Summer 1981

Multiple Victimization: Evidence, Theory, and Future Research

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MULTIPLE VICTIMIZATION: EVIDENCE, THEORY, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

Without exception, victimization surveys over the past fifteen years have found that the great majority of the surveyed population report that none of the incidents they were asked about had happened to them during the period covered; a minority report that they experienced *one* incident; and successively smaller proportions generally report having experienced two, three . . . *n* incidents. This last group has been referred to, rather misleadingly,[1] as "multiple victims;" it is this group, and their experiences, with which this article is concerned.

The phenomenon of multiple victimization raises a number of problems. Some of these problems are methodological; in particular, multiple victims pose a host of problems for those interested in victimization surveys, especially those surveys, such as the National Crime Surveys now being carried out by the United States Census Bureau for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which aim to measure the volume of certain crimes or victimization in the general population. Multiple victims also raise some important substantive issues. Why do some people become victims of crime whereas others do not? To what extent can people act in ways that minimize, if not eliminate, the risk of future victimization? What are the social, psychic, and economic costs of being the victim of a crime? The answers to these questions may be no different in the case of multiple victims than for those victimized only once; but even if that is so, those answers may be easier to see if we look at multiple or recurrent victimization rather than occasional, sporadic, or egregious events.

This article will review briefly the available evidence on multiple

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 [1] It is misleading because the expression "multiple victimization" is also used to refer to (a) cases in which there is more than one victim in a single incident, and (b) cases in which a single victim suffers more than one crime at one time, such as when a person is raped, robbed, and has her car stolen. I neglect both of these complications in this article.

victimization, and will sketch a theoretical framework within which it might be studied as part of a broader effort aimed at explaining the observed distribution of criminal victimization. Some promising directions for future empirical research on multiple victims will then be indicated.

THE EVIDENCE ON MULTIPLE VICTIMIZATION

Having ascertained the existence of multiple reported victimization in surveyed populations, the next step is to ask whether it is more than a random phenomenon. This has usually been done by comparing observed (survey-reported) distributions of incidents ($k = 0, 1, 2 . . . K$) with the distributions that would be expected if victimization were a Poisson process characterized by a transition rate that is constant over the entire surveyed population. In practice, of course, it is estimated from the sample mean rate. Almost invariably, the observed and expected distributions do differ to a statistically significant extent: observed distributions contain more nonvictims, and more multiple victims, than the Poisson process predicts.[2]

The hypothesis that criminal victimizations "cluster" in the population may reasonably be rejected for the same reason that flying bombs clustered in particular blocks in London, or that chromosome interchanges occur with certain frequencies after organic cells are irradiated by x-rays, *i.e.*, chance.[3] Unfortunately, that rejection would be more interesting if there had ever been any reason to accept the hypothesis in the first place. As Coleman[4] has pointed out, the importance of the Poisson process in relation to social phenomena does not lie in its empirical fit to social data, but rather in the assumptions on which the distribution is based, and in the fact that these *may* be reasonable assumptions about the process underlying the phenomena. To say that

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[2] For evidence on this point, *see, e.g.*, K. AROMAA, ARKIPAIVAN VAKIVALTAA SUOMESSA (Everyday Violence in Finland) (1971); A. BIDERMAN, REPORT ON A PILOT SURVEY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ON VICTIMIZATION AND ATTITUDES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT (1967); M. HINDELANG, M. GOTTFREDSON & J. GAROFALO, VICTIMS OF PERSONAL CRIME: AN EMPIRICAL FOUNDATION FOR A THEORY OF PERSONAL VICTIMIZATION (1978) [hereinafter cited as PERSONAL CRIME]; A. REISS, JR., STUDIES IN CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS (1967); P. REYNOLDS, VICTIMIZATION IN A METROPOLITAN REGION: COMPARISON OF A CENTRAL CITY AREA AND A SUBURBAN REGION (1973); R. SPARKS, H. GENN & D. DODD, SURVEYING VICTIMS: A STUDY OF THE MEASUREMENT OF CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION, PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND ATTITUDES TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE 88 (1977) [hereinafter cited as PERCEPTIONS]; P. WOLF, VOLD I DANMARK I FINLAND, 1970/71 EN SAMMENLIGNING AF VOLDSOFRE (1972); Aromaa, *Victimization to Violence: A Gallup Survey*, 2 INT'L J. CRIMINOLOGY & PENOLOGY 333 (1973).

[3] *See* 1 W. FELLER, AN INTRODUCTION TO PROBABILITY THEORY AND ITS APPLICATIONS 159 (1950).

[4] J. COLEMAN, INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICAL SOCIOLOGY 291 (1964).

the Poisson distribution does not fit the observed distribution of victimization is to say that one or more of those assumptions is not valid, *e.g.*, that events are not independent or that the process is not governed by a transition rate which is the same for each member of the population.

