recent study on burglary, conducted by Urban System Research and Engineering, showed that "the amount of time during the day when no one is at home was positively associated with the likelihood of being burglarized."¹¹ Furthermore, "the elderly, the group that was victimized least frequently, were less transient and often at home."¹²

Therefore, one might assume that people have a direct effect on whether a criminal act will occur. People can prevent the act from occurring by decreasing environmental vulnerability. A rapist is less likely to seek out his victim on a busy street. The child molester works where he cannot be noticed and where his actions will

not be spotted. In other words, people influence the extent and nature of the criminal act. They are what is often referred to as socially responsible for what occurs.

A lack of social responsibility can heighten the environmental vulnerability of a community. An excellent example is the Kitty Genovese murder; whereby 38 of her neighbors, in a respectable New York City neighborhood, stood by while she cried out in terror. No one came to her assistance even though the murder took over half an hour---no one even bothered to call the police.¹³

A similar lack of social responsibility may occur where the elderly are involved. In an urban, industrialized society the older person is looked down upon as a reflection of society's general attitudes. These attitudes, which may be relatively distinct to a modern industrialized society, places the aged at the bottom of social priorities. An older person is too often made to feel out of place in a community with younger people, since they have become unproductive, and thus unwanted. They are consequently expected to go off to retirement villages, nursing homes, or homes for the aged. Accordingly the younger individual believes the aged are better off away from society. It is, unfortunately, the working younger person who feels no need to show any social responsibility towards the aged.¹⁴

However, the lack of social responsibility of persons in the community is not limited to just the elderly. It is an infectious deficiency that has overcome many urban environments. It has resulted in an increase in environmental decay, which has caused an increase in environmental vulnerability, which has also resulted in an increase in the amount of criminal victimization for all age groups.

Moreover, Jane Jacobs, in her book the Death and Life of Great American Cities, illustrates that varying city streets afford different opportunity for crime: "Different kinds of city streets garner radically different shares of barbarism and fear of barbarism."¹⁵ She goes on to illustrate how certain sections of Boston, such as the North End have relatively little crime,^{Since} there is an active degree of social responsibility and interaction on the part of residents. "Half a dozen times or so in the past three decades...would be molesters have made an attempt at luring a child or, late at night, attacking a woman...In every such case the try was thwarted by passers-by, by kibitzers from windows or shopkeepers."¹⁶ In contrast, Jacobs cites the Elm Hill Avenue section of Roxbury as containing "street assaults and the ever present possibility of more street assaults with no kibitzers to protect victims."¹⁷ Clearly in these two sections environmental vulnerability is directly reflected by the social responsibility of the people living in the varying communities involved.

The public housing project, which many elderly persons find themselves in, is usually limited in the extent to which it is possible for people to interact with each other. Consequently, what occurs is an increase in environmental vulnerability. But this environmental vulnerability is not limited to residents, it is also affected by a police force which concentrates its resources on crime detection rather than crime prevention. In the Boston area, elderly organizations are calling for the return of the foot patrolman in order to reduce environmental vulnerability.¹⁸ The foot patrolman would accordingly act as a deterrent to crime and would as a result reduce environmental vulnerability. In upper-class, high rise, luxury apartment houses

environmental vulnerability is socially reduced by doormen, garage attendants, security guards and so forth. Because the rich can afford these luxuries, their vulnerability is minimized. In a sense, they are buying social interaction and responsibility in order to secure their safety. The elderly, on the other hand; generally cannot afford these luxuries.

Finally, another element that has increased environmental vulnerability for the elderly in today's urban centers is the effect of a mobile, industrialized economy. Since our society has become industrialized, its citizens have become more and more transient. In an agrarian society, it was typical for the children to live within the same community as their parents, which reduced their environmental vulnerability. Today's mobile society calls for the older person's children to no longer live within the same area as their parents. As a result, the protection that was once accompanied by raising a family no longer exists.

Structural Vulnerability

The third factor which relates to environmental vulnerability is the effect of the physical surroundings. Special attention has been given to brightening the lights in certain high crime areas. The hopeful effect is to reduce environmental vulnerability.

