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Published version

HEAP, Vicky (2008). Criminal Victimization of the Elderly: Have rates of crime against the elderly changed relative to overall crime rates? *Internet Journal of Criminology*.

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CRIMINAL VICTIMISATION OF THE ELDERLY: Have rates of crime against the elderly changed relative to overall crime rates?

By Vicky Heap¹

ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing profile and reliance upon victimisation surveys to map crime trends, some of society's demographic receive little attention. The elderly are one such group. They have received little attention due to the traditional notion that they suffer low levels of victimisation. This study challenges these long-held beliefs and focuses upon the criminal victimisation of the elderly, in order to assess if crime rates against them have changed relative to the overall crime rate. A secondary analysis was conducted on the 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2001 British Crime Surveys in order to chart both the proportion and rate of criminal victimisation experienced by the elderly.

The results that were produced report a number of differences between the overall crime rate and that experienced by the elderly. The victimisation rates show that the elderly have sustained a relatively steady amount of victimisation in comparison to the whole population, which fluctuates dramatically over the sweeps analysed. The peak in elderly crime rate also occurred two years later than that of the whole population. Furthermore, the elderly were found to suffer a disproportionate amount of property crime, compared to motor vehicle crime which is the largest rate for the whole population. The proportion of crime suffered by the elderly is also increasing slightly, which does not follow the trend set by younger victims.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the criminal victimisation of the elderly has changed over time. This provides further impetus to continue research in this area.

¹ Submitted in partial fulfilment of the MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice at Loughborough University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It's November 2003 and I'm on my way to an away hockey game in Derbyshire. I receive a telephone call from my Mum telling me that my Grandad, who lives on his own and was 83 at the time, had been burgled. He was asleep in the armchair, they broke in, took his money and left. Thankfully he remained asleep throughout. The emotions of anger and shock that were provoked by that piece of news on that November morning have stayed with me and have been a constant driving force throughout this project. If any part of this study can raise awareness of the criminal victimisation of the elderly then something has been achieved. This one's for you Grandad!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Graham Farrell for the advice, guidance and time he has given me. I really appreciate the help he has offered me over the past few months. I realise I have been fortunate to have had a supervisor with such vast knowledge and experience, particularly of the British Crime Survey.

I would also like to thank my parents for their continued love and encouragement throughout my years at Loughborough. I wouldn't be where I am today without them and for that I will always be grateful. You can retire now Mum!

Special thanks go to Sam for reading numerous drafts of this project, especially as she has been extremely busy starting her NQT year. I couldn't have done this without her support and ability to make me realise that things are never as bad as they seem!

INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of victimology as a discipline in the 1950's, the study of victims has become increasingly influential within the sphere of criminology (Anttila, 1974). A number of different theoretical strands have studied particular types of victims in depth (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). However, one thing that these competing ideologies have in common is their reliance upon victim survey data. This is because victim surveys provide "a fuller picture of people at risk, the reasons why, and the nature of both reported and unreported offences" (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). The main victim survey that is conducted in England and Wales is the British Crime Survey (BCS). It has been conducted on a bi-annual basis from 1981 to 2000, and changed to an annual survey in 2001. It averages a sample size of 12,000 people (until the introduction of the annual survey when it increased) and is claimed to be the best measure of crime rates available in this country (Chivite-Matthews and Maggs, 2002). The BCS charts the development of a number of different areas within the criminal justice system, with reports being published on the following sectors: the police (Skogan, 1990), neighbourhood watch (Dowds and Mayhew, 2000) and victim support (Maguire and Kynch, 2000).

Despite the wide range of topics selected for coverage within the BCS, one group has been marginalised by this type of research. The elderly are a vulnerable demographic of society (Midwinter, 1990). Little victimological research has focused upon their experiences of crime, especially within England and Wales. Gerontological research within victimology has traditionally concentrated on their fear of crime (Pain, 1997) and the unquantifiable occurrence of elder abuse (Manthorpe et al., 2004). Studies about the criminal victimisation of the elderly are rare, therefore their experiences of crime have gone largely unnoticed.

The aim of this research is to investigate the extent of criminal victimisation experienced by the elderly. This will be achieved by using seven sweeps of the BCS to determine what proportion of crime the elderly suffer and the rates of crime they have faced over time. Once these values have been established, they will be compared to the same figures for the whole population. This will answer the key research question of this study: 'have rates of crime against the elderly changed relative to overall crime rates?' It is therefore hoped that this study will contribute to the small amount of existing literature on this topic. Furthermore, as it is based upon BCS figures, there is the potential for crime prevention strategies to be based upon the findings.

Chapter one of this study introduces the concept of victimology and chronicles its development from birth to the 'victimology of action'. It then outlines various victimological theories associated with the victimology of action, before discussing the impact this made upon the victim movement. The importance of the victim survey within victimology is examined in relation to the use of social surveys in general. Gerontological study is then approached, outlining the few studies that have been conducted within victimology.

Chapter two moves on to provide an in-depth analysis of the BCS, due to its prominent position within this study. This is achieved through examining the history and purpose of the survey. The research design of the BCS is then fully outlined with specific detail focused upon the questionnaire, weighting and coding. Recent developments of the survey

are then documented to provide an up to date account of any modification. Finally, the general availability of the BCS is summarised.

The third chapter examines the methodology used in the production of this research. Research methods are discussed with specific reference to the quantitative strategy. This is followed by an explanation of how the BCS is used in this study, through the concept of secondary analysis. The data collection procedures for phase one of the research, relating to the measurement of the proportion of crime suffered, is fully outlined. Phase two of the research is then explained, which relates to the crime rate figures.

Chapter four provides written and visual interpretations of the results produced by this study. Phase one is outlined first, followed by a summary of key findings for that phase. The same format is applied to the results generated from phase two of the data analysis.

The fifth chapter discusses the key findings outlined in chapter four. Phase one is discussed through comparing the proportion of criminal victimisation experienced between different age bands and speculating reasons as to why the results occurred. A similar pattern is used to discuss the phase two results, comparing the overall rates with those specific to the elderly.

Chapter six concludes this study. The results produced by this study are concluded before a number of final thoughts are detailed. Finally, implications for further research are outlined.

CHAPTER 1 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1.1 Introduction

“Criminology has many meanings but at its widest and most commonly accepted it is taken to be the scientific understanding of crime and criminals” (Carrabine et al., 2004:3). In the context and history of criminological study one group of people have been widely ignored, namely the victims of crime. “Scholars have begun to see the victim not necessarily as a passive object, as the neuter or innocent point of impact of crime into society, but as eventually playing an active role or possibly contributing in different measure to his own victimisation” (Drapkin and Viano, 1973:xi).

1.2 The Birth of ‘Victimology’

Victim-centred study is a relatively new strand of research, originating in the 1940’s. Hans von Hentig produced the first work examining the relationship between criminals and victims in 1941. He “proposed a dynamic, interactionist approach which challenged the conception of the victim as a passive actor” (Zedner, 1997:578). The impact of this work provoked other authors to comment on this area and the term ‘victimology’ was created (Wertham, 1949). Victimology is “the scientific study of crime victims, (that) focuses on the physical, emotional, and financial harm people suffer at the hands of criminals” (Karmen, 1996:2). The origins of victimology were centred on the criminal act that was imparted upon the victim and why such acts took place (Fattah, 1979). This was focused towards the development of victim typologies, which aimed to identify common characteristics of crime victims. Von Hentig (1948) produced the first typology, an elaborate list of categories that highlights social, psychological and biological factors, which characterise born and society-made victims (Schafer, 1968). There are thirteen wide-ranging victim classifications, that are: ‘the young’, ‘the female’, ‘the old’, ‘the mentally defective’, ‘the immigrants’, ‘the minorities’, ‘the dull normals’, ‘the depressed’, ‘the acquisitive’, ‘the wanton’, ‘the lonesome and heartbroken’, ‘the tormentor’ and ‘the blocked, exempted and fighting’. Whilst these categories represent what von Hentig believed to be victim characteristics, there are some assumptions made that weaken this typology. For example, not all people that can be placed into a category are going to be victims of crime, despite a speculatively increased risk. Furthermore, in certain instances it does not account for life being a dynamic process (Schafer, 1968), for example a person may not be continually ‘lonesome and heartbroken’ and to what extent does this characteristic have to be present or evident in order to merit being included in this category? Therefore some categories are slightly unclear. Evidently there are some limitations with constructing typologies, however, another prominent victimologist developed a similar typology focused upon the more controversial area of victim guilt. Mendelsohn (1956) created a ‘Correlation of Culpability’ that defined victims depending on how guilty they were of contributing to the crime they suffered. Victims could be classified into six groups: ‘the completely innocent victim’ e.g. children, ‘the victim with minor guilt’ e.g. provocative women, ‘the victim as guilty as the offender’ e.g. those guilty of euthanasia, ‘the victim more guilty than the offender’ e.g. those who induce crime, ‘the most guilty victim’ e.g. a person attempting murder being killed in self-defence and ‘the simulating victim’ e.g. misleading claims of victimisation. This typology bears parallels with von Hentig’s, and therefore can be criticised in a similar way regarding it’s general categories that may not be applicable to all victims. Furthermore, neither of the aforementioned typologies was empirically tested. This therefore inhibits their application

to a practical setting and whether or not the typologies are significant in their function. Nevertheless these typologies were the foundation for further research.