Before turning to these possibilities, we ought to note some limitations of the research on this subject to date. First, the deviation from expectation under a Poisson process—too many nonvictims, and too many multiple victims—may be the result of response bias. The data, after all, concern the numbers of incidents mentioned to interviewers, which almost certainly are not the same as the numbers of incidents actually occurring. Most victimization surveys—in particular, the National Crime Surveys—probably severely understate the victimization experience of those surveyed. The observed frequency distribution may be due in part to the fact that some respondents are more productive than others when asked about things which may have happened to them in the past six months or year. It is doubtful, however, that this can explain the whole of the deviation from chance expectation. Conceivably, it may mask the extent of that deviation. The key question is whether incidents not now being reported to survey interviewers have happened to persons reporting at least one other incident, or whether they are mostly incidents which happened to persons reporting no incidents at all. For the moment, there is little evidence on this one way or the other.[5] In either case, underreporting to interviewers could hardly be the entire explanation.

A second limitation of the research on this subject concerns so-called series victimizations, *i.e.*, those cases in which a respondent says that several things happened to him in a certain time period, but that he cannot remember precise numbers or details of those incidents.[6] By definition, such a series victim is a multiple victim, but arguably series incidents should be excluded, or counted as one victimization, especially where such incidents are necessarily measured with great imprecision. In fact, whether such cases are included or excluded from the observed distribution of victimization apparently makes little difference to the basic conclusion.[7]

A third limitation of the studies cited above is that they all involved cross-sectional data derived from a single interview in which the respon-

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[5] *See* PERCEPTIONS, *supra* note 2, at 95-97.

[6] In the National Crime Survey, series victimizations are defined as three or more similar incidents that occur to the respondent during the reference period, for which the respondent cannot recall details of the individual events. The season of occurrence is asked; an estimate of the total number of incidents in the series is made; and details are obtained where possible on the last of the incidents. The similarity of the incidents is established because they are mentioned in response to a particular screen question.

[7] *Cf.*, *e.g.*, PERSONAL CRIME, *supra* note 2.

dent was asked about a time period, usually one year preceding the interview. For a variety of reasons, it is not easy in practice to partition that time period in analyzing survey data. It is often difficult to be sure that reported events are dated or ordered accurately. The restriction to cross-sectional data makes it impossible to distinguish between two competing explanations for multiple victimization as a continuing phenomenon, enduring over some substantial time period, in the victim's life. Reiss is currently analyzing one longitudinal data set consisting of responses from successive interviews with respondents in the national household panel component of the National Crime Surveys. But the difficulties posed by this data set are considerable.[8]

Unfortunately, when we move from cross-sectional survey data to consider a number of time periods, whether these be survey reference periods, or arbitrary intervals of time such as one calendar year, it is not very clear what a multiple victim *is*. Consider, for example, the seven six-month periods on which a respondent in the NCS surveys may report. Suppose he is assaulted in time period t_1, assaulted (or something) again in t_2, again in t_5, and then three times in t_6? Suppose that a house or store is broken into in t_1, and then again in t_7? What if a respondent experiences a series of assaults in t_2, another series in t_4, and then single discrete assaults in t_6 and t_7? Is someone a multiple victim if his house was broken into in 1956, and again in 1980? If they suffer any kind of criminal victimization over their lifetime? Plainly the answer to the last question must be no; otherwise one could never cease to be a multiple victim once having attained that status. There is nothing to be gained by treating "multiple victimization" as an absorbing state. I shall suggest below a way in which this question may be tackled. That it remains a question illustrates the work still to be done on the problem of multiple victimization.

Multiple victimization raises a number of further methodological problems for those interested in carrying out victimization surveys.[9] In addition, some important substantive reasons remain for studying multiple victims. As I have already suggested, they may illuminate more general causal processes, and thus help to show how far, and in what ways, the attributes or behavior of victims themselves may help to explain their victimization. Also, even if multiple victimization were merely the

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[8] A. REISS, VICTIM PRONENESS BY TYPE OF CRIME IN REPEAT VICTIMIZATION: ANALYTICAL STUDIES IN VICTIMIZATION BY CRIME (1977) (Data Rpt. No. 7).

