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“Messin’ With Drugs ... You Could Lose Your Life”: the Effect of Victimization on Routine Activities and Risk Management

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3. “MESSIN’ WITH DRUGS...YOU COULD LOSE YOUR LIFE”: THE EFFECT OF VICTIMIZATION ON ROUTINE ACTIVITIES AND RISK MANAGEMENT

J. Michael Vecchio

Decades of research have helped to identify that victims and offenders are not opposing parts of the crime equation (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1991), but often are intertwined as part of a homogeneous population (Lauritsen & Laub, 2007). Those with the greatest likelihood of experiencing personal or property victimization are those who report offending or substance using behaviors (Gottfredson, 1984; Jensen & Brownfield, 1986; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990). This increased victimization risk is commonly related to the amount of time spent in situations with greater proximity to motivated offenders and a lack of supervision (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garofalo, 1978; Jensen & Brownfield, 1986). Individuals who are particularly at-risk for victimization are those involved in substance use and abuse and street offending (Anderson, 1999; Biernacki, 1986; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Jacobs, 2000; Jacques & Wright, 2008; Sutherland, 1937; Waldorf, 1973).

Victimization experiences can have disparate affects on individuals’ perceptions and behaviors (Ferraro, 1995; Hindelang et al., 1978). These effects can range from no perceived effects (Hindelang et al., 1978), subtle effects (Hindelang et al., 1978), and significant effects (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Jacques & Wright, 2008; Sutherland, 1937) on individual behavior. In particular, the effect of exposure to crime and victimization may influence risk management techniques. The current study will attempt to address whether victimization experiences lead to behavioral change and whether individuals recognize or acknowledge this change. The study uses qualitative interviews with formerly at-risk adult men involved in an alcohol and drug rehabilitation center in a major metropolitan area.

RELATED LITERATURE

VICTIM AND OFFENDER OVERLAP

For the field of criminology, victims were often the forgotten part of the crime equation. Research over the past several decades has moved beyond this assumption to explore the intricacies of this unique population. What has been learned is that victims and offenders are often demographically and behaviorally similar (Lauritsen & Laub, 2007). This finding has been consistent across time, place, and subgroups (Lauritsen & Laub, 2007) and has been upheld by both quantitative (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1991; Jensen & Brownfield, 1986; Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991) and qualitative analysis (Anderson, 1999; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Jacobs & Wright, 2006).

The development of routine activities theory and lifestyles perspectives have aided in the study of the victim and offender overlap. Hindelang and colleagues (1978) developed the lifestyles perspective which indicates that daily routine behaviors – vocational and leisure activities – form a lifestyle which directly influences the propensity of becoming a victim of crime. Cohen and Felson (1979) identified that crimes occur at the convergence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and an absence of capable guardianship. Subsequent research using these perspectives has

upheld these assertions, showing that victimization risk and experiences are linked to the amount of time spent in proximity to motivated offenders with a lack of supervision by capable guardians (Garofalo, 1979; Jensen & Brownfield, 1986).

AT-RISK GROUPS

Given that individual risk of victimization increases with the amount of time spent around motivated offenders absent of capable guardianship, some of the most at-risk are those involved in illicit drug use and street offending. This group, by definition, is involved in illicit behavior which is conducted in situations devoid of formal guardians. The illegal nature of these behaviors places individuals in greater contact with motivated offenders and subsequently enhances risk of personal and property victimization.

Prior research on this population has upheld these theoretical assertions on magnified victimization risk (Anderson, 1999; Biernacki, 1986; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Jacobs, 2000; Jacques & Wright, 2008; Shover, 1996; Sutherland, 1937; Waldorf, 1973) and has identified a variety of factors contributing to it. Those involved in substance using or a “life as a party” lifestyle often carry money, illicit substances, or weapons on their person (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Jacobs, 2000; Peterson, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2004; Shover, 1996). Having these desirable items on your person greatly increases target attractiveness for motivated offenders (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Further amplifying victimization risk for these individuals is a reluctance to report crimes to the police. This inability to report personal or property victimization to the police is tied implicitly to fear of self-incrimination in illegal activities (Jacobs, 2000; Lauritsen et al., 1991; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990), a general mistrust in police (Anderson, 1999; Rosenfeld, Jacobs, & Wright, 2003), or a desire to resolve the crime personally with retaliatory behavior (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Jacobs, 2000; Jacobs & Wright, 2006). In light of this, individuals involved in a substance using and street offending lifestyle must be aware of risk and manage it accordingly – absent of the help of formal state guardians (e.g. police).