The introduction of the notion that a victim could be guilty of inducing their own victimisation was a topic seized upon by other researchers. Wolfgang (1958) introduced the concept of 'victim precipitation', which examined the victim's position in "initiating, inducing, provoking, triggering or facilitating the crime" (Fattah, 1979:200). The aim of this work was to understand the behaviour of both victim and offender in order to explain why crime occurs. Unlike previous victimologists, Wolfgang (1958) conducted an empirical study of homicide. Through the examination of police records he found that 26% of known homicides were victim-initiated, thus establishing an empirical link between the typologies of von Hentig and Mendelsohn and the existence of victim precipitation. This study brought victimology out of the realms of the abstract and served as an important prelude to further research. Wolfgang's original research was most notably applied by Amir (1971) who studied 'Patterns of Forcible Rape'. After investigating rapes recorded by the police, he claimed that 19% were victim-precipitated. This controversial claim was widely criticised, both methodologically and ideologically (Zedner, 1997). Fattah (1979) also condemned the work of Amir as the definition of victim-precipitation had been used too broadly. Nevertheless he was keen to emphasise that victimology as a discipline had progressed into a recognised area of study. Furthermore, such emotion provoking work within the field of victimology elevated its position into the sphere of public interest.

1.3 Victimology of Action

The growth of victim knowledge provided by victimology produced invaluable information (Anttila, 1974). This was not confined to social research, as the focus of victimology changed into a more dynamic process. What conventionally was a study of the act, changed to a 'victimology of action' during the 1970's. The victimology of action aimed to take "affirmative action for the victims of crime" (Fattah, 1979:198). This approach was characterised by a number of social developments brought about by an increased interest in victims of crime (Fattah, 1979). For example, this period in time witnessed a right-hand shift in public opinion and distinguished the criminal justice system becoming increasingly aware of its responsibility towards victims. This was enhanced by the influence of the feminist movement, who began to highlight the position of women victims to crimes such as domestic violence and rape. Such attention to these victims resulted in the establishment of women's centres and refuges. These social aspects were further complimented by the research field that witnessed a decline in the orthodox study of criminology, in favour of more applied research in the area of criminal justice (Fattah, 1979). This period of time also saw the emergence of the 'victim movement', which will be discussed later in this chapter.

It is apparent that a shift in opinion regarding victims of crime took place, but how did this manifest into a victimology of *action*? Essentially, action on behalf of the victim occurred through victimologists researching and acting on particular aspects of victimology they felt important. As there are many different types of victims, as noted by the early work of von Hentig, different 'strands' of victimology emerged. The different strands of victimology form three broad categories: Positivist, Radical and Critical. Each of these strands propose different ways of treating victims, which all have a bearing on the development of victimology in the academic sense as well as shaping public opinion and policy development.

Positivist victimology distinguishes non-random patterns of victimisation, which focuses on inter-personal crimes and identifies victims who play a part in their own victimisation (Miers, 1989). This strand of victimology has also been termed 'Conservative' (Karmen, 1996) and 'Conventional' (Walklate, 1989) victimology. A strong feature of this approach relates to its scientific link to academia, and the focus upon regularities, patterns and the development of typologies (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). The aim is to identify "themes of consensus, equilibrium and incremental change, which are embedded in the production of typologies since they fail to capture (or challenge) the process of the social reproduction of (criminal) victimisation" (Mawby and Walklate, 1994:12). This projects a distinctly functionalist perspective that suggests crime is an essential function of society (Durkheim, 1895). Although this accounts for the emergence of victims in a logical and accountable manner, it fails to address a number of key issues. Primarily, the positivist strand assumes a functionalist position that can be criticised under the grounds of its static view of society. While some uncomplicated societies share consensus and common values, others, especially industrialised societies, are more disjointed and lack continuity (Carrabine et al., 2004). Social change is consequently ignored. Therefore the positivist stance is based upon a mantra that may not be applicable to England and Wales due to society's complex nature. Further criticism of positivist ideals has been sounded by feminist victimologists, who argue that patriarchal structures have been ignored, thus provoking victim blaming regarding domestic violence. Nevertheless, positivism has had an unquestionable input into the development of victimology as it contributed to the creation of victimisation prevention (Karmen, 1996). Positivism can also be linked to the Conservative party's view of social responsibility and restorative justice in the 1970's, where the aim was to satisfy victims by punishing the offender (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). Hence positivism's key *action* has been to influence political thinking, thus providing an elevated position of the victim within society.

Unsatisfied with the perspective offered by the positivist strand, radical victimologists pursued a different agenda. Radical victimology was established in the 1960's and 70's and attempted to address a different kind of victim to positivists. According to Quinney (1972) radical victimologists are concerned with victims of police violence, war, correctional institutions, state violence and general oppression. The aim is to question capitalist society's definition of what constitutes an offender, as the powerful appear beyond the rule of law, hence oppressing and ignoring victims of crime (Rock, 1994). Therefore, the power of the state and the law to oppress is acknowledged (Friedrichs, 1983). This provoked the radical strand's concern for human rights. Elias (1985) claims that human rights provide victims with boundaries, which objectively measure victimisation against a universal code. The aim of creating such boundaries is to relieve human suffering. Radical concerns also criticise the structure of the criminal justice system and highlight the predicament of 'hidden' victims (Reiman, 1979). For example, victims of police violence are considered to be treated differently to those who are victims of non-police violence, due to the circumstances in which the victimisation took place and in relation to who committed the victimisation. This approach to victimology differs vastly from the concerns of positivists as the emphasis here is on those who are oppressed by the state in comparison to the victims of inter-personal crime. Nevertheless both strands assume universal standards in their perspectives. There is limited social research highlighting the radical perspective (Friedrichs, 1983), however the action created by this type of victimology has been predominantly rhetorical (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). For example, Amnesty International and Liberty, human rights organisations, have taken the ideals promoted by radical victimology and applied pressure to organisations they feel are

infringing universal rights and creating victims. This use of the principles of victimology is comparable with 'Radical Left Realism' which has modified original radical victimology ideas and created a more theoretically and empirically driven discipline (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). Radical left realism relates more to the victim movement, victim support and embraces the feminist perspective. This reformed strand of radicalism also embraced the use of survey data (Rock, 1994), which will be discussed in detail later. The proponents of this reformed standpoint strive for an 'engaged' approach to victims, opposed to a concentration on administrative issues which fail to address victims' needs in a practical sense. For example, women's needs were championed by this standpoint and were realised through the creation of women's refuges and rape crisis centres (Rock, 1994). Connections with victim support and a more structured research agenda has propelled radical victimology and victims in general, into the public spectrum. Despite increasing the profile of victimology, the radical perspective is not without fault. "Radical victimology problematises the state, but has historically failed to consider features of the process of victimisation other than class and has also traditionally failed to consider the way in which not all law is directed towards specific capitalist objectives" (Friedrichs, 1983:111). This explains the theoretical downfalls of radicalism, and further comment on this is added by Sumner (1990) who claims that the radical perspective views social class and the law in a too simplistic manner. Nevertheless, the *action* provided by this strand has been to increase the awareness of victims, especially victims of the state, and has added impetus to the victim movement.

The final strand of victimology to examine is the critical stand-point. This approach has been influenced by social psychology and symbolic interactionism. According to Walklate (1990) the critical perspective understands the need for developing an empirical, rational and objective science. In doing so there must be an awareness of "a number of processes which contribute to the construction of everyday reality" (Mawby and Walklate, 1994:18-19). This relates to conscious and unconscious decisions that underpin everyday life, thus encompassing predictable and unforeseen circumstances. Such developments are important as this perspective has been used within the criminal justice system to examine the victim, and indicate the importance of victim support. There are also links to victim compensation schemes and an increase in women-specific provision (Jefferson and Shapland, 1990). Overall:

"critical victimology constitutes an attempt to examine the wider social context in which some versions of victimology have become more dominant than others and also to understand how those versions of victimology are interwoven with questions of policy response and service delivery to the victims of crime" (Mawby and Walklate 1994:21).

Therefore the critical strand has attempted to bring together different aspects of competing approaches in order to achieve a comprehensive approach to the study of victims. This demonstrates the distinction between the other strands mentioned, as they appear to follow rigid ideals that excluded some groups of victims. Therefore the *action* produced by the critical perspective relates to the way victimology has been applied in an all encompassing manner to benefit as many victims as possible. This may appear to be pursuing a different agenda in comparison to the other strands mentioned. However, the crucial factor is that all three strands, through varying degrees of research and rhetorical impact, have highlighted the concept and existence of victims within the criminal justice system. The development

of theoretical positions has provided a basis for victim research that was not apparent before their formation and in addition has encouraged the victim movement to emerge.

1.4 The Victim Movement

The victim movement is not only a product of victimology but also a setting for continued study. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, established in 1964, was a pre-cursor of the victim movement. This is a state run compensation scheme for victims of crime. Emotional support for victims did not emerge until, what is now known as Victim Support, transpired as a local initiative in 1974. Since then Victim Support has grown and now receives upwards of £10 million funding from the Home Office alone (Zedner, 1997). However, such funding was not always available and due to this Victim Support remained largely a voluntary and marginal outlet throughout the 1970's and 80's (Shapland, Willmore and Duff, 1985). The main service of Victim Support is to provide assistance for crime victims at a local level, although they have become more nationally united when lobbying for political change (Zedner, 1997). The victim movement has also produced other forms of assistance for victims, more notably women's refuges, which have already been linked with the radical strand of victimology.

Beaurocratically speaking, the government has also introduced schemes to aid victims. The Victim's Charter (1990) was created as a guideline for the way victims should be treated by the criminal justice system. Such measures were reinforced by other policies including the 'Statement on the Treatment of Victims and Witnesses' (1993) and the 'Court Users Guide' (1994). The Victim's Charter was re-issued in 1996 detailing twenty-seven service standards that victims should expect to be upheld. This denotes a definite shift towards centralised victim provision. However, "the Victim's Charter has no legal status: its provisions encourage rather than bind and as such it is questionable whether it can be said to 'furnish' rights in any meaningful sense" (Zedner, 1997:598). The victim movement has progressed vastly over a relatively short period of time, however such advances have not orchestrated victims rights fundamentally. Therefore the victim movement still needs more research and practical application in order for victims to achieve a legal standing. But for victim policy to advance, a greater depth of knowledge about victims is required. How is such detailed information about victims collected?