[9] In particular, although multiple victims are a minority of all victims, they account for a disproportionate amount of all incidents captured by most surveys. Thus they provide a disproportionate amount of information about incidents in general. *See* R. SPARKS, STUDYING THE VICTIMS OF CRIME: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES (NAT'L INST. OF MENTAL HEALTH MONOGRAPH 1980).

result of chance (or "bad luck"), and if the number of multiple victims were no greater than one might expect from a Poisson or other random process, nonetheless those victims would constitute an extremely important group. Clearly, the consequences of one-time victimization generally are not relatively serious. Such incidents (even occurring in a fairly short time period) are relatively unimportant from the victim's point of view and the standpoint of public policy.[10] But those whose lives are frequently or chronically affected by crime are another matter. For many such persons, the social meaning of crime and victimization likely is very different from what it is to one-time victims.[11] Thus, multiple victims would be an important group to study even if they haven't always been as frequent as they now appear to be. Also, of course it would not follow that their excessive victimization is in fact due to chance (whatever that might mean), even if it were no more frequent than the Poisson distribution would predict.

MODIFICATIONS OF THE POISSON MODEL[12]

Assuming that the observed distribution of victimization with its excess of multiple victims is real and not artificial, how might that distribution be explained? Such frequency distributions can be reasonably well reproduced by a number of simple probabilistic models resting on assumptions different from those which govern the simple Poisson process. One of these, attributed primarily to Polya, abandons the assumption that events are statistically independent. Instead, in the present context, being a victim on one occasion supposedly increases one's future probability of victimization. Models of this kind have been extensively treated by Coleman[13] among others. Coleman describes them as "contagious Poisson" models, though as Greenberg[14] has pointed out, "reinforcement" might in many contexts be a more appropriate term.[15] In criminology, something of the kind was posited by some "labeling" theo-

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[10] *See* LeJeune & Alex, *On Being Mugged: The Event and Its Aftermath*, 2 J. URB. LIFE & CULTURE 259 (1973).

[11] For more evidence bearing on this, *see* PERCEPTIONS, *supra* note 2, at 198-217.

[12] Portions of this section and the following one are adapted from R. SPARKS, *supra* note 9.

[13] J. COLEMAN, *supra* note 4.

[14] D. GREENBERG, MATHEMATICAL CRIMINOLOGY 269 (1969).

[15] In most applications of such models, it is assumed that the occurrence of one event increases the rate parameter for the entire group. In the case of victimization, this assumes that the rate parameter for each individual in the group increases, regardless of his previous experience. This assumption can be avoided in more complex models, however. For some discussion, *see* S. FEINBERG, VICTIMIZATION AND THE NATIONAL CRIME SURVEY: PROBLEMS OF DESIGN AND ANALYSIS (1977) (Technical Rpt. No. 291, Univ. of Minnesota); Singer & Spilerman, *Social Mobility Models of Heterogeneous Populations*, in SOCIOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY 356 (H. Costner ed. 1973).

rists, who hypothesized that the more often an offender is arrested, convicted, or otherwise stigmatized as "deviant," the more likely he is to continue offending in the future.[16] In some social situations such models may be intuitively reasonable, but criminal victimization does not seem to be one of them. For example, perhaps a burglar breaks into a house or store and finds many things worth stealing and few precautions against theft. He tells other burglars about this or plans to go back himself, thus increasing the probability of second and subsequent burglaries. Perhaps a man who has been assaulted may become paranoid and belligerent, take lessons in self-defense and so on, thereby increasing his probability of being assaulted in the future. These examples are pretty far-fetched, and not many more suggest themselves. In particular, concepts like contagion or reinforcement are not easily applied to repeated or frequent victimization of different types, *e.g.*, burglary followed by robbery followed by car theft.

A more plausible modification of the Poisson process was first discussed by Greenwood and Yule in 1920.[17] This relaxes the assumption that the entire population can be characterized by the same transition rate. Instead it assumes that the population consists of persons or other units, such as organizations, having different degrees of "proneness" or susceptibility to the phenomenon in question. It also assumes that proneness-related events, such as accidents or criminal victimizations, occur independently and randomly, so that for each subgroup, given its average proneness, some variation or clustering would still occur around that average. Thus even in subgroups of very low proneness, *some* extreme multiple incidents would still occur purely by chance. Greenwood and Yule hypothesized that the proneness they studied in connection with data on accidents in factories was distributed according to a two-parameter (Pearson type III) distribution,[18] and that the actual occurrence of incidents was governed by a set of Poisson processes with different pronenesses as transition rates. The Greenwood-Yule model can be shown to fit observed distributions of criminal victimization from

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[16] *See, e.g.*, R. CARR-HILL, THE VIOLENT OFFENDER: ILLUSION OR REALITY (1971); Green & Martin, *Absconding from Approved Schools as Learned Behavior: A Statistical Study*, 10 J. RESEARCH CRIME & DELINQUENCY 73 (1973) (applying a similar model to absconding from juvenile institutions).

[17] Greenwood & Yule, *An Inquiry into the Nature of Frequency Distributions Representative of Multiple Happenings with Particular Reference to the Occurrence of Multiple Attacks of Disease or Repeated Injuries*, 83 J. ROYAL STATISTICAL SOC'Y 255 (1920).