EFFECTS OF VICTIMIZATION

Victimization can be a powerful experience which can influence individual perceptions of crime as well as behaviors and routine activities (Ferraro, 1995; Hindelang et al., 1978). Especially given the inability or reluctance to report, victimization can serve as an event which may further strengthen alienation from non-offending/substance using society and may encourage individual handling of the crime through retaliatory actions (Anderson, 1999; Jacobs, 2000; Jacobs & Wright, 2006). While these findings are important, research also suggests that men are less likely to admit that exposure to violence motivated behavioral changes because of the risk of appearing less tough (Anderson, 1999; Hindelang et al., 1978).

Victimization can similarly be interpreted as shock which may make an individual face the harsh realities of their future in an offending or using lifestyle (Sutherland, 1937). In this vein, responses to victimization may range from subtle to absolute changes in behavior. Hindelang and colleagues (1978) suggested that the behavioral effects of crime are most commonly subtle adjustments. Specifically noting that “rather than making substantial change in what they do,

people tend to change the ways in which they do things” (Hindelang et al., 1978: p224). These subtle changes can include defensive weapon carrying as well as changes in patterns of leisure activities (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Ferraro, 1995; Hindelang et al., 1978; Jacobs & Wright, 2006).

Other research has indicated that victimization (both individual and vicarious) has the ability to serve as an event which will facilitate absolute change in behavior. In their work with St. Louis, Missouri gang members, Decker and Van Winkle (1996) identified that for many gang members prolonged exposure to violence (vicarious victimization) can be a motivator for gang desistance. The importance of exposure to violence (direct and indirect) can serve as a substantial motivator for absolute behavioral change (Cusson & Pinsonneault, 1986; Decker & Lauritsen, 1996; Jacques & Wright, 2008). Taken as a whole, research in this area suggests that victimization is an event which can have disparate impacts on individual behavior and perceptions.

Given the at-risk nature of substance users and street offenders, the study goal is to examine whether and how victimization experiences lead to behavioral change. This research will use retrospective qualitative data from a sample of formerly high risk men to explore the effects of victimization experiences. Specific attention will be paid to whether victimization significantly influenced how individuals behaved, navigated the risks of a substance using and street offending lifestyle, and whether individuals recognize or acknowledge victimization the facilitator of any change. As a whole, this study should provide further insight into the area of the affect of victimization on individual behavior which currently has some conflicting findings.

GATEWAY RESEARCH FINDINGS

For the purpose of this study, questions were asked about whether subjects had experienced any conflicts or disagreements while buying, selling, or using drugs, whether they were the victim of a crime, and whether victimization subsequently changed any behavioral patterns. Table 3-1 shows that over 90% of the original sample reported some form of personal, property, or significant vicarious victimization. This is consistent with those involved or previously involved

Table 3-1. Reported Prevalence of Victimization (N = 35)

Victimization	32 (91%)
No Victimization	3 (9%)

in a drug using and street offending lifestyle (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Jacobs, 2000; Jacobs & Wright, 2006; Waldorf, 1973). For the purpose of the present study, a restricted sample of 30 respondents will be used to explore what impact, if any, victimization had on behavioral patterns.³

³ While 32 respondents reported some victimization experience, two cases were excluded from the analysis. One reported having been the victim of a crime or violence, but additional follow up questions were not asked by the researcher given that the offense occurred outside of his drug use period. Another reported having suffered the theft

VICTIMIZATION PREVALENCE AND EXTENT

Like many involved or formerly involved in drug using and street offending lifestyle (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Jacobs, 2000; Jacobs & Wright, 2006; Lauritsen et al., 1991), Table 3-2 shows that respondents indicated they were exposed to victimization in a variety of forms. The vast majority of victimized men indicated that they had been the victim of a personal crime (25 or 83%). Robbery victimization, either attempted or completed, was experienced by 21 men (70%) and was by far the most common form of personal crime victimization. A number of respondents reported being shot (7 or 23%) or shot at (6 or 20%). Several others also reported being assaulted or being in fights (3 or 10%).