1.5 Criminal Statistics and Victimization Surveys

"By collecting, computing, and analysing statistics, victimologists can discover what kinds of people (are victimised) most" (Karmen, 1996:47-48). At the most basic level "statistics are supposed to reduce complex data to their meaningful minimum (Pease, 1999:xi). This is crucial to victimology, criminology and criminal justice in general because the "rational discussion of crime needs to be informed by accurate statistics on the present state of the criminal justice system and how it is evolving over time" (Copas, 1995:275). It also allows informed decision making when formulating policies and initiatives that aim to combat crime.

A variety of statistics are available. Prior to the emergence of victimology, official statistics were the only measure of crime. Such statistics are available in a wide range of forms, including: 'criminal statistics' (crimes that are recorded by the police), 'prison statistics', 'Criminal Injuries Compensation Board statistics', 'Customs and Excise statistics' and 'Home Office statistical bulletins'. Official statistics are not collected for the purpose of research, however they collect precise information and have been used to justify "many different sociological and psychological theories, and (have been) the testing

ground for many more” (Sparks et al., 1977:1). Theories and assumptions based upon official statistics may suffer from a number of flaws. For example, “statistics gathered by the police offer a poor guide to the extent of crime” (Hough and Mayhew, 1985:1). This is due to a number of factors; not all crime is reported by victims to the police as some victims are not concerned enough to call them and once it has been recorded it may not be classified as a crime. Furthermore, some victims may not realise that they are a victim in cases such as minor theft. Combine these factors and the result is an underestimation of overall crime, which is known as the ‘dark figure’ of unreported and unquantified crime. In addition, “the dominance of offender-specific information in official statistics reflects not only their administrative source and function, but also encourages the correctional approach within traditional criminology and penal policy” (Bottomley, 1979:31). This ignores the victim perspective and serves to reinforce the offender-centred system, which is what victimology has been fighting against.

There is however, a way of quantifying crime without relying upon official statistics. “Victim survey research, by asking a representative sample of the population whether they have suffered from various types of crime in a recent period, provides a new type of evidence on the volume of crime” (Glaser, 1970:31). The interest in victimology was fuelled by the introduction of the victim survey (Zedner, 1997). Researchers found that while collecting victim information about crime, they could also collect data about the public’s opinion regarding crime and punishment (Matthews, 1994). This provides a variation to official statistics, where opinions are not sought. A full and detailed account of the development of national criminal victimisation surveys, with specific reference to the design and implementation of the British Crime Survey (BCS) can be found in chapter two. In brief, “the BCS measures the amount of crime in England and Wales by asking people about crimes they have experienced in the past year” (Carrabine et al., 2004:15). Surveys were conducted on a bi-annual basis until 2001, when annual data collection commenced. Hence, “regularly repeated victim survey research should indicate how much fluctuation occurs in the actual crime rate, independently of changes in the adequacy of police data collection” (Glaser, 1970:33). This demonstrates how victim survey data is not seen as a replacement of official statistics, but rather as a complimenting feature allowing a more holistic picture of crime to be generated. Victimology fostered the development of victim surveys. According to Biderman (1973) they are advantageous because: the sole focus is upon the victim and such information can generate direct victim risks. Socio-demographic considerations can be examined as can precautionary behaviour. Furthermore, unreported crime can be checked. Overall, victim surveys provide the tool to measure the theoretical perspectives outlined by early victimologists such as von Hentig. However, victim surveys are not without fault. A number of questions have been raised regarding their reliability, mainly due to the methodological limitation of social surveys. For example, achieving a large representative sample, so rare crimes can be denoted. Although some surveys do not achieve a totally representative sample as prisoners, mental hospitals and care homes are not surveyed. Criticisms are also levelled at the survey respondents, as incidents can only be quantified if they are reported. Although some incidents cannot be reported because they are not included in the survey, in relation to the BCS this covers such offences as shoplifting and company fraud (Zedner, 1997). Other victim-less crimes cannot be measured because a victim is not identifiable, this is true of drugs offences and prostitution (Sparks et al., 1977). Therefore only certain crimes can be analysed if they are reported. Further evaluation of victim surveys has demonstrated further problems with respondents. Many surveys ask respondents to recall incidents over a period of time. This can be affected by memory decay, where events are forgotten, and

telescoping, where the date on which an incident occurred is shifted either backwards or forwards in time (Coleman and Moynihan, 1996). A respondent's integrity is also brought into question as some reports may be unsubstantiated due to a low incentive to provide accurate information (Biderman, 1973). In addition, some incidents may be concealed leading to the under-reporting of certain offences such as domestic violence. Conversely, incidents may be fabricated in order for what the respondent sees as a crime problem, to be addressed (Coleman and Moynihan, 1996). The competency of the interviewer may also impact upon the reliability of the survey as a different interviewer may elicit different responses from different respondents (Maung, 1995). Nevertheless, when regulated, victimisation surveys do present a comprehensive measure of criminal victimisation that cannot be achieved by official statistics.

Theoretically speaking, victimologists have generally embraced the victim survey. Using statistics as a basis of study links heavily with the positivist view. Critical victimologists also reap the benefits from victim surveys because more information is available about the service victims receive from criminal justice agencies. However, some Radical Left Realists oppose the use of national victim surveys, making their application within victimology a contested terrain. They criticise surveys for lacking in detail and their failure to address that crime is geographically and socially focused (Jones, McLean and Young, 1986). Although this strand is driven by the study of oppressed sub-groups, as opposed to patterns and trends in data, sub-group information is available from national surveys as Zedner states "these new macro studies aim to quantify the true volume of victimisation and to identify the social, economic and demographic characteristics of the victim population (1997:580). Therefore victimologists, through the application of victim surveys have the means for assessing sub groups.

1.6 Sub-Group Study: The Experiences of the Elderly

As mentioned earlier, von Hentig produced his typology suggesting thirteen characteristics associated with victims of crime. One vulnerable category was 'the old' who were said to be physically and sometimes mentally weaker than the young (von Hentig, 1948). Couple this with evidence that the UK has an aging population, where the proportion of people over the age of 65 has increased (Office for National Statistics, 2005), and there appears to be an increasing number of elderly people who are potentially at risk of becoming victims of crime. In 2003 there were 9.5 million people living in the UK aged over 65 (Age Concern Website). Factor in other variables such as; 90% of old people live alone or with one other and often have the worst housing provision and a lack of money (Midwinter, 1990), and the elderly appear to be a salient target for crime. This image is reinforced by the media as "images of the battered, bruised pensioner, a victim of mindless assault . . . have become strong and overt in our society" (Midwinter, 1990:11). More recently, countless stories have emerged of older people falling victim to telephone and overseas lottery scams where they have been defrauded of vast amounts of money (BBC News Website, The Guardian Newspaper Website).

At this point it is important to put into context the amount of gerontological study that has taken place within the field of victimology. In comparison to criminology, victimology is a narrow field. Within victimology there are a number of common themes that are subject to large amount of study, for example, child abuse (Cawson et al., 2000), domestic violence (Walby and Allen, 2004) and women's studies (Walby, 1999). These topics reflect the dominance of the radical strand of victimology that is mentioned above. However, elderly study is marginalised within victimology. The main focus at present centres upon elder

abuse. Elder abuse constitutes "...a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons' (Department of Health, 2000:9). This could be in the form of physical, mental, financial or discriminatory abuse (Manthorpe et al., 2004). Fear of crime and the elderly is also a common area of study. Research has found that elderly people have high levels of fear in comparison to other age groups (Clarke, 1984, Pain, 1997, Chadee and Ditton, 2003). Both of these topic areas are important areas of study, but they do little to inform about the levels of crime experienced by older people, additionally this work does not indicate whether or not older people are as vulnerable to crime as von Hentig (1948) suggests, as no trends or patterns of victimisation can be established.

Studies that specifically examine the levels of elderly victimisation are quite rare. More studies of this type have taken place in America than in the UK. Although general comparisons can be made, overseas studies cannot capture victimisation levels within the UK. The majority of UK studies use the BCS as a data collection tool, however the BCS findings reports do not report age specific crime levels and patterns (Kershaw et al., 2001). Reports published after the first BCS sweep indicate that older people suffer from less crime than other age groups (Mawby, 1982). This trend has been reinforced over time as "it has been shown in numerous victimisation surveys that the elderly are less at risk of most crimes than others are (Clarke et al., 1985:1). The most comprehensive examination of older peoples' experiences of crime charts their levels of victimisation from 1991-1999. Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) claim that those aged over 60 shared a relatively constant proportion of crime between those years, of around 12-14%. Furthermore older people, in this instance those people over 60, suffered a lower risk of personal and property crime than other age groups. Individual offences were also examined and older people were shown to have the lowest chance of being a victim of burglary, vehicle related theft and vandalism. Despite being the most in-depth study of its kind to date, there are still a number of unanswered questions. For example, have certain crime types become more prevalent among the elderly over time? Are there any indications of certain crimes reducing? These questions are unobtainable from the data they report. Furthermore, the age bands used in this study may impair the findings. Only three age bands have been used, 16-29, 30-59 and 60+, and they are quite wide-ranging. This may shield some important findings because the ages are too general. It should also be noted that measuring victimisation levels was only a small part of this study as fear of crime, security precautions and confidence in the police and criminal justice system have been measured. This may account for some aspects of victimisation being overlooked. What defines old age has been contested, with age campaigners calling for age to be defined by status for example, where a person is in their life course, opposed to chronologically (Age Concern Website, Midwinter, 1990). Most research does however, measure age chronologically, with definitions of what constitutes old age varying between 60 (Chivite-Matthews and Maggs, 2002) and 65 (Klaus, 2000).