[18] But, as they remarked, "The choice of skew curves is arbitrary." Greenwood and Yule also derive expected values on the assumption that the underlying proneness is normally distributed. This seems seldom likely to be the case where phenomena such as crime are concerned, however.

several surveys in different countries quite well.[19]

Quite apart from considerations of goodness of fit, the Greenwood-Yule model, based as it is on heterogeneity or differing degrees of risk or proneness in the population, has a certain intuitive plausibility in explaining such things as accidents or illnesses. In such a model, differences in susceptibility or proneness are conceived of as relatively invariant in the sense that they are unaffected by the number of times a person has previously suffered the occurrence in question. Thus, in the case of accidents, presumptively some persons are just naturally clumsy or are given to taking imprudent risks, while others are naturally adept or cautious. These two groups' different experiences are conceived of as being caused by their basic attributes, subject to a residual chance variation which behaves in accordance with a Poisson process. Though an obvious oversimplification, it is a reasonable first step toward the explanation of observed facts.

The notion of proneness needs careful interpretation, however, and may be extremely misleading where criminal victimization is concerned. The term is harmless enough, if it is understood to refer merely to variations in the probability of experiencing a certain event in a given time period. But there is a danger that it may be understood to imply something more, namely, that such variations in risk are caused by inherent attributes of persons, such as clumsiness. This is certainly not the case. While variations in risk may be associated with particular groups or categories of persons, the causes of those variations may lie in the social situations of those persons, or places to which they usually go, rather than in anything inherent in the persons themselves. With that caveat, the term "proneness" will be used in this article, not merely to honor established usage, but because there is no equally convenient alternative term.

Unfortunately, models based on the notion of contagion, heterogeneity, or differing pronenesses have limiting distributions, which are identical.[20] Choosing between them is not possible on the basis of cross-sectional data alone. The NCS national household data, ideally based as they are on seven-wave panels, could in principle be used to see if the probability of subsequent victimization increased, given past victimization (as "contagious" models predict). Again, however, those models are not in general reasonable. If they did turn out to be supported by the NCS data, the findings would still warrant methodological doubts.

An explanation of multiple victimization based on heterogeneity

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[19] *See, e.g.*, K. AROMAA, *supra* note 2; PERCEPTIONS, *supra* note 2, at 92; P. WOLF, *supra* note 2; Aromaa, *supra* note 2, 2 INT'L J. CRIMINOLOGY & PENOLOGY at 333.

[20] Feller, *On a General Class of "Contagious" Distributions*, 14 ANNALS MATHEMATICAL STATISTICS 384 (1943).

still needs some further modification, for models of the Greenwood-Yule type typically have assumed that individuals' pronenesses tended to remain relatively fixed. This assumption is not necessary and in the case of criminal victimization it is plainly unreasonable. On the contrary, individual risk of victimization, though perhaps *relatively* durable, is nonetheless a function of personal and social characteristics, and so can be altered if those characteristics are changed.

Analytically, the situation is somewhat similar to one recently discussed by Eaton and Fortin[21] in relation to schizophrenia. Diagnosed schizophrenics from time to time experience acute episodes in which they may become deluded, hallucinated, and generally out of touch with reality. Between such acute episodes they may function more or less normally. Some chronic schizophrenics also go through periods of mildly impaired functioning. During these spells, the probability of experiencing an acute episode is much higher. Eaton and Fortin found that the frequency distribution of acute episodes experienced by a sample of schizophrenic patients resembled the skewed distribution of reported incidents found in most victimization surveys. They also found that a more accurate prediction of those episodes could be made if they knew the number of subjects who, in the time period in question, had a given number of spells in which the probability of an episode was high. The expected distribution predicted by their assumptions turned out to be a negative binomial, the same as that predicted by Greenwood and Yule's heterogenous Poisson model.

The fruitfulness of the Eaton-Fortin study is that, unlike the original Greenwood-Yule study, it allows for variations in proneness, while still making it possible to predict, from a fairly simple set of assumptions, a distribution of incidents very like that which is in fact observed in many victimization surveys. One further refinement is necessary, however. Eaton and Fortin, like many other researchers working on analogous problems, operationally defined their schizophrenic subjects as being either "in a state" or "not in a state." They recognized no intermediate status. By analogy this suggests that persons either did or did not have a given degree of risk of victimization. This may be a necessary first approximation, but it is an obvious oversimplification. Furthermore such an assumption is not necessary in order to apply a reasonably straightforward probability model of this kind. On the contrary, we may assume that (1) there are different degrees of proneness in the population, and that (2) an individual's proneness or risk of victimization may vary, for example, according to variations in his lifestyle or

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[21] Eaton & Fortin, *A Third Interpretation for the Generating Process of the Negative Binomial*, 43 AM. SOC. REV. 264 (1978).

personal characteristics. Thus, a fairly simple and realistic model resting on the assumption of variation in risk, changes in individuals' probabilities of risk, and chance variation given a certain probability of risk, can describe and begin to explain multiple victimization. Any realistic account of the observed distribution of victimization must recognize that to the victim it is at least in part a matter of chance. Some high-proneness groups or persons may be nonvictims in a particular time period, while some low-proneness groups or persons may still be multiple victims.

