

Collection of the data described here was supported by Grant No. 83-IJ-CX-0003 from the National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice, to the Police Foundation, Washington, D.C. Points of view or opinions stated in this report do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Police Foundation. The data are available from the Criminal Justice Data Archive at the University of Michigan.

## The Impact of Victimization on Fear

Wesley G. Skogan

*This report examines the relationship between criminal victimization and fear of crime. Past research has been surprisingly inconclusive about this issue, and some people's fears have been branded "irrational" because the two did not appear to be tightly linked. However, the data analyzed here indicate that victimization affects both fear-related attitudes and behavior in a clear and consistent manner. This report also suggests that the impact of victimization is relatively uniform. Some research has indicated that certain groups are especially affected by crime, a claim that might be used to justify special treatment for selected victims and has been used to support demands for special "treatment" of selected offenders. However, the strong effects of victimization registered in these data were not differentially distributed across subgroups. In sum, most people do learn from their experiences, although other kinds of learning are rational as well.*

This report examines the relationship between criminal victimization and fear of crime. The link between the two may seem obvious, but there are several reasons for looking more deeply into their connection.

First, there are so many anomalies in the distribution of fear that it appears at first glance the two are only weakly related. For some groups in the population crime and fear "go together" in consistent ways; city dwellers and the poor, for example, are both more fearful and more likely to be victimized. However, high levels of fear also are reported by some who generally enjoy lower levels of victimization, including women and the elderly. Early studies found other incongruities—for

---

**WESLEY G. SKOGAN:** Professor of Political Science and Urban Affairs, Northwestern University.

CRIME & DELINQUENCY, Vol. 33 No. 1, January 1987 135-154  
© 1987 Sage Publications, Inc.

example, that area burglary rates were not related to how worried residents were about being burglarized (Waller and Okihiro, 1978). Finally, sheer *levels* of the two seemingly do not match: survey measures of fear suggest that many more people are fearful than are victimized, even in large cities. It is easy to conclude that victimization cannot explain most people's fears, and that fear of crime is to some extent "irrational."

Second, surprisingly little is known about the general impact of victimization, or about its differential impact upon victims. Most research has focused on particular crimes or categories of victims. It has told us important things about the concerns of burglary victims (Waller and Okihiro, 1978), the stages of recovery among rape victims (Burgess and Holmstrom, 1974), and the impact of homicide on the members of victim's families (Bard and Connolly, 1983). However, the exclusion of nonvictims from much of this research has left unanswered the question of how greatly victims differ from comparable nonvictim populations as a result of their experience, and its focus on specific crimes and victims has not facilitated a comparative analysis of either the impact of different kinds of victimization or the impact of victimization on different kinds of people.

This article addresses these issues. It first examines the relationship between fear of crime (broadly defined, including some measures of behavior) and people's victimization experiences. Then it examines whether the impact of crime is general, or differentially linked to such factors as the isolation and vulnerability of victims and to the resources they have at their disposal to deal with their plight.

These are lively topics. As noted above, past research is surprisingly undefinitive about the impact of victimization. In the political arena, uncertainty about the "rationality" of fear of crime has contributed to the demise of at least one policy issue, that of crime against the elderly (Cook and Skogan, 1984). The "differential impact" hypothesis is a legislative question as well. There has been a debate in several states over the recognition of special classes of victims, whose victimizers would be meted out special punishment. While there are many philosophical and political grounds for considering such action, one justification for doing so has been claims about the special consequences of victimization for vulnerable groups.

## AN OVERVIEW OF PAST RESEARCH

Interest in the apparent “irrationality” of high levels of fear was fueled by the weak correspondence of many survey measures of fear of crime to people’s self-reported victimization experiences. In a review of the literature, Rifai (1982, p. 193) concluded “there has been no convincing evidence that criminal victimization produces greater fear of crime than does the lack of being victimized.” DuBow, McCabe, and Kaplan (1979) reached the same conclusion. For the population as a whole the correlation between the two is weak, and even appears to be negative (victims reporting lower levels of fear) for some categories of personal crime. Indicators of levels of fear of personal victimization also are simply much higher than the amount of serious personal crime, another mismatch that clouds the issue. Some argue that “fear of crime” is often irrational because many people do not appear to *do* much about it—there seems to be only a slim behavioral component to the attitude. This view is represented by the common belief (probably wrong—see Karmen, 1980) that most stolen cars have keys in them, and that burglary is easy because many people are not cautious enough (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1985, p. 5). One of the anomalies of the research literature is that:

attempts to record behavior change following victimization as a measure of impact have generally been frustrated since there usually is little measurable change that is reflected in what could be termed crime preventive or victimization preventive behavior [Rifai, 1982, p. 193].