As mentioned earlier, a greater proportion of victimology studies have been conducted in America. A study by Klaus (2000) examines crime against those over 65 between 1992 and 1997, using the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). This also demonstrates that the elderly are at a lower risk of violence and property crimes than younger people. However, compared to other age groups the elderly are seen to be disproportionately affected by property crime. In America, the elderly suffer a slightly lower proportion of crime in comparison to the UK, with the share of crime they experience being around 7%.

One report has been published which claims that “Fact: older people aged 60 and over are more likely to be a victim of burglary crime than younger people” (Alford, 2003:27). This does not correlate with any of the other data produced on this subject, but it is difficult to dismiss its claim completely without further research into the experiences of older people. Although this statement was generated through a relatively small-scale study of 400 people over 60 living in Hertfordshire, which is a relatively crime-free area (Alford, 2003). Despite these findings the general consensus is that older people are less likely to be victims of crime than other age groups, however there is little research in this area assessing whether the crime experienced by older people remains static or has changed over time.

This review has discussed the emergence of victimology from the broader discipline of criminology and charted the major developments through to the marginalisation of gerontological study within victimology. It has suggested that the elderly suffer a lower risk of criminal victimisation in comparison to the rest of the population, however there is little specific research of this type. The aim of this research project is to contribute to this field of study and investigate to what extent criminal victimisation of the elderly has changed over time.

CHAPTER 2 – THE BRITISH CRIME SURVEY

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is a large social survey conducted in England and Wales on behalf of the Home Office. It is “primarily intended to obtain a picture of criminal victimisation as an alternative to statistics of offences recorded by the police” (Southgate and Ekblom, 1984:2). It therefore serves as an independent measure of crime, thus encompassing and highlighting “the existence of a massive ‘dark figure’ of crime which is not recorded in the country’s official statistics” (BCS User Guide, 1992:1). The aim of this chapter is to acknowledge the development and purpose of the BCS in order to rationalise its prominent position within this study. The history, purpose, research design, questionnaire, weighting, coding, recent progressions and availability will be scrutinised in order to obtain a thorough understanding of this survey.

2.1 History

In the years preceding the BCS, the General Household Survey posed sporadic questions about the topic of residential burglary from 1972 (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). This type of survey did not provide a realistic understanding of crime trends, as only a small number of offences were included. The introduction of the BCS was to discover victim’s experiences of crime and to map crime trends (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). This is achieved through asking people what crime they have experienced in the past year. Furthermore, attitudes towards crime and the criminal justice system are also investigated to achieve a holistic picture of crime in England and Wales. The first BCS was conducted in 1982, with further surveys in 1984, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000. This demonstrates a bi-annual cycle of data collection. From 2001, the cycle of data collection was modified to an annual sweep, which will be discussed further in the ‘recent developments’ section. The introduction of the BCS mirrored similar developments in the United States where the National Crime Victimization Survey was introduced in 1972 (Carrabine et al., 2004). This demonstrates the elevated concern about victims in general and the overall thirst for criminal statistics, hence putting victimological theory into practice.

2.2 Purpose

The BCS charts three measures of crime (Budd and Mattinson, 2000):

- 1) Incident rates – the number of crimes per 10,000 adults or households
- 2) Prevalence rates – “constitutes the number of people against whom crime is committed, however often” (Pease, 1999:xv), per 10,000 adults or households.
- 3) Crime count – the total number of crimes, through the application of incident rates to population figures.

Alongside these measures, further information is also collected about demographic and lifestyle variables (Budd and Mattinson, 2000) so as to judge if certain sectors of society are statistically more at risk of becoming a victim of crime. Furthermore, information surrounding the impact of crime is also collected. This includes topics such as the emotional, physical and financial effects of crime. Hence providing the survey with a holistic representation of criminal victimisation.

2.3 Research Design

“The BCS sample is designed to give ... both a representative cross-section of private households in England and Wales, and of individuals aged 16 and over living in them” (Budd and Mattinson, 2000:6). To achieve this, the ‘Small Users Postcode Address File’ (PAF) has been used as a sampling frame since 1992. The PAF provides comprehensive postal address listings, as every postal address in the country is included. The addresses that are to be included in the BCS are selected through the use of a multi-stage random probability design. This is where each unit of the population sampled has a known chance of being selected and results in a representative sample, which produces a microcosm of the population (Bryman, 2004). To achieve this, the postcode sectors are divided into 10 regions. Within each region, three similar sized groups are formed by the sectors based upon population density, hence forming 30 ‘strata’. Within each stratum houses are classified in increasing order depending upon the householder’s socio-economic group. “By sampling systematically down the ordered list, using a random starting point, postcode sectors are selected with a probability proportional to size” (Budd and Mattinson, 2000:6). The PAF “is available in computerised form and can be linked to Census data thereby permitting considerable control to be exercised over the sampling process” (Bolling et al., 2002:4). This demonstrates the strengths of PAF sampling. Prior to 1992, the electoral register was used as a sampling frame. “Parliamentary constituencies were sampled, then wards and polling districts were selected, addresses were sampled at the polling district level, and individual respondents were chosen for questioning at those addresses” (Skogan, 1990:52). This was the best available method at the time, however on reflection, a substantial number of potential victims may not have been sampled due to their omission from the register, for example ethnic minorities and young people (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). The development of sampling procedures illustrates how the BCS has progressed alongside technology to provide the most thorough representation of the population of England and Wales.

In some surveys booster samples have been sought due to a lack of representation. The most common type of booster sample has been an ‘ethnic boost’. This is because it has been “recognised that the experience of crime among ethnic minority communities could differ in some ways from that of the rest of the population” (BCS User Guide Part 1, 1992:10). These booster samples have occurred in 1988, 1992, 1994 and 1996 (Budd and Mattinson, 2000). A young person booster sample occurred in 1992, questioning youths aged 12-15 about their experiences of crime at school.

Overall the BCS has a large sample size, varying from around 10,000 up to 16,000 (Budd and Mattinson, 2000). The average sample size is 12,666. The response rate is also high, with an average response of 78.6%. This demonstrates a high level of representativeness of the sample, thus increases the validity and usefulness of the survey overall.

Once a household has been selected to participate in the BCS using the PAF method, an interviewer is sent to the household, where one person over the age of 16 is randomly selected for interview. The interviewers are employed by a survey company, which is commissioned by the Home Office. The National Centre for Social Research has conducted the majority of surveys. To assist the interview process, the BCS has been a Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing Survey (CAPI) since 1994. Answers given by the respondents are entered directly onto a computer as a response to particular questions (Budd and Mattinson, 2000).

2.4 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used for the BCS has maintained the same basic structure since the first sweep. There are a number of components that make up the survey. Firstly all respondents are asked the main questionnaire. This comprises of twenty-five 'screener questions'. "The screener questions have remained the same over all the sweeps so that results are comparable and a trend can be drawn" (Budd and Mattinson, 2000:12). These questions are designed to establish whether the respondent or the household has been a victim of crime since the 1st January of the previous year. These questions are posed in everyday language the respondent can understand, as opposed to the correct legal terms used to describe criminal incidents throughout the criminal justice system (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). This makes the questions accessible, and allows the respondents to answer in their own words. For example:

Screener Question 1 (MotTheft)

"During the last thirteen-fourteen months since the first of January (in the previous year), have you or anyone else now in your household had your/their car, van, motorcycle, or other motor vehicle stolen or driven away without permission?" (Bolling et al., 2002:395).

Screener Question 22 (DelibVio)

"And again, (apart from anything you have already mentioned), since the first of January (in the previous year) has anyone, including people you know well, deliberately hit you with their fists or with a weapon of any sort or kicked you or used force or violence in any other way?" (Bolling et al., 2002:404).

If the screener question uncovers a criminal incident, the respondent is then asked how many times they suffered the same incident since January 1st. If they have experienced a similar incident, more than once the incidents are considered as 'series' incidents. The main questionnaire also includes questions to gauge attitudes to local crime, the fear of crime, plus socio-demographic and lifestyle data. If a criminal incident is discovered by the screener questions, the respondent is then progressed onto a 'Victim Form'.

The victim forms collect in-depth information about every criminal incident experienced by the respondents. Each crime experienced is recorded on a victim form, with a maximum of six forms per respondent. Earlier sweeps have had a different maximum number of victim forms, with four being the limit in 1982, 1984 and 1988 and five in 1992 and 1994. Each victim form includes topics relating to the incident, the reporting of the incident to the police, the police's response to the crime and to what degree this was satisfactory, victim intimidation and victim support. For those respondents who have experienced more than six crimes, the less common offences are given priority on the forms. The six victim forms are further sub-divided in order to keep the interview at a manageable length (Budd and Mattinson, 2000). Three are considered 'long' forms, with the other three being 'short' forms. The long forms are used to collect extensive details of the crime whereas the short forms only collect enough information to 'code' the offence. Coding will be discussed in full later in this chapter.

After the main form and victim form are complete, the sample is split randomly in half, determined by whether the respondents address serial number ends with an odd or even number. One half of the sample is then assigned follow up questionnaire A, the other half questionnaire B. These questionnaires are used to probe attitudes towards the police, the

respondent's personal security strategies, attitudes towards sentencing and the criminal justice system, attitudes towards juvenile offenders, witnessing crime and the respondent's awareness of victim support. Furthermore all 16-59 year olds participating in the survey are also required to carry out a self-completion questionnaire. This part of the survey raises questions surrounding the issues of the knowledge of illicit drug use, the experience of stalking and sexual victimisation. The collection of this type of information is what broadens the scope of the BCS. Much of this information is utilised by the Home Office to produce reports about given topic areas, for example attitudes towards the police, and used to inform policy decisions.