The Greenwood-Yule and Eaton-Fortin studies assumed that proneness or its analogues were distributed in the population according to a particular probability model, the negative binomial. That, too, is a convenient first approximation, but it is also only a first step in trying to estimate those variations empirically. *Which* groups of people, activities, circumstances, social situations, times of day, week or year, regions of the country, or whatever, display higher-than-average (or lower-than-average) rates or risks of victimization? In other words, the next step in this kind of analysis involves trying to identify concomitants or perhaps even causes of variation in proneness or the risk of victimization. In the survey which my colleagues and I carried out in London some years ago, we attempted to do this empirically, following a method originally suggested by Coleman.[22] Briefly, we split our sample according to various attributes or combinations of attributes, such as age, race, sex, expressed attitudes, and area of residence, in an effort to find sets of subgroups where (1) sample mean rates of victimization were significantly different, and (2) subgroup mean rates and variances were approximately equal. The latter is a necessary, though not of course sufficient, condition for the observed subgroup distributions to be representative of simple Poisson processes.

This attempt was unsuccessful because no matter how the sample was sliced, at least one identified subgroup varied in victimization more than random processes could account for. Moreover, no reasonable explanation for those subgroups was readily apparent.[23] That we should have expected such an empirical method might succeed in separating subgroups with different pronenesses may surprise some. Why *should* this be possible, purely on the basis of simple combinations of demographic attributes, expressed attitudes, and so on? The criticism has some force. Still few other attempts have been made to examine variation in victimization rates in this way. Where large samples are avail-

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[22] J. COLEMAN, *supra* note 4, at 379.

[23] *See* K. AROMAA, *supra* note 2 (utilizing the same approach with Finnish data, with no more success); PERCEPTIONS, *supra* note 2, at 83.

able (as is the case with the National Crime Survey city-level and national household panel data sets), patterns and variations in mean rates of victimization can be estimated far more precisely than was possible for either the London or the Finnish samples. Unfortunately, there are not enough independent variables in the NCS data to permit a detailed examination of this matter.[24] However, there are more data, such as control-card data, than have yet been examined from this point of view. The next section of this article will list some concepts to help guide such an examination and permit us to begin assessing the determinants of variation in proneness to victimization.

Before that, however, two further modifications of Poisson-type processes that may apply to criminal victimization should be discussed. Under certain circumstances these modifications may help to explain the observed distribution of multiple victims. First, for some proportion of the population, the probability of becoming a victim of crime within any given time period is effectively zero because they take special precautions against crime, or for some other reason. Assume this group is "immune" to victimization. Assume further that victimization in the rest of the population is distributed according to a simple Poisson process, or a Greenwood-Yule heterogeneous one. In order to fit such a model it is necessary to make some assumption either about the size of the immune group, or about the transition rates for the non-immune cases. Good data that would permit either estimate are not now available.[25]

A second, related possibility is that the population is composed of a number of subgroups with different Poisson transition rates, but that for some of those subgroups those rates are decreasing over time as a result of prior victimizations. In other words for some members of the population, the experience of victimization leads them to modify their behavior and take precautions against future victimization so that with each successive victimization, their probability of being a victim in the future decreases until they are immune. Attempting to identify such groups, and to estimate not only their basic pronenesses but the successive decrements to those pronenesses given past victimization, is currently impossible. The general concept of a reduction of subgroup proneness as a result of actions taken in consequence of prior victimization, however, is as important as the concept of immunity discussed above.

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24 *See* COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL STATISTICS, NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL, "SURVEYING CRIME"—FINAL REPORT OF THE PANEL FOR EVALUATION OF CRIME SURVEYS (B. Penick & M. Owens eds. 1976) [hereinafter cited as SURVEYING CRIME].

25 *See* PERCEPTIONS, *supra* note 2, at 94-95.

Some Theory About Multiple Victimization

If the general notions of heterogeneity, immunity, and so forth, are accepted as reasonable, the task of explaining the existence and distribution of multiple victimization will be simplified, though not accomplished. Why do people possess certain degrees of proneness at particular times? Invoking the gamma distribution does not provide a very satisfactory answer to this question.