A number of the men also reported property victimization experiences (7 or 23%). Several men indicated having been “ripped off” or having been sold bad or fake drugs (4 or 13%). A few others indicated being given counterfeit money in exchange for drugs or had people steal their drugs without the threat of force (4 or 13%). One final form of victimization that arose in the interviews was significant vicarious victimization with several men indicating a loss or near loss of a close friend or family member (3 or 10%).

Table3- 2. Prevalence of Specific Victimization (N = 30)

Personal	25 (83%)
Simple/Aggravated Assault	3 (10%)
Robbery	21 (70%)
Shot at	6 (20%)
Shot	7 (23%)
Property	7 (23%)
Sold Fake/Bad Drugs	4 (13%)
Theft of Drugs or Counterfeit Money	2 (7%)
Serious Vicarious Victimization	3 (10%)

As indicated, the most prominent form of victimization in this sample was robbery. These victimizations occurred most commonly in the context of selling drugs. This is not surprising given that drug dealers are visible, accessible, carry valuable and desired drugs and money, and are unlikely to report any victimization to the police (Jacobs, 2000). One respondent explained: “Well, it was when I was selling. I leaned over the car to do the sale; the guy popped it out of my hand then stuck a gun to my head.” Another said, “A man said he had \$50 bucks, and I went into the house behind him and he like kind of held me up with a knife up to my neck.” A third reiterated this kind of experience while selling: “guy said he wants to spend 100 dollars...and when I put it in his hand...[h]e brandished a weapon and said ‘aight thanks.’” Another explained, “I was out late [12:30am or 1:00 am] trying to sell still. And, uhh, they called me on my phone

of \$400 dollars by the police during his booking for an arrest. While both are explicit in self-identification as a victim of crime, the lack of information and atypical nature of the second case warrants their exclusion.

and played it off like they had money and stuff. And when I got over there, they upped the guns on me, you know what I'm saying? Took what I had – my money and everything.” However, robbery in the course of a drug deal is not exclusively a threat to drug dealers.

For others, robberies occurred while trying to buy drugs or immediately after the sale. One respondent described his drive into a public housing project cruising for drugs “[a]nd uh went and pulled over to some brothers, I didn't even really know 'em, but...they stand out there like they're selling. Before I had the chance to even, you know, look, I had a gun up under my jaw, and, “Give me the money! Give me the money before I shoot ya” and shit like that. Okay, here ya go.” Another noted that a drug dealer “was trying to give me somethin' that wasn't nothin' and he ended up robbing me for what I had.” A third indicated how avoiding violence in the drug deal does not leave you impervious to other street violence: “I got robbed...he hit me with the bottom of the gun and took everything...I just bought some and stuff, and was gonna go put it up, and they came out the gangway on me...when I looked over he hit me with the gun...I guess he was just watchin', watchin' from a distance.”

For others, robbery victimization occurred in different contexts, but was routinely motivated by the perpetrator's need for drugs. One respondent said about his robbery victimization, “one morning this man, I guess he wanted some drugs or whatever, and ain't have no money. And uhm, he grabbed my partna, and put the gun up to 'em. And dude had the gun on me.” Another similarly explained:

People...used to watch me and see when I used to go to work in the morning cause you know how that drug, how the little crack fiends, how they be out during the day or in the morning when you go get up and go to work, and they watch you when you come in and come back in to work. And they be trying to study my bank payday, and every Friday they used to try to rob me or something like that cause they know I had been cashed my check, and I had my money on me, so they see me come from work, trying to take me on the elevator, or ride up the elevator with me, and try to rob me.