2.5 Weighting

Once the data has been collected, it is 'weighted' before being analysed. Weighting is used to "correct for different sampling rates and to take account of 'series' of similar incidents" (Budd and Mattinson, 2000:7). Weighting therefore compensates for disparate selection processes where some households had varying probabilities of being included in the sample. In addition, different sectors of society may have different response rates to the questionnaire, this may be due to age, gender or geographical location. Weighting the data ensures none of this bias is transferred to the results. There are four weighting components that are used in the BCS, including:

- 1) The 'Inner City Weight' – to correct any over-representation of inner city respondents.
- 2) The 'Dwelling Unit Weight' – to redress cases where more than one household was at an address on the PAF.
- 3) The 'Individual Weight' – to rectify the under-representation of individual living in a household with more than one adult.
- 4) The 'Series Weight' – equalling the number of incidents in the series.

Different weights or a combination of weight components must be used to suit the analysis being conducted. The main weights used in analysis are:

Weight a (for individual analysis e.g. personal crime) =
Individual component x inner-city component x dwelling unit component

Weight b (for household analysis e.g. burglary) =
Inner-city component x dwelling unit component

Weight i (for incident analysis e.g. a particular offence of interest) =
Weight a (or weight b) x series weight (Budd and Mattinson, 2000).

Overall, weighting is crucially important when aiming to provide truly representative data from a large and diverse sample.

2.6 Coding

Once all parts of the survey have been completed, the interviewer 'codes' the responses. "In quantitative research, codes act as tags that are placed on data about people or other units of analysis" (Bryman, 2004:537). Once the responses have been coded they are entered into various statistical computer packages ready for analysis to take place. An example of coding that bears great relevance to this study is the 'offence' variable. Every criminal incident reported on a victim form receives an offence code. A full list of offence

codes can be found in Appendix A. The code is determined by the respondent's answers to the questions on the victim form and the interviewer's interpretation of the event in accordance with the Home Office guidelines for coding. From 1996, such coding was completed by a computer, but then re-checked by researchers. This is due to the complex nature of the data and the potential for contradicting accounts given by the respondent. "The reliability and consistency of offence coding is key to producing trends in crime and therefore the Home Office puts a lot of effort into checking the data" (Budd and Mattinson, 2000:15). Once the offences have been coded, there are two distinct categories of offence. These are termed valid and invalid offences. Invalid codes contain offences where there was inadequate evidence to deem that a criminal offence has occurred. It is recommended that only valid offence codes should be used when analysing the data.

2.7 Recent Developments

The most important recent change made to the BCS has been the introduction of the annual survey. The aim of this was to conduct continuous sampling, generating a larger sample size of around 37,000 respondents (Bolling et al., 2002). Apart from generating more data, the most important aspect of this sampling change relates to the methodology. As mentioned earlier, all the BCS sweeps have kept a constant research design over time. However, from 2001, the reference period used by respondents to recall any incidents of criminal victimisation has been modified to the previous 12 months from the date of the interview. This is in contrast to previous sweeps that have used the last calendar year up until the interview date as a reference period. This has been the only major change to the BCS since its introduction in 1982.

2.8 Availability

The Home Office publishes the BCS in its entirety and follow up reports are often published in relation to specific areas of the research. In addition to the official reports it is possible for the public to access the raw data produced by the BCS through the UK Data Archive, located at the University of Essex. This process has been made easier by the introduction of the website, www.data-archive.ac.uk, where data sets can be downloaded after registering to the site. Data can be downloaded in a number of formats, all including Technical Reports and User Guides for the year selected in pdf format.

Overall the BCS provides a comprehensive snapshot of the extent of criminal victimisation in England and Wales and has done so since its introduction in 1982. The research design has remained constant throughout apart from the recent developments introducing the annual survey. Overall, these factors make the survey a robust tool for assessing crime as an alternative to official criminal statistics.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to obtain victimisation details about the elderly in order to assess their comparative levels of victimisation both over time and in relation to other age groups. The procedure and rationale for the study will be explained in this chapter.

3.2 Research Methods

There are a number of different methods that can be used to gather victimisation information. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are appropriate tools to measure the impact of victimisation and each of these contrasting strategies has specific theoretical positions. The research method adopted in this study is a quantitative analysis of the data collected through the British Crime Survey (BCS). The data collection procedure of this survey is explained in the previous chapter. The prominence of BCS data in this study will be justified in a later section of this chapter.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods uphold different epistemological and ontological considerations in addition to different perspectives about the relationship between theory and research (Bryman, 2004). In brief, the quantitative strategy proposes a deductive approach to theory and research. For example, theory guides research. Epistemologically speaking, the quantitative strategy is strongly influenced by the natural science model, especially positivism. Positivism includes the principles of deductivism, mentioned above, phenomenism: where phenomena must be observable and inductivism: where knowledge is gained through the accumulation of facts. Ontological considerations are mainly concerned with an objectivist view of the social world, where social phenomena occur independently from social actors (Bryman, 2004). The qualitative research strategy is essentially the opposite. It uses an inductive approach to theory and research. For example, theory is a product of research. It has an interpretivist epistemological stance, which opposes positivism and respects the differences between social actors and the objects of the natural sciences (Bryman, 2004). Finally, constructionism is the opposite of objectivism. This is where social phenomena are being created by social actors (Bryman, 2004).

As there is a significant difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods, either approach can be employed depending on what is being investigated. This area is strongly influenced by the type of research question adopted. Quantitative research methods can be used to answer questions requiring the collection of factual data. As this study has assessed to what extent victimisation is experienced by the elderly, a quantitative research strategy was appropriate. Employing a 'what' research question assists with discovering and describing characteristics and patterns relating to social phenomena (Blaikie, 2000). This allows the research to be directed by a certain question, linked strongly to the positivism paradigm (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001).

There are a number of advantages associated with using the quantitative strategy. Quantitative data can be measured. This is crucial because it allows for small changes to be distinguished, in this case in relation to victimisation. By measuring the same variables over time, as in this study, a high level of consistency can be maintained because differences can be observed over time (Bryman, 2004). Quantitative research also generates "hard and replicable data" (Oakley, 1999:156). This is an advantage because

studies can be replicated and compared against past results, therefore enhancing the research field and providing a solid example of validity. If, for example, a study could not be consistently replicated, doubts would be raised concerning the validity of the original results. Quantitative data also allows for a large sample to be analysed, which in turn allows quantitative researchers to make causal inferences about their findings (Bryman, 2004). In addition to this, the use of large sample sizes may permit findings to be generalised to the whole population, if the sample used is representative. Furthermore, quantitative research is “involved in uncovering large-scale social trends and connections between variables” (Bryman, 2004:287). This reinforces the selection of the quantitative research strategy in this research.

Many previous studies that observe victimisation trends use quantitative methods due to the precise and objective measurement concepts that can be applied. For example, Hough and Mayhew (1985) examined the second BCS in order to gain an overview of crime trends in England and Wales. This demonstrates the use of the whole of the quantitative based BCS to generate research findings and ideas. In contrast Clarke et al, (1985) and Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) have used the BCS in order to assess the experiences of older people. This demonstrates how a small segment of the BCS can be used successfully to generate very specific research. The established use of quantitative data in this field further reinforces why a quantitative study has been undertaken.

3.3 The British Crime Survey

Data from various sweeps of the BCS have been analysed in this study. The decision to include data from this source, instead of collecting new data, was based upon a number of factors. A new social survey could have been created for use in this study. However, this would have involved a number of limitations. For example, it takes a large amount of time to plan and develop a methodologically sound questionnaire. Once it has been planned it would require piloting and possibly amending before being administered to the chosen sample. This would entail more time, even before the questionnaire could be inputted into the computer and analysed. Furthermore, the sample size that could be generated by this form of research would be relatively small in comparison to any national survey that takes place. In addition, sampling issues may also occur in regard to it being representative of the whole population in terms of gender, age and class. The financial cost of conducting such a survey independently would also restrict the boundaries of this study. It was therefore decided to use data produced by the BCS because “regularly repeated victim survey research should indicate how much fluctuation occurs in the actual crime rate, independently of changes in the adequacy of police data collection” (Glaser, 1970:33). It therefore provided an independent, yet consistent measure of crime in England and Wales. Moreover, the BCS has been previously analysed by a large number of authors, hence reinforcing its credibility as a reliable and robust survey. By having chosen to analyse BCS data, this study entails what is termed ‘secondary analysis’. This constitutes “the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data for purposes that may not have been envisaged by those responsible for the data collection” (Bryman, 2004:543). There are a number of advantages for conducting secondary analysis, especially in relation to a small-scale research project. According to Dale et al. (1988), there are six advantages of secondary analysis that relate to this study. Firstly, conducting a secondary analysis saves on financial costs and time. In this instance, the BCS data sets were available at no cost through the UK Data Archive website, which has been discussed in the previous chapter. By using the data sets a vast amount of time was saved, as there was no questionnaire to develop or administer. Secondly, the BCS

provides high quality data as a result of data collection procedures that have been developed over a number of years by qualified research teams. National sampling has been used to achieve a high level of representativeness. Furthermore, checks are in place in order to monitor the significance of the results produced. Thirdly, using established data sets provides an opportunity for a longitudinal analysis, this allows trends to be monitored over time, which this study aims to achieve. Fourthly, conducting analysis on an established set of data allows the researcher to be selective in their approach. For example, sub-groups of the sample can be examined in order to provide specific data trends. The tracking of such sub-groups may not be possible without the large-scale sample achieved by national surveys such as the BCS. Penultimately, more time is available to analyse the data that is being used. Therefore there is the possibility of conducting more varied analyses, thus enhancing the amount of research that can be conducted. Finally, using established data may provide a new understanding to existing research, hence new theoretical positions may be developed. Overall, there is comprehensive evidence to suggest the advantages of using secondary analysis and the impact this type of research can have of the particular subject area.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

As previously mentioned, BCS data sets can be downloaded from the UK Data Archive Website. This process was carried out seven times, resulting in the data sets for the years: 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2001 being saved. Each data set had to be manipulated and analysed separately, with a similar procedure being used each time. Once a data set had been downloaded, the Victim Form and the Non Victim Form were converted into SPSS data files. Two separate types of analysis were conducted on each data set. The first analysis calculated the percentage of victimisation experienced by the elderly in relation to personal, property and motor vehicle crime. The second analysis produced crime incidence rates, again in relation to personal, property and motor vehicle crime, for the whole population and for those aged over 65.