The federal government has just begun to recognize the structural vulnerability of the public housing projects for the elderly. This was only due to outrage over the increased amount of crime in public versus private housing.¹⁹ Consequently, the Philadelphia Geriatric Center

(supported by Grant 93p-75064/3 of the Social Rehabilitation Service--Administration on Aging, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare) has been studying ways of reducing crime against the elderly in public housing projects. The research will be conducted by the Center and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, School of Architecture. The purpose is basically to devise and revise housing projects so that they will not be as structurally vulnerable as they presently are.

In today's public housing project, it is the structural vulnerability that minimizes social interaction which often increases criminal victimization.

It is the building of housing projects without recognizing the importance of minimizing structural vulnerability that has often resulted in their failure. According to the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals:

Most public housing, and even middle and high income housing, is planned and designed without considering the security system that should be built in. It is much less expensive to install proper locks, doors with secure hinges, and burglar and vandal resistant glass while the building is under construction than after it is completed. Changing the placement and design of elevators, doors, and windows can greatly affect security needs and costs once the building is constructed....Although for years buildings have been constructed according to fire safety codes, crime prevention through physical design has been almost totally neglected.²⁰

In private housing the elderly often occupy apartments near the ground floor; thus, they are structurally more vulnerable to residential crime. The reason why older persons are more likely to live on the first floor, than younger persons, is because they have greater

difficulty climbing stairs. Consequently, their vulnerability increases because the offender prefers to commit his criminal act to residents on the ground level. This is confirmed in a recent study on residential crime:

In all housing types except the luxury apartment building, the first floor was the level interviewees preferred to hit because it gave them the option of trying the window should the door prove too difficult.²¹

Clearly, the ramifications of structural vulnerability must be examined in accessing and developing crime prevention programs for the elderly.

Economic Vulnerability

According to von Hentig: "The elder generation holds most positions of accumulated wealth and wealth-giving power."²² As a result, von Hentig perceives that in "the combination of wealth and weakness lies the danger..."²³ Similarly, Schafer observed that "old women may be exposed to higher victim-risks for.....often they keep their money and their valuables in their homes."²⁴ Furthermore, Morton Hunt in his description of Alexander Helmer, an elderly person whose criminal victimization is the subject of the book, noted the following characteristics which increased his economic vulnerability.

Due to vanity, he had imprudently heightened his visibility as a target for despite his paranoid secrecy where his landlady and neighbors were concerned, he had been something of a braggart and blabbermouth with casual acquaintances, boasting of his stock-market holdings to half a dozen or more neighborhood people he knew only slightly, and making it plain that he lived alone and had no heirs--information which, passed along as idle gossip, could considerably increase his chance of victimization.²⁵

Yet in today's society, the elderly are generally poorer than their younger counterparts. The median income for an elderly person living alone was only \$1,297., just over two fifths that of younger individuals on their own. Clearly elderly persons living in public housing projects do not appear to have accumulated any great amount of wealth. Therefore, their economical vulnerability should be somewhat less than younger persons.

Nevertheless, there are other factors which greatly increase the elderly's economic vulnerability. First of all, the elderly are likely to receive their checks through the mail on certain days of the week, which consequently causes their mailboxes to be burglarized. Also, there is an increase in attention given to the elderly person going to and from a bank or shopping center to cash their social security or old age assistance checks. This increased attention obviously causes a greater amount of economic vulnerability.

Secondly, the elderly are likely to be also viewed as economically vulnerable in a busy downtown area, since their usual purpose for being there consists of shopping. The younger person today is less likely to keep cash on him personally, since credit cards or checks are more convenient. The elderly person on the other hand is more likely to keep cash, because he has not been socialized into a credit-card generation. As a result of these factors, it is obvious that the elderly's economic vulnerability is often greatly increased.

Physical Vulnerability

In criminological literature, von Hentig notes that because the elderly are physically weak there "lies the danger."²⁶ Hence the elderly, because they are often too weak to offer resistance, present themselves as the ideal victims. They are slow-moving and physically incapable of preventing the criminal act from occurring.