A number of explanations have been advanced for the apparent mismatch between victimization and fear. Perhaps the most controversial has been the argument that the two are not strongly linked because most crime is trivial in its consequences, and *isn’t* fear-provoking. As Reiss (1982) noted in his article “How Serious is ‘Serious Crime,’” few assaults measured in the National Crime Survey (NCS) lead to an injury, most rape and robbery is described as unsuccessful, many burglaries are only “attempted,” and the vast bulk of stolen property is of little value. Rifai (1982, p. 199) concludes, “a number of case studies of burglaries and thefts have suggested in fact that most of those types of victimizations were of little consequence in the daily lives of their victims.” Sparks, Genn, and Dodd (1977) even speculated that

victimization by robbery and assault *reduces* fear. They explained a negative correlation between the two by hypothesizing that people may "fear the worst" before they have any direct experience with crime; but when they do, and survive relatively unscathed, their anxiety may be alleviated. Finally, the British Crime Survey includes questions that ask victims about the effects of their experience: In the 1983 survey, half reported suffering no practical problems, and two-thirds no emotional upset (Mayhew, 1984).

Victimization and fear may also appear to be loosely related for the opposite reason, because they are *strongly* connected. It seems likely the relationship between the two is partly reciprocal. If victimization leads to fear-related behaviors, it may reduce victims' *exposure to risk* and thus lower their chance of victimization in the future. This cannot be true for everyone in the population, for there is a statistical tendency for victims as a whole to be revictimized at a rate higher than chance would predict (at least some are "victim prone"). However, researchers have used the exposure-to-risk hypothesis to explain the low rates of victimization among such high-fear groups as women (Riger, 1981) and the elderly (Cook and Skogan, 1984). A strong, reciprocal relationship between victimization and fear over time would lead survey data gathered at one "slice" of time to suggest the two are unrelated.

The mismatch between levels of victimization and fear, and apparent anomalies in their social distribution, has also stimulated research on "other" causes of fear of crime. They are numerous, and it is apparent that reports of "fear of crime" are diffuse attitudes that are sensitive to a number of aspects of daily life (Garofalo and Laub, 1979). Survey reports of fear are related to such factors as perceptions of neighborhood deterioration, vandalism, "uncivil" behavior by youths, public drinking, and other disorderly conduct (Taylor and Hale, 1985). They are correlated with perceptions of "moral decline" and anxiety about strangers (Rifai, 1982), and among whites fear is tied to concern about neighborhood racial change (Taub, Taylor, and Dunham, 1984). Both attitudinal studies (Riger, 1978) and the demographic correlates of fear (Baumer, 1978) suggest that potential physical vulnerability to victimizers stimulates fear. Participation in rumor networks also stimulates fear, in a kind of "vicarious victimization," especially when the stories that circulate concern victims from the recipient's area (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981).

The list of researchers' "other" causes of fear is long and growing. Its significance here is to demonstrate that victimization and fear co-occur

in a world of interrelated individual, experiential, and neighborhood phenomena. Direct, recent, personal experience with crime clearly is only one determinant of fear. To highlight the unique contribution of such victimization experiences one must somehow control for those "other factors." In the white-mouse world of experiments this is fairly simple, but it is unlikely that many people would appreciate a randomized opportunity to be robbed, so these studies must involve statistical analysis of some complexity.

Previous correlational studies have been limited by the availability of suitable data. Measures of experience with crime require adequate victimization survey techniques (see Sparks, 1981). Many surveys are too small to uncover enough victims of personal crime for useful analysis; studies with a methodologically sound (brief) "recall period" for measuring victimization typically uncover very few, usually about 6%, of those interviewed for violent crime. Generally, the more conventionally serious an incident is, the less frequently it occurs. To overcome these problems, Skogan and Maxfield (1981) analyzed the Census Bureau's large city victimization surveys, tabulating the relationship between victimization experiences and fear. However, those data still reflected the complex social distribution of the two—for example, victims of weapon crimes reported lower levels of fear than did nonvictims, for they were overwhelmingly young males. Skogan and Maxfield used multivariate statistical techniques to control for a number of demographic factors confounding the victimization-fear relationship, and ultimately demonstrated a weak, but positive, correlation between the two. However, they could only control for what was available—a few simple demographic factors—and other, unmeasured variables possibly would have been more effective.

The data used in this research can go further in clarifying the victimization-fear nexus. It is drawn from a large *panel* study interviewing people at two widely separated points in time. The panel design of the survey enables one to control directly for levels of fear and reports of behavior measured *before* victimization which then struck some respondents between the first and second interview.

Findings from this data might shed some light on yet another issue clouding the victimization-fear relationship. It may be that some consequences of victimization are subject to fairly rapid *decay*, and the passage of time between experience and interview in this study misses such effects. Several studies suggest that most of the effects of victimization on most victims disappear in a relatively short time.

Friedman et al.'s (1982) four-month follow-up interviews suggested that most problems that victims had rated as "serious" were resolved during the ensuing period. Maguire (1984, p. 21) concludes that "the consensus of opinion seems to be that most emotional effects 'wear off' within a few weeks or months, victims recovering more or less spontaneously or with moral support from family or friends." A pattern of decay would be consistent with a reading of "no effect" in our second wave of panel interviews, although this would still leave the "earlier effect" hypothesis unproved. On the other hand, there is also plenty of evidence that the impact of victimization can persist for a considerable period, which is one reason to control for pre-Wave 1 victimization in this study. For example, in reinterviews, Shapland (1984) found the effects of personal victimization enduring—and even increasing—for at least two years after the incident. Similar, long-term effects have been reported by Burgess and Holmstrom (1974) and others. A pattern of *persistence* of effects should be detectable in the panel design for this study (The apparent persistence of the effects of victimization revealed by some studies raises the interesting question, "When does someone *cease* being a victim, and return to 'nonvictim' status?"; this unfortunately cannot be answered here.)