Another common personal victimization for respondents was being shot or shot at. Three situational contexts were prevalent in respondents' reports of being shot or shot at: gang activity, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and drug dealing. Consistent with the gang context, one respondent said his assailant was “targeting anybody he just thought was a gangbanger.” Another similarly noted how his being shot in the head during a shooting on the highway was “over some gang stuff.” As for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, a third explained how he “was indulgin' in alcohol at a party” and he “just happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time” when he was shot. Another was 14 years old when he was shot in the head over what he thought were his clothes and his gold teeth fronts, but “come to find out that was, I was out there at the wrong time. They said it was meant for somebody else.” Another respondent experienced something similar when he was “standing out smoking a blunt with my best friends” and a 17 year old “shot me in the back of the head and in my um, right arm with a 12 gauge shotgun...It was supposedly a mistaken identity.”

One other context in which respondents were shot and shot at was while dealing drugs. One respondent noted an interaction with a buyer which turned into a violent encounter, “he going in his pocket, like looking off, like counting his money, he come up with a gun, you know, I just break on him though, so he shot all the shots at me, ain’t none hit me though.” Another also indicated he had been shot a number of times while dealing, but that he “was kinda slinging and gang banging” at the time. He noted that being in a gang and dealing drugs was: “So, that’s like double the threat. ‘Cause you got guys want, want to do stuff to you, just because of where you stay at. And then you got guy want to do something to you cause of what you doing. You know. [laugh] That’s like a double threat.” Perhaps the most indicative of the drug dealer’s risk of personal victimization is one respondent rationalizing why he had been shot over ten times: “Guys, you know, [think] ‘he a target, he’s selling dope, he got that money, he got that drugs, we seen him, we need that dope, we need that money, so let’s rob him.’ That’s what they did. They robbed me and shot me up.”

The final form of personal victimization reported by several subjects was being assaulted or getting into fights. One respondent related getting his throat slit at the club to just being “in the field. Just by bein’ in that lifestyle.” While another highlighted how alcohol could act as an accelerant for minor disrespects or disagreements “somebody more drunker than you step on your shoe, bump you a couple a times, you tell ‘em to chill out, and then they wanna get ignorant, you know, and that’s when a lot of the violence happens, you know, when words turn into actions.” The accelerant effect of alcohol was also echoed by another respondent when he said, “I’d get drunk and I’d walk out and get in trouble and I just I don’t know, I just had this rage inside of me, just sitting around thinking about...fightin’.” His increasingly aggressive demeanor and outlook while inebriated led him to get “beat real bad with a table leg, screws in it about three inches, one time...It put a bunch of holes in my back, my lungs was bleeding, I was laid up for a month and half...I couldn’t hardly breath. Spittin’ up blood.”

Also common in the sample were reports of property crime victimization. Several respondents indicated having been “ripped off” or sold bad or fake drugs. One indicated that he had been “ganked” out of \$700 when he attempted to buy some dope but instead was sold “a bag of bakin’ soda and wax.” Another indicated that “getting bad stuff” was nothing more than a “complication” when buying and selling drugs. A third also stated he had “been ripped off a few times” by being sold fake drugs. In addition, a few respondents also indicated that they had been given counterfeit money during drug sales as well as being a victim of theft. One noted how “people comin’ short and people owin’ you, you messin up yo’ money” could also amount to theft. More specifically, he regaled how a “dude pulled a disappearin’ act on me. I dropped stones in his hand and he asked where it went. And I’m like “no, gimme my money, man,” and he took off runnin’.” Another respondent noted his experiences with being paid for drugs with counterfeit money: “people give you bad money...well when you’re outside on the corner at night time, you know somebody hand you some money, you just put it in your pocket.” It is likely that property victimization was underreported in the sample given the significant amount of serious violent crime experienced by the respondents.

Serious vicarious victimization was also an area of which several respondents brought up when discussing prior victimizations. One respondent spoke generally about how “a lot of my friends was getting killed, lot of close people was gettin’ killed due to the fact of drug deals and you

know street gang violence and stuff like that.” When asked if he was a victim of crime, another replied “Yes...Um, the mother of my child, while she was pregnant with my son, she got shot two different cases. First time, she got shot in her face, second time, she got shot four times on different parts of her body...[b]ecause of the area that I was dealing drugs in. Like gang violence.” Typifying the effect of vicarious victimization, another recounted the fatal shooting death of his childhood best friend:

I lost a loved one. Soon as I got outta jail. I wasn’t using or nothing like that. I was sitting in the car with him in front of his mother house. Talking to him, my best friend I grew up with. I had just gotta jail. And, and just so happen another car had drove down the street...and the car came up and came real close to his car and just shot him in the face. And he died in my arms. I’m in the car with him. I’m scared myself cause I’ve been shot in my head. But, just seeing him, my best friend die...I be having big nightmares for over and this stuff like that. Cause he die right in my arms. His eyes was open, I just his eyes. I push his [mimes closing the eyes of victim with his hand] kinda close his eyes down and stuff like...And then, and then when they shot him, shot him in the face. I thought they fitting to come and get out the car and come around there and get me and something like that. But, thank the Lord though, they didn’t though. They just got him and did the shooting him and they left. I’m like, man.

What is clear is that while only several respondents’ explicitly discussed serious vicarious victimizations, these incidents may be as emotionally powerful to respondents as personal victimizations. These indirect forms of victimization can also increase individuals’ perceptions of individual risk (Ferraro, 1995), as powerfully evidenced by the above stories.

It is important to note that respondents varied in the number and extent of victimizations they discussed in their interviews. As seen in Table 3-3, the majority (16 or 53%) of the respondents only discussed one victimization experience during their interviews. Many, however, discussed two or more victimizations (14 or 47%). Those individuals who addressed multiple victimizations accounted for 68% of all victimizations in the sample. This pattern is consistent with prior literature indicating that those victimized once are at a heightened risk for repeated victimization (Ellingworth, Farrell, & Pease, 1995; Farrell & Pease, 1993; Pease, 1998).

Table 3-3. Victimization Frequency by Individual (N = 30)

One Victimization	16 (53%)
Two Victimizations	10 (33%)
Three Victimizations	2 (7%)
Four Victimizations	2 (7%)

EFFECTS OF VICTIMIZATION

Given the significant extent of victimization in the sample, Table 3-4 shows the effects that victimization had on respondents. Many of the subjects report some level of self-identified behavioral change in response to victimization (13 or 43%). A number reported not having any change in behavior following victimization, but reported changes in risk management techniques (5 or 17%). A number of respondents identified no behavior change following victimization and indicated no changes in risk management (9 or 30%). Finally, for several respondents, the affect is unknown given that questions addressing this were either misinterpreted by the subject or were not covered by the interviewers.⁴

Table 3-4. Effects of Victimization (N = 30)

Identified behavioral change	13 (43%)
Conflicted/unrecognized behavioral change	5 (17%)
No behavioral change	9 (30%)
Unknown	3 (10%)

Identified Behavioral Change

For many of the respondents, victimization was associated with self-identified behavioral changes. This is consistent with the assertion that victimizations can provide a unique opportunity for offenders to reevaluate and change their behavior (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Jacques & Wright, 2008; Sutherland, 1937). For a number of respondents, victimization experiences lead to greater use of risk minimization strategies or techniques. These techniques allowed individuals to still remain involved in a substance using or selling lifestyle, but individuals perceived their actions to mitigate some of the risks associated with the lifestyle. Several men talked about moving away from buying or selling in the open-air street market. One explained the risk of using an unknown street dealer, “you meet this person standing around on the street, and stuff like that then, they’re lookin’ for trouble. So, you don’t mess with them type of people.” To mitigate this risk, he would use a “person that’s alright, then that’s who you mess with.” Similarly another noted “after that [robbery victimization] I just go by phone call...it changed my pattern of drug use to where... I’d go the distance...I’d get a bike and ride, two, three miles, four miles just to meet” a trusted dealer.

Those who had been selling drugs also sought to deal with a small number of well-known clients or to get out of the open-air drug market entirely. One respondent explained how “[s]ome people would, um, sell to people they don’t know, you know what I’m saying, which when you do that you gotta take the risk of them being an undercover cop or somebody settin’ you up. I knew my

⁴ Those individuals who reported some level of victimization yet the affect of victimization could not be determined were: one who misinterpreted whether the question about whether victimization changed patterns of drug use or behavior, and two who were never asked the question about whether victimization changed patterns of drug use or behavior. Closer inspection of these respondents indicated that their victimization experiences were not substantively related to substance use or offending behavior.

customers.” In the interest of working with a small group of clients and getting off the street, one respondent “used to just, like, stay up in the crib, in the house” to sell.⁵ Another also explained: “Instead of me just like standing out on the block and selling where anybody could have access to me, I had my phone number--my phone number was given out to certain people, and I would just wait on them to call. Then, I would just go and holla at them.”