Evidently the answer is in attributes of people themselves—their social, psychological, economic, cultural, and spatio-temporal properties. Two accounts of the connections between those properties, and proneness to victimization, have recently appeared. The Panel for the Evaluation of Crime Surveys[26] conceived of those connections in terms of "vulnerability" and "risk." More recently, Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo[27] have proposed a theoretical model based on lifestyle, which they hypothesize to affect victimization primarily (though by no means entirely) through variation in exposure to risk. The matter is somewhat more complex than either makes it seem.[28] There are at least six ways in which the actions, attributes, or social situations of victims may help to explain variations in victimization rates.

PRECIPITATION

As Wolfgang[29] pointed out, a victim may act in such a way as to precipitate or encourage the offender's behavior. Typically, but not necessarily, the victim's words or actions arouse the offender's emotions, and the offender acts under the influence of those emotions. As the courts have long recognized, such actions may be less than fully "voluntary." Significantly, the concept of precipitation sketched here marks a causal distinction, and not just a legal or moral one, though the two are related. A victim who precipitates an offender's action does or says something that works on the emotions or passions of the offender to such an extent that he makes the offender act as he does. This kind of causation may be extremely rare, but possible. Compare *making* someone jump by suddenly shouting "Boo!" at them from behind, and *getting them* to jump by saying "I'll give you $100 if you jump."

FACILITATION

Even if the victim does not take any active part in the crime, he

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[26] Surveying Crime, *supra* note 24, at 92-99.

[27] Personal Crime, *supra* note 2, at 250-72.

[28] For an earlier and even more oversimplified account, *see* Perceptions, *supra* note 2, at 97-106.

[29] M. Wolfgang, Patterns in Criminal Homicide (1958).

may facilitate its commission—by deliberately, recklessly, or negligently placing himself at special risk. The group of "temptation-opportunity" situations identified by Normandeau[30] belongs in this category. Thus, persons who leave property in unlocked cars may substantially increase the risk of that property being stolen; persons who cash checks without asking for identification may increase the risk of accepting bogus checks; persons who sign contracts without reading the fine print run the risk of fraud by bogus repairmen. In general, anyone who fails to take reasonable precautions against crime may be said to have facilitated a crime against him. In other words, facilitation involves the creation of *special* risks; and (unlike precipitation) it need not involve a bilateral transaction with the offender. Facilitation, thus defined, is both context-dependent and culture-dependent. While it may be reasonable to leave your house unlocked in a low-crime, rural area, in certain inner-city areas it might be tantamount to inviting theft. Facilitation thus must be seen against the background of standards generally accepted in both the group and the situation in question. Such standards may of course be very vague; but that is not an argument against the concept of facilitation.

VULNERABILITY

Some persons, because of their attributes, usual behavior, or their place in a social system, may be very vulnerable to crime, in that they are abnormally susceptible to it. This implies that they are less than normally capable of preventing such crimes against themselves. Several of the general categories of victims mentioned by von Hentig[31] were thought by him to be clearly vulnerable in this sense. Thus, the very young and the elderly are physically less able to resist violent attack, as are some adult females. The mentally defective, immigrants, and the uneducated or inexperienced are especially vulnerable to deception and fraud.

Note that this is vulnerability in a different sense than that used by the National Academy Panel in its recent report.[32] The Panel distinguished between what it called ecological vulnerability (*e.g.*, living in a high-crime area); *status* vulnerability arising from such attributes as sex, race, occupation, or social class; and *role* vulnerability, arising from relationships from which the individual cannot readily withdraw (*e.g.*, marriage, tenancy). This use of the concept is too broad. It fails to specify *how* particular roles, statuses, or environments lead to higher risk of vic-

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[30] A. Normandeau, Trends and Patterns in Crimes of Robbery (1968) (unpublished dissertation at University of Pennsylvania Library).

[31] H. VON HENTIG, THE CRIMINAL AND HIS VICTIM (1948).

[32] SURVEYING CRIME, *supra* note 24, at 94-97.

timization. Indeed, the Panel's use of the term vulnerability seems at times equivalent to the notion of proneness. Marriage would not cause vulnerability as defined in this article unless the spouse had a high propensity to commit crime against his partner. Other instances of such vulnerability would include physical frailty, visible intoxication, or blindness. These may normally carry a higher risk of victimization because they deprive individuals of the normal ability to prevent crimes against themselves. What distinguishes vulnerability from facilitation, as defined above, is that vulnerability does not involve any deviation from standards of due care; the victim or potential victim who is vulnerable need do nothing to create a greater risk than that possessed by those who share his attributes.[33]

OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity is of course a logically necessary condition for crime. In order to be a victim of car theft, it is necessary to have a car; and a man who never goes out of his house will never be robbed in the street.[34] Earlier I defined facilitation as the creation of a special risk, for example, cashing checks without requiring identification. But an opportunity variable—in this case, the practice of using checks—is required before such frauds can be facilitated or committed. Similarly, there is a distinction between conditions creating opportunity, and conditions creating vulnerability: a person living in an unprotected house in a neighborhood full of thieves may be vulnerable to theft, but there will be no opportunity for theft if he has nothing to steal.