The second issue of concern here is that of the *differential* impact of victimization. Whatever the effect of victimization, is it a general one? Are some kinds of victims more severely effected, and might claims of special status for particular classes of victims be justified by the special consequences of victimization for them?

In research terms the issue is, "Are there measurable factors which magnify or ameliorate the impact of crime, so that some people are more or less effected than are others?" This is a practical question as well. As Maguire (1984, p. 18) notes,

it is important for service agencies (particularly agencies which, like Victim Support Scheme, select those they will visit from large numbers referred by the police) to have some indication of the social characteristics of victims who may be most in need.

He reports it has been found "with some regularity" that various groups are more vulnerable to the emotional effects of victimization, but concludes that such differential effects are not large enough to justify focusing on some groups to the exclusion of others. "Most service agencies should not give special priority to any one group but should be open to victims of all ages, both sexes and all social classes" (p. 19). Bard

and Sangrey (1979) also hypothesize that prior characteristics that victims bring to their experience influence their reactions to being victimized. With respect to fear of crime, research on such factors can be summarized in the form of four hypotheses to be tested.

*Isolation.* Surveys indicate that socially isolated people are more fearful (Kennedy and Silverman, 1984-1985; Silverman and Kennedy, 1985), and research on victims suggests that networks of "supporters" play an important role in alleviating people's fears and making victims "whole" again (Friedman et al., 1982; Yin, 1980). Social isolates, those with few friendly neighbors, may have no one to share their concerns with. Victims have a strong need for such support (Coates, Wortman, and Abbey, 1979). Fear may be magnified among victims who live alone. Single adults and others who live alone may be more fearful because they do not have anyone to take care of them. The isolation-fear relationship is particularly strong for women (Silverman and Kennedy, 1985) and the elderly (Lebowitz, 1975). Maguire (1980) reports that female burglary victims separated from their husbands are especially likely to experience acute stress as a result.

Three indicators of isolation were used to test the "isolation" hypothesis: whether or not respondents lived alone, the number of neighbors they knew personally, and the length of time they had lived in the neighborhood.

*Resources.* Some victims have greater capacity for coping with the consequences of that experience. Property damage and financial loss from crime can place an enduring burden on victims. This is particularly true for the poor, who are least likely to have insurance (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981). Friedman et al., (1982) found that poor and less educated victims reported more practical "coping" problems than did others, and higher levels of fear. In the case of rape, there is evidence that poor (and black and elderly) victims react more strongly to their experience (Atkeson et al., 1982; Sales, Baum, and Shore, 1984). Victims with more knowledge and experience, and facility in dealing with public and private bureaucracies, may more readily find support and assistance if they need it. Finally, although renters often report higher rates of victimization and fear than do home owners, the latter have more control over their property and a long-term commitment to it that facilitates crime-prevention efforts (Lavrakas, 1981; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981).

Three indicators of the resources available to our respondents were used to test the hypothesis: family income, home ownership, and education.

*Vulnerability.* Research on fear indicates that women and the elderly feel particularly vulnerable to crime and its consequences, and there is some evidence that the impact of victimization is magnified for those groups. In their study of residential burglary, Waller and Okihiro (1978) asked victims "what they felt" when they learned of their plight. Women, but very rarely men, volunteered that they felt fearful. Bourque et al. (1978) measured reactions by crime victims on seven-symptom scale, and found that women were more affected than were men.

There is similar evidence regarding the elderly. Garofalo (1977) examined survey data on the relationship between victimization and fear, and found that almost all attitudinal differences between victims and nonvictims in the general sample were due to the impact of victimization on the elderly; for other age groups those differences were virtually nonexistent. Friedman et al. (1982) found the highest fear levels among female and elderly victims, but because this is also true of the general population, the absence of nonvictims in their study makes this finding difficult to interpret. Both Knudten et al. (1977) and Friedman et al. found elderly victims reported essentially the same number of practical problems as did victims in younger age categories.

This differential impact of victimization may be attributable to the relative vulnerability of women and the elderly. They feel open to attack, relatively powerless to resist, and fear exposure to traumatic physical consequences if they are attacked. Large surveys in both the U.S. (Antunes et al., 1977) and Canada (Ministry of the Solicitor General, 1983) reveal that, when injured, elderly crime victims are more likely to need extensive medical treatment. Perhaps because of perceived vulnerability, both groups usually report they frequently restrict their activities to limit their exposure to risk of victimization. Sheppele and Bart (1983) found that among women who did so, and were victimized anyway, the consequences of the experience were magnified.

*Previous Experience.* Finally, it may be that the impact of victimization is dependent upon people's attitudes beforehand. Several researchers have speculated that victimization may have more serious consequences for those who *already were more fearful*. Presumably the experience reinforces their perceptions of an "unjust world" and

emphasizes their personal vulnerability (Kahn, 1984; Sheppele and Bart, 1983; Friedman et al., 1982). On the other hand, as noted above, Sparks et al. (1977) and others take the opposite view, based upon survey findings regarding the banality of most victimization experiences. As Yin (1980, p. 497) puts it, "any victimization experience that does not create serious harm . . . might actually aid the victim in forming a more realistic assessment of the nature of crime, thereby reducing fear of crime." As we have seen, by many measures this could be true of most criminal encounters.