Other respondents indicated a variety of other risk minimization techniques for buying and selling drugs. One would switch dealers if he felt he was being sold bad or stretched drugs, he said: “because he start putting salt in the game, now, so I’ll switch up.” Another noted “I would have a lot of people around me” when buying or selling. A third started carrying a handgun “just in case someone trying, you know, harm me. I just be ready for it.” To forestall the risk of being given counterfeit money, one respondent would “always check and make sure what I am putting in my pocket.” He would also used “people I would give something to, to let me know what’s going on in the street, who’s talking about me, who set me up” to help him identify personal or property victimization risks before they could occur.

Several other respondents identified that victimization had lead to a greater use of risk avoidance techniques. A number of robbery victims utilized avoidance techniques after their experiences. One respondent would avoid buying in “neighborhoods where if I didn’t know the people or if they didn’t know me.” Another also noted his robbery victimization “made me know that I can’t let nobody get too close up on me.” A third “stopped goin’ to get it myself” as his victimization illustrated to him how “messin’ with drugs...[was] really, really dangerous, you could lose your life.” Similarly, another explained how he temporarily stopped buying after being sold bad drugs: “I wouldn’t wanna get them for awhile cos I was tired of getting ripped off. Or didn’t know who to trust.” These findings are similar to those of Biernacki (1986) showing substance users acting to minimize risk of property victimization at the hands of others.

For others, victimization facilitated avoiding conflicts or avoiding others entirely. One respondent’s approach to conflicts was one that stressed “just walk[ing] away from it man. Be a better man and walk away from it. You know, if they say something, just walk away from it.” Another vowed to not “get into anybody’s’ business” to avoid conflicts and victimization. And a third attempted to avoid being victimized while buying and dealing by “pretty much I wouldn’t be seen, heard.”

A smaller number of subjects indicated that their victimization experiences inspired change in thinking as well as long-lasting change in behavior. One noted, “it changed my pattern of thinking, like of how I was supposed to move. What choices I make.” Likewise, another said, “after I was shot, it was like is it worth it?...I started rethinking it because a lot of my friends was

⁵ While this respondent would switch to selling from his house to minimize some of the risks of dealing on the streets, he perceived street dealing as somewhat safer. He explained that:

It’s harder [selling from his residence] because you can’t see nothing coming. You don’t know when nobody going to kick your door in. You don’t know who’s just standing off side, just waiting for you to come. That, that, that why I think it’s safer to me. See when you be out there you can see, you can see every car pass you. You know, you can see all the little gang waves and cuts.

While this is conflicting with his assertions on the safety of street dealing, he would use this risk minimization technique as an alternative to carrying a heavy firearm while dealing.

getting killed lot of close people was gettin' killed due to the fact of drug deals and you know street gang violence." The above respondent's vicarious victimization of the mother of his child also weighed heavily on his desire for change. He described, "it inspired me to wanna change, want something different." This desire to change was based on how "I could've lost my son, I could've lost my family. I changed...I see how affecting my family that they had been going these different altercations."

For two individuals the experience of personal victimization was enough serve as a negative turning point and bring about desistance. One respondent's robbery victimization not only had him start using his friends to procure drugs for him, but he completely "stopped tryin' to, uh, sell stuff." Having been shot and severely injured while hanging out outside and smoking a blunt with his friends, another noted that his victimization changed "my behavior, my thinking, everything." This yielded an absolute change in behavior: "It really, I really just, that's when I really just stopped smoking in general...[s]o I just stopped hanging out and everything." These instances of severe victimization being a factor in desistance from drug dealing are consistent with recent research on the topic (Jacques & Wright, 2008).