Phase one analysis was conducted in order to examine what proportion of the elderly were victims of crime, to give a general picture of victimisation. The procedure for calculating the percentage of victimisation was relatively simple. A full account of the SPSS syntax used in phase one of the analysis can be found in Appendix B. In brief, this analysis began by manipulating the Victim Form. In order to assess personal, property and motor vehicle crime, a new variable had to be created that defined the existing offence codes into separate categories. This type of analysis has been done in the past therefore it was possible to use existing syntax to recode the groups (Farrell, 2005), which can be found in Appendix C. The offences were grouped together to include all relevant personal crimes in one category, all the property crimes in another and motor vehicle crime in a third. Other, non-relevant offences were excluded. A full list of offences in their corresponding categories can be viewed in Appendix D. Once these categories were established the Victim Form had to be 'matched' to the Non Victim Form in order for the age variable to be analysed alongside the crime categories. In order to make sure the data produced was as accurate and representative as possible, it was decided to include a 'weight'. The rationale for weighting data was discussed in the previous chapter. For the purpose of this analysis, weight i was used. Once this had taken place it was possible to run descriptive statistics in order to produce the data. This was achieved by running a cross-tabs of the age and crime type variables. Once the output data had been generated, it was copied and pasted into the computer programme Excel, where visual representations of the data were created. This process was repeated for each year of the BCS data held.

Phase two of the analysis was more complex, and designed to examine the incidence rates of crime per 10,000 people. This is the exact way in which the Home Office measures crime. The syntax for completing this analysis was available in the BCS Training Guide (Budd and Mattinson, 2000). However, the syntax featured in the Training Guide could only be used on the data produced after 1996, this was because the variable names were constant throughout these sweeps. For the years 1988, 1992 and 1994, variables were defined by alpha-numeric codes. This meant that the syntax from the Training Guide was incompatible. However, syntax designed specifically for the earlier sweeps was available as part of the files downloaded from the UK Data Archive. All syntax used in the phase two analysis can be found in Appendix E. Succinctly, the syntax conducts a number of transformations, firstly to produce the crime rates for the whole population. This began by using the Victim Form to create the three crime groups as in analysis one. Then the data was re-coded in order to retain only valid offence codes and exclude all crimes that were not committed in England and Wales. These controls were not enforced in the phase one analysis. Controls were then establishing in order to take account of series incidents. Once the offences were recoded, a matrix was created for all the variables being analysed. The matrix was then flattened by the unique identifier, in this instance 'row label', which created an 'aggregate' file. The Non Victim Form was then matched to the aggregate file, which formed a 'rates' file. Descriptive statistics were then produced for personal, property and motor vehicle crime and were appropriately weighted, personal by weight a and property and motor vehicle by weight b. The mean average for all years, produced through the statistics, was multiplied by 1000 to correct for the weighting issues outside the control of this study. The output was the copied into Excel where the data was converted into a visual form. To calculate the age defined rates a slightly different procedure was used once the 'rates' file was established. Means of the personal, property and motor vehicle crime were compared to the age means. This produced a new mean average that represented the rate. This figure was also subject to being multiplied by 1000. Once again, the data was transferred into Excel to format the results.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

The analyses performed on the BCS have produced the following results.

4.1 Phase One Results

The aim of conducting the phase one analysis was to produce an overall picture of victimisation, in order to establish the percentage of elderly victims of crime. As seven sweeps of the BCS were analysed, trends in victimisation could be identified. Table 4.1 shows the percentage of victimisation categorised by age groups. It is important to note that this details the *proportion* of crime, and is independent of the amount of crime committed in each year.

The results in table 4.1 identify that the 65+ age category consistently suffer the lowest percentage of crime in all crime types and in all years. Of the proportion of crime they suffer, property crime is constantly the greatest, motor vehicle the second greatest and personal crime always the lowest. To put these results into context, the 16-24 age group always suffered a greater proportion of personal crime, compared to property crime being the second highest proportion and motor vehicle crime the lowest. The 25-44 age group displayed a different pattern of crime distribution. Between 1987 and 2000 motor vehicle crime was consistently the highest proportion of crime they suffered, with property crime being the second and personal the third. However, between 1997 and 2000 there was a shift in distribution, as the proportion of personal crime became greater than the proportion of property crime. The 45-64 age group constantly experienced a higher proportion of motor vehicle crime compared to property crime, which was the second highest and personal crime, which was the smallest. This was true for all years apart from 1994 where property crime was the highest proportion of crime suffered.

Table 4.1 Percentage of crime experienced by age groups using BCS 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2001

Year	Age Group	Personal (%)	Property (%)	Motor Vehicle (%)	Total (%)
1987	16-24	42.80	22.99	18.14	27.32
	25-44	39.38	45.10	53.40	45.91
	45-64	13.99	21.08	22.76	19.51
	65+	3.83	10.82	5.69	7.25
1991	16-24	41.33	19.38	16.80	24.73
	25-44	42.20	50.52	54.16	49.36
	45-64	13.42	21.13	24.42	20.03
	65+	3.05	8.97	4.62	5.88
1993	16-24	36.35	18.93	16.32	23.79
	25-44	44.96	45.20	53.50	47.50
	45-64	15.43	26.47	25.64	22.68
	65+	3.26	9.39	4.54	6.03
1995	16-24	33.80	18.72	13.05	22.37
	25-44	44.46	44.53	53.36	46.99
	45-64	18.06	25.64	28.24	23.74
	65+	3.68	11.11	5.35	6.91
1997	16-24	30.56	19.80	13.56	21.75
	25-44	45.84	43.82	53.10	47.03
	45-64	19.97	25.20	27.63	24.09
	65+	3.62	11.18	5.70	7.13
1999	16-24	30.13	15.86	12.03	17.99
	25-44	44.51	43.85	50.31	46.18
	45-64	21.38	29.35	30.58	27.74
	65+	3.99	11.44	7.08	8.09
2000	16-24	30.59	18.67	12.62	21.39
	25-44	46.84	42.83	52.17	46.94
	45-64	18.76	26.68	28.94	24.38
	65+	3.81	11.81	6.27	7.29

Table 4.1 also reveals that for those aged 65+, the proportion of personal and motor vehicle crime peaked in 1999 and property crime peaked in 2000. Furthermore it shows that the highest proportion of total crime suffered by the 65+ age group was in 1999, with them suffering 8.09% of the total amount of crime.

4.2 Phase One Personal Crime Breakdown

The overall results demonstrate how personal crime was consistently the lowest crime type suffered by those aged 65+. Figure 4.1 charts the levels of personal crime by age group.

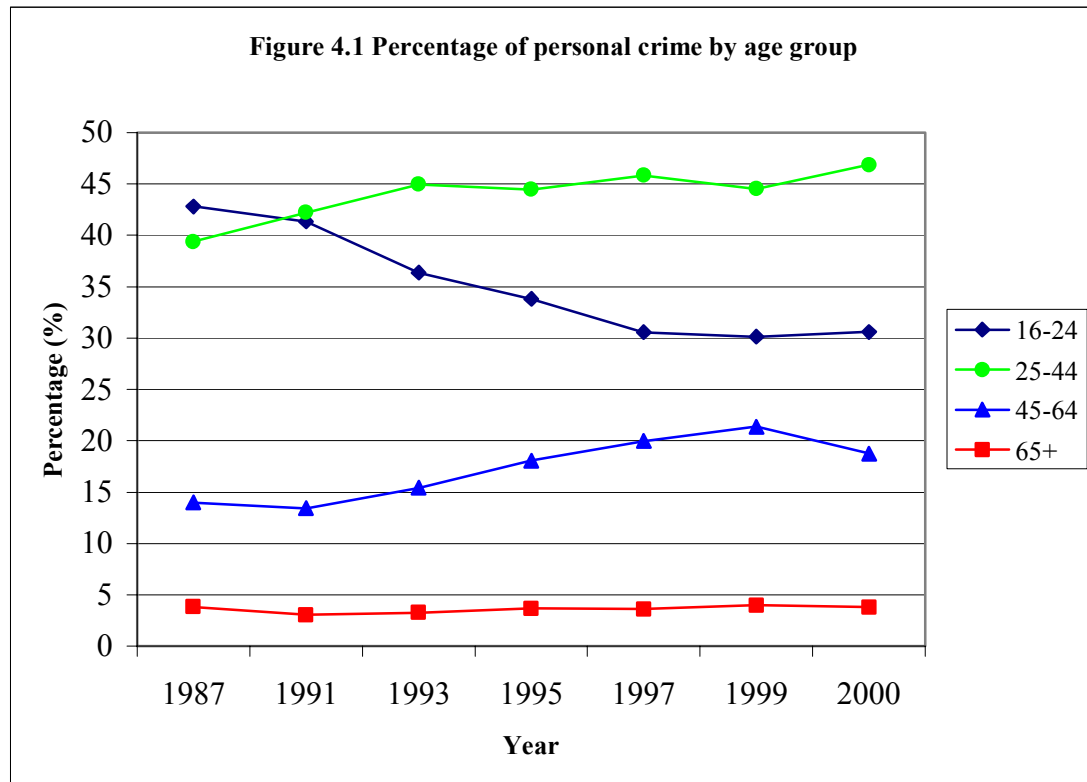


Figure 4.1 clearly demonstrates that both of the older age groups (45-64 and 65+) had an increased proportion of personal crime until it peaked in 1999 and reduced again in 2000. Simultaneously, the two younger age groups (16-24 and 25-44) had a decreased proportion of personal crime in 1999, which then increased again in 2000. The two older age groups have similar trends in personal crime victimisation as the two frequency polygons relating to each group show on figure 4.1. However, the 45-64 age group's trends are more sharply defined by more definite increases and decreases in victimisation. Overall, when considering the proportion of personal crime, the 65+ age group remains relatively stable. This is shown by the 0.94% difference between the lowest and highest proportion of personal crime experienced by the elderly in comparison to 7.96% difference in the 45-64 age group, 7.46% difference in the 25-44 age group and 12.67% difference in the 16-24 age group.