In this analysis, the impact of past experiences and victim's attitudinal "predispositions" are captured by first-wave measures of fear. The hypothesis that victims who initially are more fearful subsequently are more affected by crime is one concerning statistical interaction between those early measures and interwave victimization.

## *THE DATA*

Data to assess the impact of victimization on fear was gathered in personal interviews with 1,738 residents of seven selected neighborhoods in Newark, New Jersey, and Houston, Texas. The neighborhoods were relatively high-crime areas featuring a mixture of single-family homes and rental apartments. Respondents in Newark were virtually all black, while in Houston blacks, whites, and Hispanics were represented in all of the areas. Households were randomly selected from lists of all residential addresses in each neighborhood; individual respondents were then chosen at random from among household residents 19 years of age and older. The data are available from the Criminal Justice Data Archive at the University of Michigan.

A unique aspect of the data is that it includes two interviews with each respondent, spaced one year apart. The "panel" feature of the data helps solve several substantive and methodological problems.

As indicated above, one issue is that there are multiple, confounding determinants of both fear of crime and related behavior. As in past research, it is possible to develop measures of some of these sources of fear and control for them statistically. However, there are many of them, some may be inadvertently left out of the analysis, others may be poorly measured, and some are doubtlessly unknown. Another difficulty in untangling the unique impact of a particular victimization experience

on fear is that people may have had other experiences with crime in the past. It is necessary to distinguish one crime from another. Finally, there are a number of well-known methodological problems in measuring victimization. Victims may have difficulty in recalling incidents, especially if they were less consequential. This could artifactually increase the observed correlation between measures of victimization and fear. As this research relies on the accurate assessment of recent victimization experiences, it was necessary to develop a data collection method that was as accurate as possible.

A useful (if inevitably only partial) solution to the "confounding" problem was to interview respondents twice. The first interview established "baseline" information on fear, crime-related behaviors, and past victimization experiences for each individual. Then, a second wave of interviews remeasured these things to assess *changes* in attitudes and behavior during the intervening period. Changes between Wave 1 to Wave 2 then could be related to new victimizations occurring during the period between the interviews. Panel data are not a perfect solution to the confounding problem. A special difficulty is that the consequences of other events that take place between the two waves of interviews can be confused with "victimization effects," especially if they co-occur to some extent with victimization. One candidate in this category is contact with the police. And, because there is inevitably error in the measurement of variables, our Wave 1 data do not fully "adjust" Wave 2 data for "true" levels of fear during the first period, and some variance in the Wave 2 measures really reflects prior levels of fear.

There were a number of different measures of "fear." The *attitudinal* measures reflected the distinction between "worry" and "concern" about crime. Following Furstenberg (1971) and others, we distinguished between how worried people were about being victimized and how concerned they were regarding the level of crime in their neighborhood. Measures of the two are of course correlated, but some people feel relatively immune to crime around them (because, for example, they do a lot to protect themselves), so responses to the two differ. Separate "worry" and "concern" measures were created for personal and property crime. Methodological research by Rosenbaum and Baumer (1981) indicates the personal-property crime distinction is a prominent dimension in any set of crime-related attitudes. There were also indicators of defensive and preventive *behavior* with respect to personal and property crime.

The analytic scales measuring worry, concern, and behavior each combined responses to several survey questions. *Worry about personal victimization* was measured by combining responses to questions about fear of going out after dark, fear of walking in nearby areas, and the extent to which respondents were worried about being robbed and assaulted in their neighborhood. A measure of *worry about property crime* was based on questions about burglary and auto theft. *Concern about personal crime problems* was measured by responses to questions about "how big a problem" robbery, assault by strangers, and sexual assaults were in the area. The *concern about property crime* scale combined responses to questions about the extent of local burglary, auto vandalism, and auto theft problems. There were two self-reported measures of crime-related behaviors. Respondents were asked whether or not they tried to go out with others for safety reasons, if they avoided nearby areas, and if they avoided certain types of people when they saw them, and how often they simply stayed home because of crime? Responses to these questions formed a measure of *defensive actions against personal crime*. Also, those interviewed were quizzed about various *household crime prevention efforts*. A score was given each respondent reflecting whether or not their household had installed special locks, lights, timers, and so on.

Except for the household crime prevention measure, all of these scales were single factored. Their reliabilities (Cronbach's Alpha) ranged from .70 to .85, and were very similar for the two waves of the survey. Household crime prevention was measured by a simple count of the extent of adoption of six different tactics. More details about the measures can be found in Annan, 1985.

Victimization was measured by yes-no responses to 17 "screener" items. Each asked about specific recent experiences, and they covered both completed and attempted incidents in a variety of crime categories. This report uses indicators of *personal victimization* (encompassing robbery, rape, actual assault, and purse snatching), *property victimization* (burglary, theft, vandalism, and auto theft), and *total victimization* (combining all of them). In the Wave 2 survey, 32% of those interviewed were classified as inter-wave victims of property crime, 5.3% as victims of personal crimes, and (because they overlapped) 33% as victims of either. The most frequent property victimization was simple theft (20%), followed by vandalism (11%), and burglary (10%). Among personal crimes, robbery was most frequent (2.4%).