The central propositions of the theory of personal victimization advanced by Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo[35] are apparently propositions about opportunity. Thus, their Proposition 1 asserts that the probability of suffering a personal victimization is directly (*i.e.*, positively) related to the amount of time that a person spends in public places, especially at night; this amount of time is said in turn (Proposition 2) to depend on "lifestyle." Surely that is just a generalization of a set of statements to the effect that a man who never goes out of his house will never get robbed in the street?

Similarly, their Proposition 6 asserts that the probability of per-

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[33] Of course the victim or potential victim may have done something at some earlier time that leads to his subsequent vulnerability. For example, he may have married an alcoholic with a history of violence when drunk. This would scarcely be regarded as facilitation in the sense this article uses, unless the person knew of the spouse's violent propensities, or perhaps voluntarily stayed within the marital home after the violence manifested itself.

[34] For a further discussion, *see* Sparks, *Criminal Opportunities and Crime Rates*, in INDICATORS OF CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE: QUANTITATIVE METHODS, (S. Feinberg & A. Reiss eds. 1981).

[35] PERSONAL CRIME, *supra* note 2, at 250-66.

sonal victimization, particularly theft, is directly related to the amount of time that an individual spends among non-family members—the assumption being, presumably, that family members do not often steal from one another. This too relates to opportunity—some sorts of personal theft require propinquity—though we should note that a person who was *forced* (*e.g.*, because of his employment) to spend a disproportionate amount of time in public places might on that account be said to be *vulnerable* to personal theft (in my sense of that term, which is approximately equivalent to Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo's term "vincible." This shows the borderline between my two concepts, though it does not, I think, show that they overlap.)

ATTRACTIVENESS

Plainly some targets are more attractive than others from a criminal's point of view. Thus, persons who look affluent are better prospects for robbery than persons who look impoverished; expensive houses full of durable consumer goods are more attractive to a burglar than tenements in a slum. Presumably extreme ugliness, old age, and halitosis are disincentives to certain sorts of sexual assault. Attractiveness is, of course, in the eye of the beholder. The victim may make every attempt to hide his or her attractiveness to no avail. Attractiveness may be hidden, but it will not immunize a victim. Thus, rich women may remove their jewelry when traveling to and from parties but that does not remove the opportunity for robbery. Similarly, political bagmen, narcotics dealers, and those too poor to have bank accounts are typically forced to deal in cash. They do not intentionally or negligently bring about their attractiveness to robbers; they are simply stuck with it. Moreover, some varieties of attractiveness cannot logically be concealed. How do you make a Lamborghini less attractive to a potential car thief without making it look less like a Lamborghini? All you can do is make it look like a *less attractive* Lamborghini, for example, by letting it get very dirty or painting it a hideous shade of chartreuse.

IMPUNITY

Finally, certain persons have higher-than-average proneness to victimization, not because their attributes or actions are conducive to crime or make it specially tempting, but because they make it easy to get away with. This category does not include a failure to protect person or property through deadbolt locks, cans of mace, or the like. Some persons are selected as victims precisely because they are believed to have limited access to the usual machinery of social control. Thus, homosexuals are said to be frequent victims of blackmail and extortion because they are

thought to be reluctant to notify the police. Similarly, criminals, ex-criminals, neighborhood paranoiacs, and members of minority groups may be chosen as victims because they are thought to be unable or unwilling to call the police.

Here, then, are six ways in which some persons may have higher proneness to criminal victimization than others. There may well be other ways in which victims of crime play an important part in causing their own victimization, though these six are likely to be quantitatively the most important. Analytically distinct, they are not mutually exclusive, and there may well be correlations and interactions between them for particular kinds of persons or crime. Furthermore, the six concepts may relate to particular places or social situations as well as to persons. Thus, dark alleys, basements, elevators in public housing developments, and late-night subway trains may make persons vulnerable; schoolyards, bars, and sports arenas may lead to precipitation; prisons, railway stations, and crowded department stores may facilitate crime to the extent that they make it difficult or impossible for people to take reasonable precautions against it; brothels, illegal gambling dens, and narcotics transactions may offer high impunity to would-be offenders.