4.3 Phase One Property Crime Breakdown

As mentioned above, property crime was consistently the highest proportion of crime suffered by those aged 65+. Figure 4.2 maps the proportion of property crime suffered by all age groups.

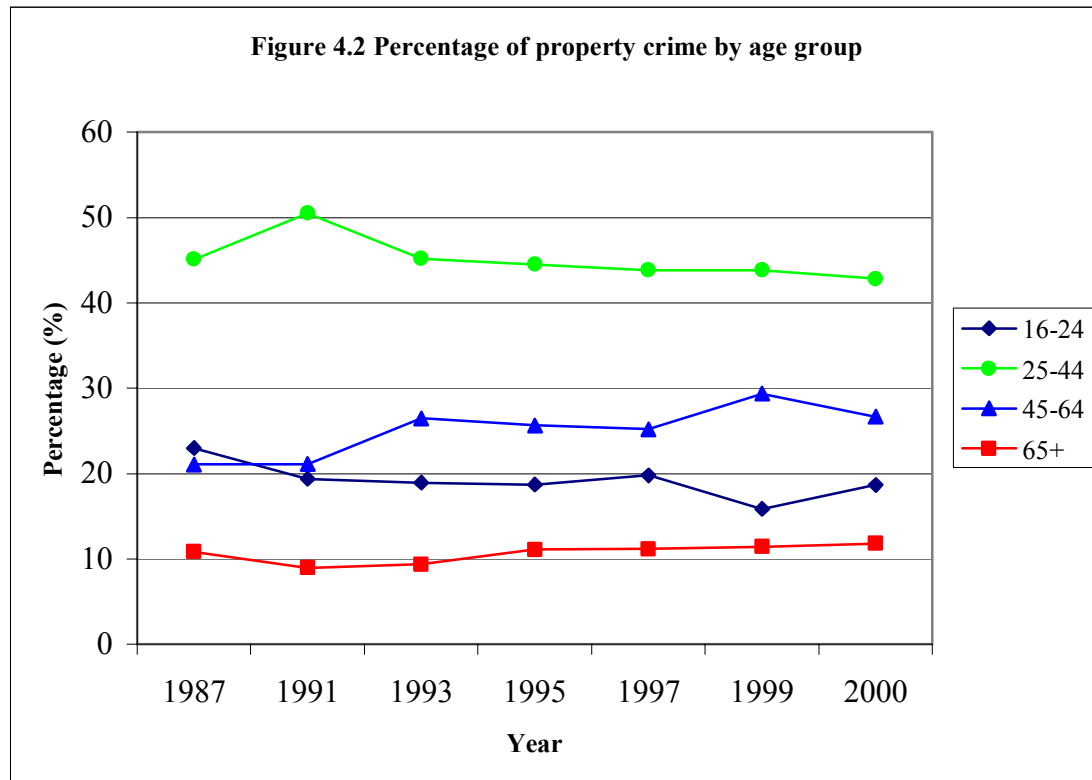
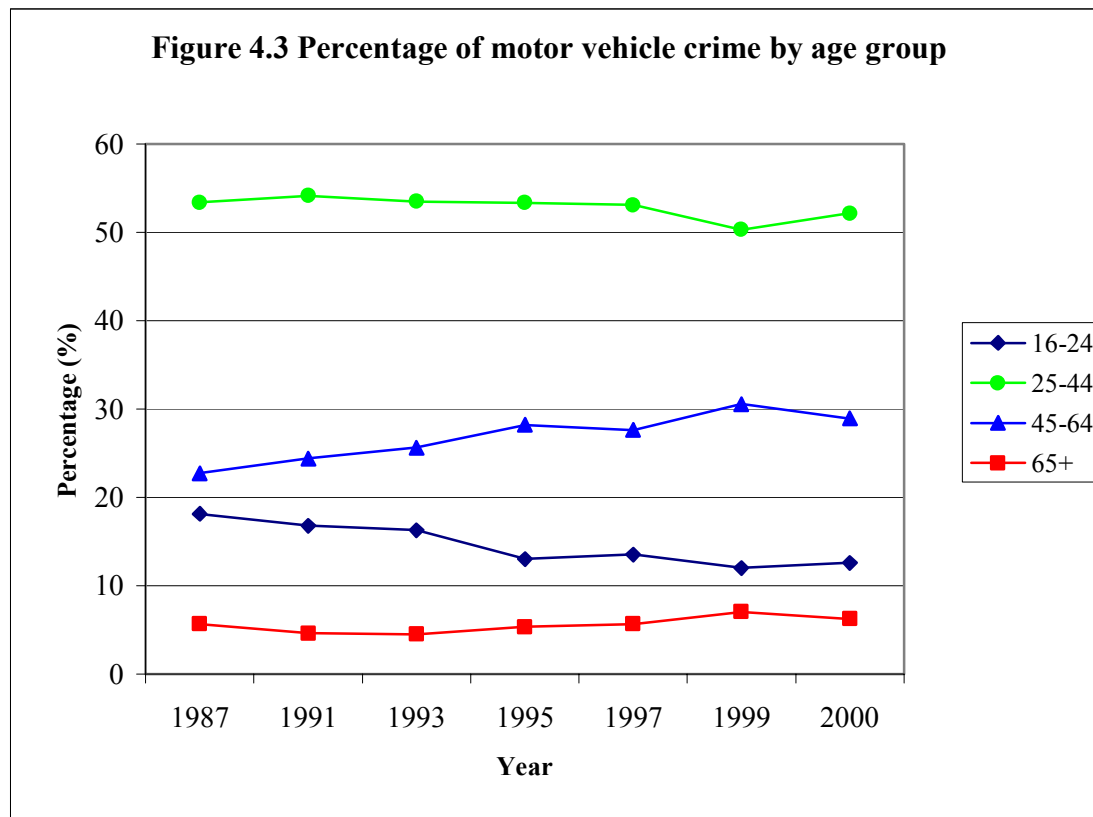


Figure 4.2 highlights the biggest percentage difference over two years, in victimisation for all crimes in the 65+ age groups. From 1993 to 1995 the proportion of property crime rose by 1.72%. This took the proportion of victimisation to over 10%, where it has maintained until 2000. This is the only category in the 65+ age group to cross the 10% threshold. The percentage increase is not a large figure when viewed, but when taking into account all other percentage increases between years, it is the largest increase from one survey to the next of any crime type in any age group.

4.4 Phase One Motor Vehicle Crime Breakdown

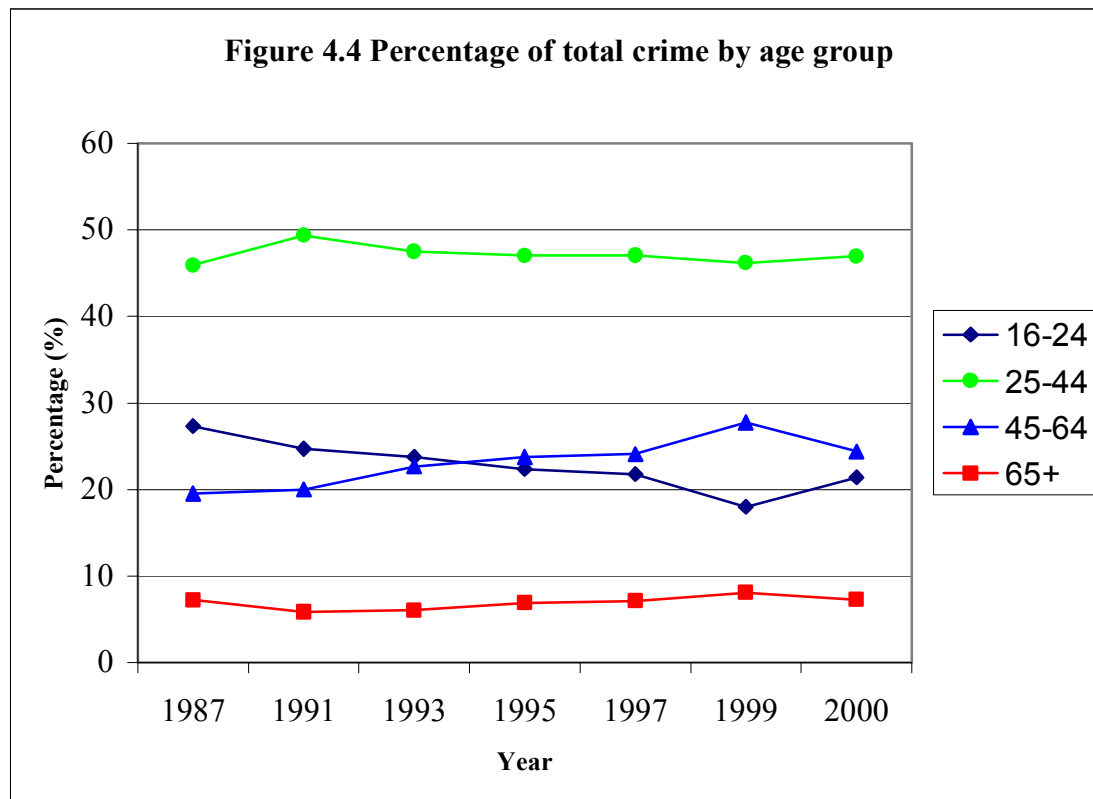
As mentioned previously, motor vehicle crime represents the highest proportion of crime experienced by those in the 25-44 and 45-64 age groups. This is demonstrated by figure 4.3. One trend that is clearly visible from figure 4.3 is that the two younger age groups and the two older age groups are essentially opposite. For example, when the younger groups decrease their proportion of crime in 1999, the older groups increase their proportion of crime experienced. Alone, this trend may not bear a great amount of relevance to the overall study, but when analysed alongside other trends, such as the total amount of crime experienced, it may provide an insight into the overall distribution of crime.