*FINDINGS: VICTIMIZATION AND FEAR*

The first research question was, "Is there a general and consistent relationship between victimization and fear?" As indicated above, the complex connection between those factors and other features of people's lives clouds our view of their interrelationship.

Table 1 takes advantage of the panel nature of the data to examine the correspondence between recent victimization and measures of attitudes and behavior, controlling for past levels of fear and experiences with crime. In summary form, the statistical model analyzed in Table 1 is: Wave 2 = V2 + Wave 1 + V1.

The "Wave" variables are before and after consequences measures. The "V"s are before and after measures of victimization. Table 1 presents regression coefficients describing the relationship between "V2" victimization measures for total, personal and property crime, and the consequences measures discussed above. As victimization is a "count" measure, the unstandardized regression coefficients in Table 1 indicate the (estimated) extent of change in the outcome measures for each additional victimization.

The data in Table 1 document a strong and consistent pattern: net of past experiences and attitudes, recent victims report higher levels of worry and concern about crime. Also, even controlling for what they did in the past, recent victims report doing more to protect themselves from both personal and property victimization.

A detailed inspection of Table 1 suggests several things. Note, for example, that both personal and property crime had significant consequences for victims. The regression coefficients (which can be compared across rows) belie the proposition advanced by DuBow et al. (1979) and Garofalo (1977), that only personal, potentially violent encounters generate substantial fear or stimulate changes in behavior. Here the effects are of comparable magnitude. Direct experience with personal crime had somewhat greater consequences for the personal-crime outcomes, while the same was true for the property-crime indicators. The only nonsignificant coefficient in Table 1 relates personal victimization to household crime prevention efforts, somewhat unrelated phenomena.

If more detailed information were available about these incidents, so they could be weighted for seriousness and otherwise analyzed more closely, the relationship between victimization and fear probably would appear even stronger than suggested here. One measure of the serious-

TABLE 1: Relationship Between Recent Victimization and Fear of Crime

Wave 2 Consequences	Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels Controlling for Wave 1 Scores and Pre-Wave 1 Victimization			(N)
	Total Victimization	Personal Victimization	Property Victimization	
Personal Crime				
Worry about personal victimization	.09*	.12*	.09*	(1737)
Concern about area personal crime	.15*	.24*	.17*	(1680)
Defensive behavior	.03*	.05*	.02*	(1733)
Property Crime				
Worry about property victimization	.18*	.16*	.20*	(1733)
Concern about area property crime	.19*	.20*	.22*	(1704)
Household protection	.15*	.09	.17*	(1738)

ness of the predicament our respondents found themselves in that can be calculated from the data is the extent of *multiple* victimization during the period between the two surveys. Rifai (1976) found that elderly victims in Portland who had been victimized more than once had much higher anxiety scores than did nonvictims or one-time victims. Garofalo (1977) also found an added "multiple victim" effect on perceptions of future risk of victimization. Figure 1 illustrates the magnitude of the impact of multiple recent victimization in this data.

Figure 1 plots the distribution of "standardized and residualized" outcome measures against the frequency of recent victimization reported by our respondents in Houston and Newark. Victimization between the two waves of surveys has been categorized at the high end as "five or more incidents." The outcome measures arrayed across the bottom of Figure 1 have been adjusted statistically for their pretest level and for victimizations recalled prior to the first interview, just as they were in the regression analyses presented in Table 1. They have also been *standardized*, with a mean of zero for all respondents, so that the values for the various outcome measures are comparable. Figure 1 illustrates a fairly regular, "stairstep" distribution of Wave 2 fear levels; in each case, as levels of victimization between the waves of the survey mount, so do subsequent levels of worry, concern, and crime-related behavior.