In a recent study conducted by Thomas Reppetto on patterns of residential crime, the author found that 28 percent of the robbery victims were elderly in the Boston Metropolitan area; even though the elderly's population consists of 12 percent. Accordingly, Reppetto concludes that "the findings regarding age are predictable since older persons are more vulnerable than younger persons."²⁷

In the Kansas City Study approximately 20 percent of the burglary victims report having some significant physical disability---roughly the same percentage as the elderly victims of the other crime studies."²⁸ Clearly the elderly's physical disabilities as well as his general physical weakness makes him the ideal candidate for the criminal act.

Furthermore, many crimes that may start out as simple burglary may expand to robbery because of the older persons fragility. Violence may not be intended as an aspect to the offenders motives; however, a slight bump or push may have graver physical consequences for the older individual than for the younger person.

Yet the elderly person, because he fears his physical weakness as being a source for victimization, may be more inclined to enact defensive measures in order to reduce his physical vulnerability. These defensive measures commonly take the form of a hair pin, a can of mace,

or a pocket knife. The motivation force for their use is the fear of being confronted by the criminal offender. Thus, the elderly person is likely to be actively engaged with arming himself in order to reduce his physical vulnerability.

Psychological Vulnerability

The elderly in general present themselves as ideal victims because they are psychologically vulnerable. Amram Ducovny offers the following explanation for psychological vulnerability in reference to fraud:

Sheer loneliness can make an older person yearn for the sound of a human voice--even a con man's; a feeling that "time is running out" and reluctance to see a doctor after a lifetime of good health can make a person easy prey for the quack.²⁹

But more importantly the elderly are psychologically vulnerable to the criminal act because of their fear of the criminal offender. The elderly person, to a significant degree, will often refuse to speak out against the offender for fear of retaliation. This is confirmed in the Boston and Kansas City study. In the Boston study a significant amount of fear against retaliation was noted in the family projects, where a higher percentage of juvenile delinquency exists.

Furthermore, the elderly's psychological vulnerability may cause an increase in their physical vulnerability. The Kansas City study, for example, showed that the elderly, to a great degree, tended to show more resistance to the criminal act, perhaps due to the fear of death from the consequences of victimization. This caused a greater amount of violence to be incurred upon the elderly victim.

Nevertheless, for all crimes in total, the elderly are less psychologically vulnerable because of their increased psychological fear. It is because the elderly fear crime that they do more to avoid it than the younger person. This is validated by all the obtained data which, in comparison, show that the elderly have a lower rate of multiple victimization than younger persons. This is also confirmed according to a recent study "On Being Mugged":

Accompanying this new sense of vulnerability, an awareness of the self as a potential target, there is the sense that an environment previously perceived as benign has become a jungle. Appearances are no longer "normal," and trust is an inappropriate attitude for survival.³⁰

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one can summarize the quality that makes the elderly susceptible to criminal victimization in a series of hypotheses. These hypotheses are suggested to illustrate the four various vulnerability factors discussed; environmental, physical, economic, and psychological vulnerability. The first series of hypotheses, on the one hand, suggest that the elderly are less like^{ly} to be victimized than younger persons. The second series, on the other hand, illustrate that the elderly are more likely to be victims of crime. Although only one hypothesis is listed for each of the vulnerability elements, it must be noted that the following is by no means limited. There are a number of other possible hypotheses that can be developed from this chapter's discussion on the elderly's vulnerability.

Why the Elderly are Less Likely to be Victimized in Comparison to Younger Persons

(1) Since older persons spend more time at home, they are less likely to be environmentally vulnerable--through exposed, social and structural vulnerability factors; thus, they are less likely to be criminally victimized than younger persons.

(2) Since older persons are more likely to carry hair pins, knives, and other self-protecting devices in order to reduce their physical vulnerability, they are less like^{ly} to be physically vulnerable; thus, they are less likely to be criminally victimized than younger persons.