Conflicted/Unrecognized Behavioral Change

For several other respondents, victimization had a conflicted or unrecognized effect on behavior. Given the all male composition of the sample, this lack of acknowledgement or attribution of victimization to changes in behavior is not uncommon. Hindelang and colleagues (1978) found that males were less likely to admit that crime or victimization motivated changes in their behavior. This is particularly salient given the geographic and demographic composition of the sample which may contribute to an overarching culture which encourages "badness" (Anderson, 1999). Often victimization was rationalized as being an unfortunate but unavoidable part of a lifestyle of drug using or selling. One respondent spoke about why his robbery victimization did not change his patterns: "Don't nothing stop drug users, I mean your house is just on fire so it's another reason to get high. Don't nothing stop drug users." He indicated that this was because victimization was just "part of the game... That ain't unusual, that's no reason [to stop]." Another reiterated this when he noted, "it was like this part o' the lifestyle." Several others simply reported that victimization didn't change their behaviors.

Even though these respondents reported that victimization had no effect on their behavior, they indicated changes in risk management over time. One respondent, who reported being robbed three times, indicated that "[a]t some point I probably won't wear jewelry" as a means of keeping a low profile and being a less attractive target. He also indicated not travelling alone and having defensive weapons nearby: "if I am riding I will have someone with me who got something on him...gotta have a gun or two on them." Another said that he would "only mess with certain people" when he was dealing to avoid street risks. A third noted how he avoided conflicts since he would "practically walk away...I'd leave," similar to another who would "holler at you later" when approached with conflict. These narratives provide conflicting information with regard to how people react and how they interpret their reactions to victimization. However, neither the risk management techniques nor the lack of attribution of change to victimization are atypical for urban males (Anderson, 1999; Cobbina, Miller, & Brunson, 2008; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Hindelang et al., 1978).

Most indicative of this conflicted change was the respondent who had experienced two robberies. He noted that after the first robbery he “was practically out for revenge if I found ‘em.” After suffering a second and more severe robbery (he was shot by the assailant during the commission of the crime), he noted that “[i]t practically changed my pattern of selling...I stopped selling. I stopped completely.” Having twice experienced the violence inherent in drug dealing, he said “[i]t changed my...it made me cherish life a lot.” This also led him to avoid conflicts by “I practically walk away...I’d leave.” His interview suggests that while victimization may be initially tolerated and facilitate a desire for retaliation (Jacobs, 2000; Jacobs & Wright, 2006), it can eventually bring recognized behavioral changes (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Jacques & Wright, 2008; Sutherland, 1937).

No Behavioral Change

Several respondents asserted that their victimization did not influence their behavior. Like those who experienced conflicted change in behavior, when asked how to avoid conflicts one respondent plainly replied, “Couldn’t avoid ‘em.” Another reiterated, “[Y]ou can’t change the game. You gotta accept what comes to you.” Similarly, a third indicated that violence and victimization “wasn’t that, that big of a deal, I was used to stuff like that...I’m used to violence.” Another explained how those within the lifestyle couldn’t avoid conflict and that small problems could be magnified into large and potentially violent altercations:

[Y]ou not really solvin’ no conflict you just makin’ ‘em worse. ‘Cause either the drug makin’ you, have an attitude. Or you, or either you sellin’ drugs and you think you livin’ yo’ life, think you livin’ thug life, you might have the big head. You think can’t nobody tell you nothin.’ So every problem you get, overexaggeratin’ it ya nah mean. It might be a little bitty problem, ya know wha I’m sayin.’ And you just turned into to even somethin bigger.

This respondent typifies how hyper-masculine presentations of self can facilitate, rather than reduce, risk for retaliatory violence (Anderson, 1999). This acceptance of a certain element of personal or property crime risk was also evidenced in those who were implementing risk minimization techniques prior to their victimization. Another respondent would attempt to avoid conflicts by “I don’t let nobody mess wit’ me, or make me just snap out, I know how to control my anger so, I’d just keep doin’ what I was doin.’” Two others applied certain risk minimization techniques when they were buying and selling. One explained how he wouldn’t “deal with nobody you don’t already know” to minimize the risk of being sold fake drugs. The other noted two tenets of the drug dealing code: “It’s codes you live by like never sell where you sleep at. Never use your own.” A third would “just don’t give credit out” because “nobody wants to pay for yesterday’s high.” This technique allowed him to “keep a lot of confusion down” and avoid conflicts. What is clear from those who indicate no behavior change subsequent victimization is that the omnipresent danger of being involved in a drug using or offending lifestyle is recognized by individuals and techniques are used to manage risks throughout their time in the lifestyle.