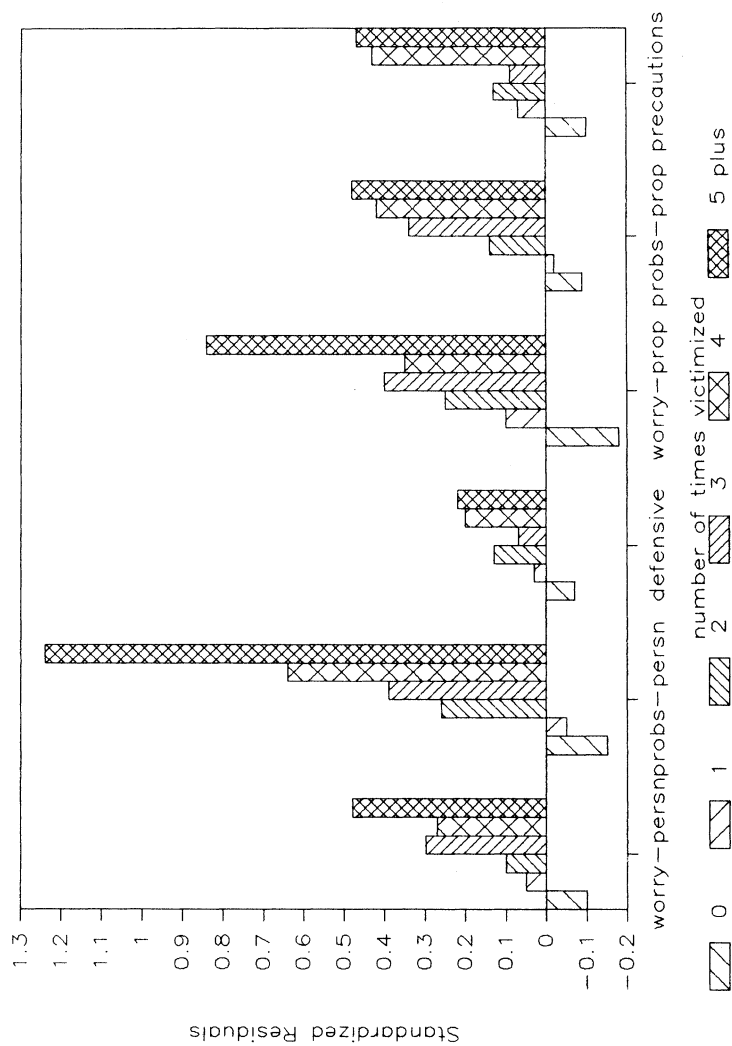


Figure 1: The Consequences of Victimization by Number of Wave 2 Victimations

## *FINDINGS: DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT OF VICTIMIZATION*

The second research question was, "Are the consequences of victimization relatively evenly distributed, or are some victims more severely impacted?" Hypotheses were advanced that isolation, resources, personal vulnerability, and earlier levels of fear lead less advantaged victims on each dimension to be especially more fearful and more reclusive as a result of their experience.

Technically, these are hypotheses concerning "victimization-covariate interaction." The mediating factors discussed above—poverty, gender, age—are the covariates. The statistical model for testing such "special impact" hypotheses is as follows:  $\text{Wave 2} = \text{Wave 1} + V2 + V1 + C + C * V2$ . Using this model, one can control for a number of factors in order to detect any special impact of victimization on the groups detailed above. It controls for previous levels of fear (Wave 1), the fact that victims are more fearful (V2 and V1), and the fact that—for a variety of reasons—those groups have "baseline" levels of fear that vary greatly (measures of those are "C"s, for "covariates"). This leaves the factor " $C * V2$ " (covariate-victimization interaction); if it is significantly related to Wave 2 measures of fear and behavior independently of the other factors, it is evidence that "being in that group *and* being victimized" has special consequences.

No extensive table details the findings of this analysis, for the results were uniform and simple: There was *no* evidence of a differential effect of victimization on the groups identified above. People who were isolated, vulnerable, and had fewer resources were more fearful when they were victimized, but the effect of that experience was the same for their counterparts. This (null) finding held for 53 of the 54 tests of "special consequences" hypotheses for groups (six outcome measures for each of eight groups); this is far fewer than we would expect by chance, which weighs very heavily against the proposition. The same "null" findings characterize the data with regard to the hypothesis that those who were more fearful before they were victimized were particularly effected by that experience. Of the six consequences measures, five showed no special interactive relationships with inter-wave victimization and earlier fear levels, and in the 18 tests the only significant coefficient (about the number expected by chance) was in the opposite direction.

The apparent wisdom of the "special consequences" hypothesis

clearly calls for more research. Demands for special legislation punishing those who victimize specific classes of individuals have been justified, in part, by claims concerning the unique consequences of those crimes. Such claims also have been advanced to justify special services for selected victims of crime. In this case, however, analyses of the impact of various kinds of victimization, and detailed inspection of patterns for subgroups, could find no support for those claims.

Why should this be the case? Part of the problem may lie in the sparse representation of particular subgroups in this survey. For example, there were interviews with only 6 elderly victims of a recent (Wave 2) personal crime. However, redefining the "elderly" category to include those 50 and older—which increased the count substantially—did not change the conclusion. And, the no-effect finding held for elderly property crime victims, who were much more numerous.

The expectation that different types of people should be differently affected by victimization may also be true—for types of people or victimization not examined here. Certainly other hypotheses concerning the impact of victimization could be entertained. For example, Waller (1982, p. 176) advances the hypothesis that the impact of victimization will vary with one's "locus of control." The null finding reported here does hold for other measures of isolation, for race and linguistic groups, and for other consequences measures (such as "commitment to the neighborhood") as well. The victimization categories discussed above were highly aggregated. But, in addition to the simple classifications presented in Table 1, separate victimization-covariate analyses were done for experiences with burglary, vandalism, robbery, threats and intimidation, and simple theft. None showed any but random deviations from the pattern of null findings reported here.