(3) Since older persons are more likely to be poorer than their younger counterparts, they are less likely to be economically vulnerable; thus, they are less likely to be criminally victimized than younger persons.

(4) Since older persons are more likely to be psychologically fearful of the criminal act, they make more of an effort to reduce psychological vulnerability; thus, they are more likely to avoid criminal victimization than younger persons.

Why the Elderly are More Likely to be
Victimized in Comparison to
Younger Persons

(1) Since older persons are more likely to live in depressed urban environments, they are more likely to be environmentally vulnerable; thus, they are more likely to be criminally victimized than younger persons.

(2) Since older persons are weaker than younger persons, they are more likely to be physically vulnerable; thus, they are more likely to be criminally victimized than younger persons.

(3) Since older persons are likely to have money on certain days of the week, when they receive their social security or old age assistance checks, they are more likely to be economically vulnerable; thus, they are more likely to be criminally victimized than younger persons.

(4) Since older persons are more fearful of victimization, they are less likely to testify against the offender because of the fear of retaliation, they are more likely to be psychologically vulnerable; thus, they are more likely to be criminally victimized than younger persons.

APPENDIX

REDUCING THE ELDERLY'S VULNERABILITY

Before proceeding with suggestions that might reduce the elderly's criminal victimization, it is important to briefly note the more traditional approach to crime. Essentially it consists of reducing the number of criminal offenders and consequently lessening the amount of crime. This approach is limited in two respects. First, it requires an enormous amount of resources; and secondly, it requires a great deal of time to remove the sociological influences that breeds delinquency and crime. Therefore, as an immediate solution for reducing the elderly's victimization, it is suggested that one ought to look instead at the means for minimizing the opportunity for crime.

Reduce Environmental Vulnerability

Reducing Exposed-Environmental Vulnerability

- (1) Plan public-housing projects exclusively for the elderly.
- (2) Locate Elderly-Public Housing in areas that do not contain a high-crime rate.
- (3) Offer subsidized housing incentives for the elderly to move to private housing in low-crime areas.

Reducing Social-Environmental Vulnerability

- (1) Encourage and promote unarmed, citizen's defense groups to patrol areas where there is the likelihood for criminal victimization.
- (2) Develop public education programs to increase social cohesion among all age groups. Elderly organizations could lead the way for informative educational programs that would redirect the average citizen's attitudes toward the elderly.

Reducing Structural-Environment Vulnerability

(1) In general, revise the physical structure of public housing projects so that they will not be a source of criminal victimization. For example, increase lighting and eliminate blind alleys.

(2) In high-rise public housing install close-circuited television cameras in order to deter criminal victimization in hallways, elevators, and on the grounds of the project.

(3) Distribute and install efficient types of security devices in private as well as public housing projects.

Reduce Economic Vulnerability

(1) Educate the elderly population to use the banks and their related services. In order to eliminate the carrying of cash, elderly persons could have their income checks sent directly into a credit-card account. Through a credit-card the older person could purchase all essential items. Or, money could be specially designed for the exclusive use of the elderly with accompanying identification card.

(2) Rotate the days on which income checks are sent to the elderly so that only the person receiving the check would know when it is suppose to arrive.

Reduce Physical Vulnerability

(1) Develop in high crime areas a buddy-system whereby it would not be necessary for an elderly person to leave his home alone. Elderly organizations could implement and coordinate this program.

(2) Develop and distribute portable alarms for elderly persons living in high-crime areas.

Reducing Psychological Vulnerability

(1) Develop a special telephone service for reporting crime by the elderly person. This service should be obtained by dialing the operator and asking for the service, since many older persons have difficulty in dialing the telephone. The service should be manned by a capable police officer specially trained in communicating with the older person.

(2) Develop throughout the criminal justice system the means by which the older person can remain anonymous in identifying the criminal offender. This protection must be guaranteed throughout the investigation as well as into the court trial, in order to reduce the fear of retaliation.

(3) Develop a psychiatric clinic to offer services for the elderly victim who has been traumatized by the criminal act.

FOOTNOTES

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