Proneness is a function of the six concepts just listed. Those concepts in turn depend on the social and personal characteristics of different groups in the population, their lifestyles. A change in a person's attributes or usual behavior would thus alter the extent to which he facilitated, attracted, was vulnerable, etc., to crime, and would thus alter his proneness to that type of crime. Following the argument in the preceding section of this paper, the probability that a person would actually be victimized is a function of his proneness as well as a random element not dependent on the attributes or social situation of the victim. Given sufficient information about the attributes and behavior of a population, calculation of their "net proneness" to criminal victimization would in principle be possible, *i.e.*, the probability of victimization in a given time period t. That would permit us to calculate an expected level of victimization around which there should merely be random stochastic variation. Then, if the relevant characteristics of the population were to change (*e.g.*, people go out less often, barricade themselves behind dozens of locks, get divorced, give away all their money, quit dealing cocaine), their proneness, and thus the expected rate of victimization in the population, should decrease accordingly.

The operational definition of these six concepts, and their application to fact situations to make concrete predictions, may of course be difficult in some cases. On balance, however, it will usually be no more

difficult than operational definition anywhere else in social research.[36] However, two issues may be problematic in doing this kind of research in the special context of multiple victimization, where the process may be more easily seen. These issues are discussed briefly in the next section.

FUTURE RESEARCH ON MULTIPLE VICTIMS

An important contribution of the research done in the name of victimology is that it has not, by and large, relied on large-scale social surveys as a research technique. Such surveys will continue to be an important source of information about victimization in general and multiple victimization in particular, but they have distinct limitations, especially where multiple victimization is concerned. The first of these relates to sampling, the second to data collection.

Victimization is a relatively rare event in the American population, and multiple victimization is even rarer. Representative samples of the general population are thus unlikely to produce sufficient cases of multiple victimization for study, except at inordinate cost. Conventional victimization surveys are of course possible in high-crime areas where the proportion of victims and multiple victims can reasonably be expected to be high. Alternatively, and perhaps preferably in the present state of our knowledge, samples could be drawn from persons whose victimization has on some occasion come to the attention of the police or other social agencies, such as hospitals.

However such cases may be identified, effective research on multiple victimization will require detailed information on the social and personal contexts in which the victimization took place. This almost certainly cannot be obtained, at present, using interviewing techniques appropriate to general-population surveys like the NCS. However, eventually sufficient indicators of the determinants of proneness may economically be obtained in relatively short, structured half-hour interviews. For the present, more detailed interviewing of the kind used in a very different context by Toch[37] is needed. Such interviews would seek to embed victimizations in the life-situations of the victims, by trying to answer questions like the following: Did the victimizations occur because the victim in some way facilitated them? Were they related to a vulnerability arising in turn out of a role-relationship that persisted over time? Did victimizations cease after the victim took steps to reduce the opportunity for victimization, and if so, what were those steps? Was there an element of precipitation, at least so far as can be judged by

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[36] *Id.*; R. SPARKS, *supra* note 9.

[37] H. TOCH, MEN IN CRISIS (1975); H. TOCH, VIOLENT MEN (1969).

accounts given by victims, in respect of personal crimes? Was the victim limited in his or her access to law enforcement or social control, or was it probably believed that this was so? Did the victim's behavior make him an especially attractive target? To what extent were those persons who might attract crime also able to take steps to limit the opportunity for it, or, conversely, to what extent did they facilitate it by failing to take precautions? If so, what was the result?

The outcome variable, criminal victimization, may take various forms. This itself is a matter in need of much further detailed investigation. How many of those whom we call multiple victims are victims of different types of crime so that pronenesses are correlated? What are the typical time intervals between victimizations, for high-proneness groups? To what extent are the incidents now called series victimizations in the NCS and other victimization surveys incidents involving the same offender or group of offenders, such as a landlord, or a particular group of vandalizing neighborhood children? To what extent are some cases of multiple victimization best understood, *not* as discrete incidents, but as continuing states or conditions? Perhaps a housewife reports frequent beatings by her spouse, but the more important element is not this or that blow on the head, but the continuing state of terror and shame she must endure. After one or more incidents of victimization, to what extent do people take steps to reduce their proneness to that type of crime? To what extent *can* they do so? Why are some people who live in high-crime areas *not* victims, if indeed this is the case? Do victims who have been dissatisfied with the police response fail to call the police in the future, thus increasing the impunity with which offenders can victimize them again?

This is but a small sample of the questions to which we now need answers. One hypothesis, of course, is that the answers to those questions will be the same for multiple victims, as for one-time victims. Whether or not this is so, we need to begin to try to see criminal victimization in its social and personal context, and to relate incidents involving crime to the rest of the victims' lives and life-situations, so far as this can be done. Of course there may always be some persons for whom victimization, including multiple victimization, is a matter of chance, absolutely unrelated to their attributes or behavior. That, too, is a hypothesis, to be investigated in the same way as the others listed in this article.