Victimization also has other consequences than those measured here. The list of potential psychological consequences of victimization is a long one, including depression, anxiety, paranoia, loss of control, shame, embarrassment, vulnerability, helplessness, humiliation, anger, shock, feelings of inequity, awareness of mortality, tension, and malaise, as well as fear. Victimization can lead to such interpersonal problems as extreme mistrust of others, social isolation, difficulty in interacting with family and friends, divorce, and an inability to function appropriately at work. These consequences have been summarized in a recent report of the American Psychological Association's Task Force on the Victims of Crime (Kahn, 1984). It may be that differential, group-specific consequences of victimization are confined to some of those outcomes, and

not to the attitudinal measures of worry or concern, or the crime-related behaviors examined here.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Two general empirical findings were reported here. First, recent victimization was consistently related to measures of worry and concern about crime, and to crime-related defensive behaviors and household crime prevention efforts. Property victimization may have had more measured effects than personal victimization. There are reasons to expect this to be the case, including the fact that more of the property crimes measured in the survey took place in the respondent's immediate neighborhood. However, it may also be due to the more infrequent occurrence of personal victimization. Only 5% of these respondents reported being the recent victims of personal crimes, as compared to 32% for property crime, and—other things being equal—the latter is thus more likely to “explain” frequent behavior and normally distributed measures of worry and concern about crime.

Second, there was no evidence of any special impact of victimization on particular subgroups. There has been some speculation about factors that might amplify or ameliorate the impact of victimization on particular classes of persons. However, none of the hypotheses here were supported. Clearly, vulnerable groups such as women and the elderly are more fearful and more willing to report taking defensive actions. People who are socially isolated are more fearful, as are those with fewer resources for coping with the consequences of crime. And recent victims are more worried, more concerned about the amount of crime around them, and more likely to take actions to protect themselves and their families. However, these differences appear to be cumulative in an additive way, and did not multiply to the special disadvantage of particular groups.

What does all of this imply about the “irrationality” of fear of crime? The analysis reported here indicates a strong, consistent relationship between people's recent experiences with crime and their attitudes and behavior. That effect is cumulative with other features of their lives, but experience seems only to add to victim's stock of assessments of their environment and is not exaggerated in some fashion by their personal attributes. All of this seems quite “rational.” Research does indicate that

factors other than direct, personal experience with crime affect people's levels of fear. However, these factors include many that may signal danger, including street disorder and unpredictable social conditions. Hearing about nearby crime and victims who resemble themselves also spark fear in people, and that also seems to be a reasonable reaction. This research has found that, in addition, people who are victimized (a) think there is more crime around, (b) are more worried about being a victim, and (c) do things to protect themselves, probably as a consequence of their experience.

It is not clear that these necessarily are "negative" consequences of crime; in other contexts, the ability to alter one's behavior in light of experience is called "learning." Janoff-Bulman (1982, p. 1979) and others find that victims who identify shortcomings in their self-protective tactics are more likely to perceive they can avoid subsequent victimization. The benefits of learning appropriate levels of caution can flow both from direct experience (as reported above), and indirectly. As Tyler (1984) points out, learning from "socially transmitted experience" (as in a classroom, or from the neighborhood rumor spreader) is rational and cost-effective, especially when personal experience can be risky. People should not have to be burgled to act "rationally" to protect their homes from unlawful entry. "To be most adaptive, individuals should combine . . . socially acquired experiences with their own personal experiences to produce an overall judgment of risk" (Tyler, 1984, p. 29). Some "healthy anxiety" leading to awareness and caution probably is a good thing, when it is rooted one way or another in reality. It is when fear is incapacitating, or not linked to environmental conditions, that it can be dysfunctional.

## REFERENCES

- Annan, Sampson. 1985. *Fear Reduction Program: Technical Report*. Washington, DC: Police Foundation.
- Antunes, George E., Fay Lomax Cook, Thomas D. Cook, and Wesley G. Skogan. 1977. "Patterns of Personal Crime Against the Elderly." *Gerontologist* 17, 4: 321-327.
- Atkeson, B. M., L. S. Calhoun, D. A. Resick, and E. M. Ellis. 1982. "Victims of Rape." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 50: 96-102.
- Bard, Morton, and Dawn Sangrey. 1979. *The Crime Victim's Book*. New York: Scribners.
- Bard, Morton, and H. Connolly. 1983. *The Social and Psychological Consequences of Homicide*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.
- Baumer, Terry. 1978. "Research on Fear of Crime in the United States." *Victimology* 3, 3-4: 254-264.