DISCUSSION

The current study extends previous research on the effects of victimization on individual behavior and risk management through using a sample of formerly at-risk substance users and street offenders. Respondents in the current sample were exposed to a significant amount of personal, property, and vicarious victimization. This level of exposure to victimization is consistent with prior research on substance using and street offending populations and is likely facilitated by individuals having desirable drugs and money on their person (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Jacobs, 2000; Peterson et al., 2004; Shover, 1996). Victimization risk was further enhanced by the fact that a substance using and street offending lifestyle often places individuals in greater proximity motivated offenders and less proximity to formal guardians (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Hindelang et al., 1978).

The effect of victimization on individual behavior was directly addressed in the interviews with respondents. Several indicated no behavioral or risk management changes following victimization experiences. Those which reported no change commonly indicated that victimization was implicitly tied to a substance using and street offending lifestyle. With victimization being “part of the game,” prolonged exposure to violence may have desensitized these respondents to direct or indirect victimization. This is particularly salient given an overarching urban culture which encourages outward perceptions of toughness and nerve (Anderson, 1999).

While several respondents reported that victimization had no effect on behavioral change, the present study also finds that two-thirds of victims experienced some subsequent change in behaviors and risk management. Most respondents identified and attributed victimization to these behavioral changes while others did not. Those which identified victimization as affecting behavioral change indicated several specific changes in risk management techniques. Most followed the assertion made by Hindelang and colleagues (1978), where instead of making substantial change in *what* they did, individuals modified *how* they did it. A common change for several individuals was to temporarily or permanently escape the risks of buying and selling in an open-air street drug market by switching to a hidden or networked-based drug market. Several sought out better known and trusted dealers or buyers as well as turned to defensive weapon carrying to facilitate safety during drug transactions. Several others noted greater or absolute change in behavior, witness through a complete change in thinking or desistance from drug selling. In particular, several respondents reported that their victimization experience facilitated cessation from drug selling. This affirms the belief that victimization can serve as a turning point in the process of desistance (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Jacques & Wright, 2008; Sutherland, 1937).

Still others, which experienced some subsequent change in behaviors and risk management, did not attribute victimization as the facilitator or contributor to change. For these individuals, victimization risk was also commonly tied to the risk of the substance using and street offending lifestyle. While many noted that conflicts and violence were unavoidable due to the need to show nerve and toughness (Anderson, 1999), these individuals still indicated changes in risk management techniques following their victimization. These techniques relied heavily on having groups of individuals around them to reduce risk as well as attempting to keep a low profile and

staying out of other's business (Cobbina et al., 2008). This conflicted finding may be partially explained by an overarching culture which celebrates machismo or "badness" (Anderson, 1999) and by the fact that males are less likely to report or make dramatic changes in routines and risk management strategies due to crime (Cobbina et al., 2008; Hindelang et al., 1978).

These findings are generally supportive of the assertion that victimization can have a substantive affect on individual behavior. Many individuals subtly or absolutely modified their behaviors and risk management techniques following victimization experiences. Based on similar findings with gang affiliated youth, Huff (2002) and Decker and Lauritsen (2002) asserted that the ideal window of opportunity for targeted programming is directly following a violent event or victimization. Based on those remarks and the findings in this and other research, substance use treatment and offending desistance programming can be targeted to this at-risk group by working closely with local hospitals and community health centers.

The present study's findings are limited since they are retrospective in nature and use a sample of adult men who are no longer active in substance use or offending behaviors. Research with an active substance using and offending population may yield different effects of victimization on individual behavior. Future research should continue to explore the short and long-term behavioral effects of victimization across populations. However, in the present study strong evidence was found to support the belief that individual and vicarious victimization has substantive effects on individual behavior and risk management.

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