- Bourque, Blair B., G. B. Brumback, R. E. Krug, and L. O. Richardson. 1978. *Crisis Intervention: Investigating the Need for New Applications*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1985. *Bulletin: Household Burglary*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Burgess, Ann W., and Lynn L. Holmstrom. 1974. *Rape: Victims of Crisis*. Bowie, MD: Robert Brady.
- Coates, D., Wortman, C., and Abbey A. 1979. "Reactions to Victims." In *New Approaches to Social Problems*, edited by I. Frieze, D. Bar-Tal, and J. S. Carrol. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cook, Fay Lomax, and Wesley G. Skogan. 1984. "Evaluating the Changing Definition of a Policy Issue in Congress: Crime Against the Elderly." Pp. 47-66 in *Public Policy and Social Institutions*, edited by Harrell Rodgers. New York: JAI Press.
- DuBow, Fred, Edward McCabe, and Gail Kaplan. 1979. *Reactions to Crime: A Critical Review of the Literature*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice.
- Friedman, Kenneth, Helen Bischoff, Robert Davis, and Andresa Person. 1982. *Victims and Helpers: Reactions to Crime*. New York: New York City Victim Services Agency (Report to the National Institute of Justice, US. Department of Justice.)
- Furstenberg, Frank. 1971. "Public Reactions to Crime in the Streets." *American Scholar* 40 (Autumn): 601-610.
- Garofalo, James. 1977. *Public Opinion About Crime: The Attitudes of Victims and Nonvictims*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice.
- Garofalo, James, and John Laub. 1979. "The Fear of Crime." *Victimology* 3, 3-4: 242-253.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. 1979. "Characterological versus Behavioral Self-Blame: Inquires into Depression and Rape." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37, 10: 1798-1809.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. 1982. "Esteem and Control Bases of Blame: "Adaptive" Strategies for Victims versus Observers," *Journal of Personality* 50: 180-192.
- Kahn, Arnold, ed. 1984. *Victims of Violence: Final Report of the APA Task Force on the Victims of Crime and Violence*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Karmen, Andrew. 1980. "Auto Theft: Beyond Victim Blaming." *Victimology* 5, 2-4: 161-174.
- Kennedy, Leslie W., and Robert A. Silverman. 1984-1985. "Significant Others and Fear of Crime Among the Elderly." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 20, 4: 241-256.
- Kennedy, Leslie W., and Robert A. Silverman. 1985. "Perception of Social Diversity and Fear of Crime," *Environment and Behavior* 17 (May): 275-295.
- Knudten, Robert, Anthony Meade, Mary Knudten, and W. G. Doerner. 1977. *Victims and Witnesses*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice.
- Lavrakas, Paul J. 1981. "On Households." Pp. 67-86 in *Reactions to Crime*, edited by Dan A. Lewis. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lebowitz, Barry. 1975. "Age and Fearfulness: Personal and Situational Factors." *Journal of Gerontology* 30: 696-700.
- Maguire, Mike. 1980. "The Impact of Burglary on Victims." *British Journal of Criminology* 20 (July): 261-275.

- Maguire, Mike. 1984. "Victims' Needs and Victim Services: Indications from Research." Paper presented at the Third International Institute on Victimology, Lisbon.
- Mayhew, Pat. 1984. "The Effects of Crime: Victims, the Public, and Fear." Paper presented at the 16th International Symposium on Criminology, Strasbourg.
- Ministry of the Solicitor General. 1983. *Who Are the Victims?* Ottawa: Research and Statistics Group, Ministry of the Solicitor General, Report No. 1.
- Reiss, Albert J. Jr. 1982. "How Serious is Serious Crime," *Vanderbilt Law Review* 35 (April): 541-585.
- Rifai, Marlene Young. 1976. *Older Americans Crime Prevention Research Project*. Portland, OR: Multnomah County Division of Public Safety.
- Rifai, Marlene Young. 1982. "Methods of Measuring the Impact of Criminal Victimization Through Victimization Surveys." Pp. 189-202 in *The Victim in International Perspective*, edited by Hans Joachim Schneider. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter.
- Riger, Stephanie. 1978. "Women's Fear of Crime," *Victimology* 3, 3-4: 254-264.
- Riger, Stephanie. 1981. "On Women." Pp. 47-66 in *Reactions to Crime*, edited by Dan A. Lewis. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Rosenbaum, Dennis, and Terry Baumer. 1981. *Measuring Fear of Crime*. Evanston, IL: Westinghouse Evaluation Institute (Report to the National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice).
- Sales, E., M. Baum, and B. Shore. 1984. "Victim Readjustment Following Assault." *Journal of Social Issues* 40, 1: 117-136.
- Shapland, Joanna. 1984. "Victims, the Criminal Justice System, and Compensation." *British Journal of Criminology* 24 (April): 131-149.
- Sheppelle, Kim L., and Pauline Bart. 1983. "Through Women's Eyes: Defining Danger in the Wake of Sexual Assault." *Journal of Social Issues* 39, 2: 63-80.
- Silverman, Robert A., and Leslie W. Kennedy. 1985. "Loneliness, Satisfaction and Fear of Crime." *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 27, 1: 1-13.
- Skogan, Wesley G. 1981. *Issues in the Measurement of Victimization*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice.
- Skogan, Wesley G., and Michael Maxfield. 1981. *Coping With Crime*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Sparks, Richard F. 1981. "Surveys of Victimization: An Optimistic Assessment." Pp. 1-60 in *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research Vol. 3*, edited by M. Tonrey, and N. Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sparks, Richard F., Hazel Genn, and David Dodd. 1977. *Surveying Victims*. London: John Wiley.
- Taub, Richard, D. Garth Taylor, and Jan Dunham. 1984. *Patterns of Neighborhood Change: Race and Crime in Urban America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, Ralph, and Margaret Hale. 1985. "Testing Alternative Models of Fear." Unpublished paper, Department of Criminal Justice, Temple University.
- Tyler, Tom R. 1984. "Assessing the Risk of Crime Victimization." *Journal of Social Issues* 40, 1: 27-38.
- Waller, Irvin. 1982. "Victimization Studies as Guides to Action." Pp. 166-188 in *The Victim in International Perspective*, edited by Hans Joachim Schneider. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter.
- Waller, Irvin, and Norman Okihiro. 1978. *Burglary: The Victim and the Public*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Yin, Peter P. 1980. "Fear of Crime Among the Elderly." *Social Problems* 27 (April): 492-504.