4.5 Phase One Total Crime Breakdown

It is important to consider the overall total of the proportion of crime experienced by all age groups in order to gain an insight into general trends. As figure 4.4 shows, the percentage of crime experienced by all age groups remained relatively constant for those in the 25-44 and 65+ age groups, given the changes in individual crime type fluctuations.

The focal 65+ group did suffer an increase in the proportion of crime they experienced. However, the fluctuation between the highest and lowest proportion they suffered was only 2.21% over a period of thirteen years. This is low in comparison to the 16-24 age group who had the greatest difference of 9.33%. The 45-64 and 25-44 had differences of 8.23% and 3.45% respectively.



4.6 Phase One Key Findings

A summary of the key findings from phase one are as follows:

- The over 65s consistently suffer the lowest percentage of all crime in all years.
- Property is continually the highest percentage, then motor vehicle, then personal.
- In 1999 personal and motor vehicle victimisation peaked for those aged 65+.
- The percentage of property crime peaked in 2000.
- The proportion of personal crime experienced by those 65+ showed the lowest rate of change of all ages.
- 65+ property victimisation witnessed the biggest increase from one BCS sweep to another for all crime types.
- Overall the elderly experienced a slight increase in the overall proportion of crime they suffer.

4.7 Phase Two Results

Phase two analysis produced the overall crime rates for the whole population in England and Wales and age specific crime rates for those over the age of 65. In congruence with the phase one results, the total rate was broken down into personal, property and motor vehicle crime types. The rates results detail the *actual* amount of crime experienced, which differs from the phase one analysis.

4.8 Overall Crime Rates

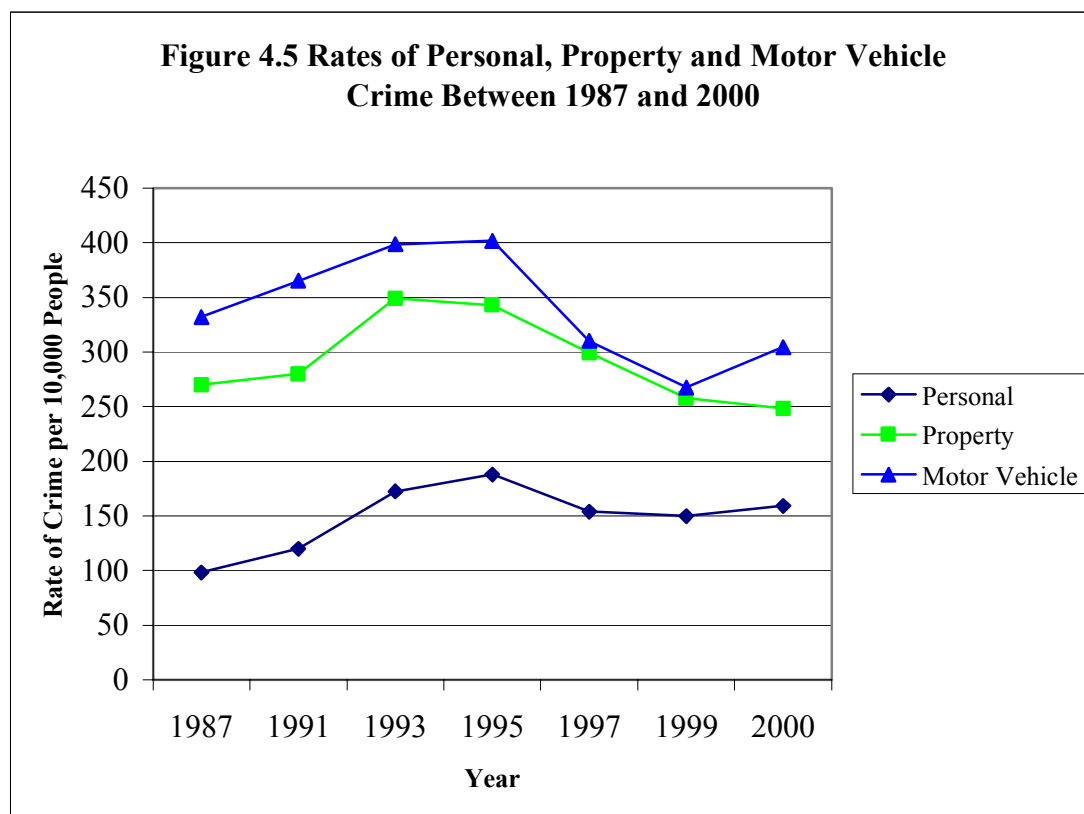
The overall crime rates show how much crime is experienced per 10,000 people. Table 4.2 shows the rates for all the years of the BCS analysed.

	1987	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2000
Personal	98.27	120.11	172.35	187.83	153.86	149.77	159.36
Property	270.05	279.93	349.03	342.82	299.10	257.55	248.40
Motor Vehicle	331.93	365.18	398.51	401.82	310.17	267.55	304.40
Total	700.25	765.22	919.89	932.47	763.13	674.87	712.16

Note: Source = 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2001 BCS.

The above table shows that all crime peaked, for the whole population in 1995. Crime rates increased until 1995, where after they began to decline until rising again in 2000.

As figure 4.5 visibly shows, personal crime peaked in 1995, as did motor vehicle crime. Property crime reached its greatest value in 1993.



The highest rate overall related to motor vehicle crime in 1995, which equated to 401.82 crimes per 10,000 people. Personal crime was consistently the lowest rate across all sweeps, and produced the lowest overall rate of 98.27 crimes per 10,000 people.

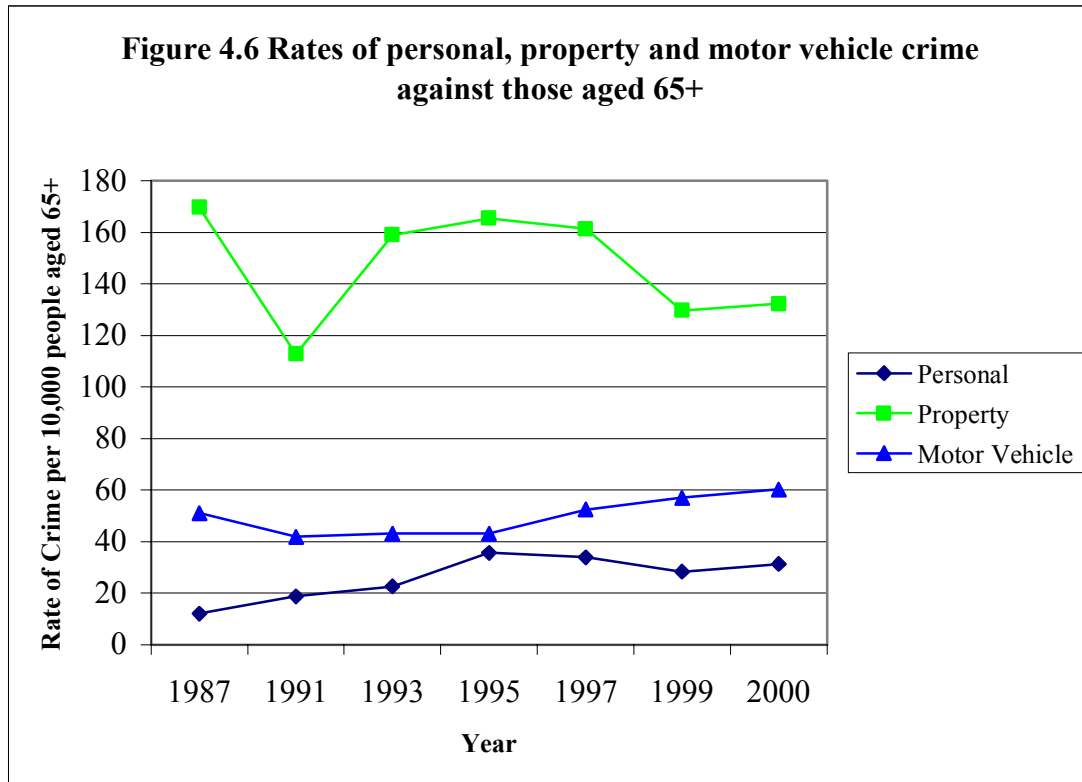
4.9 65+ Rates

The rates calculated for those aged 65+ were based upon a rate of crime per 10,000 people aged over 65, which is the distinction between the overall population rates reported above. Table 4.3 provides the rate of personal, property, motor vehicle and total crime for all sweeps of the BCS analysed.

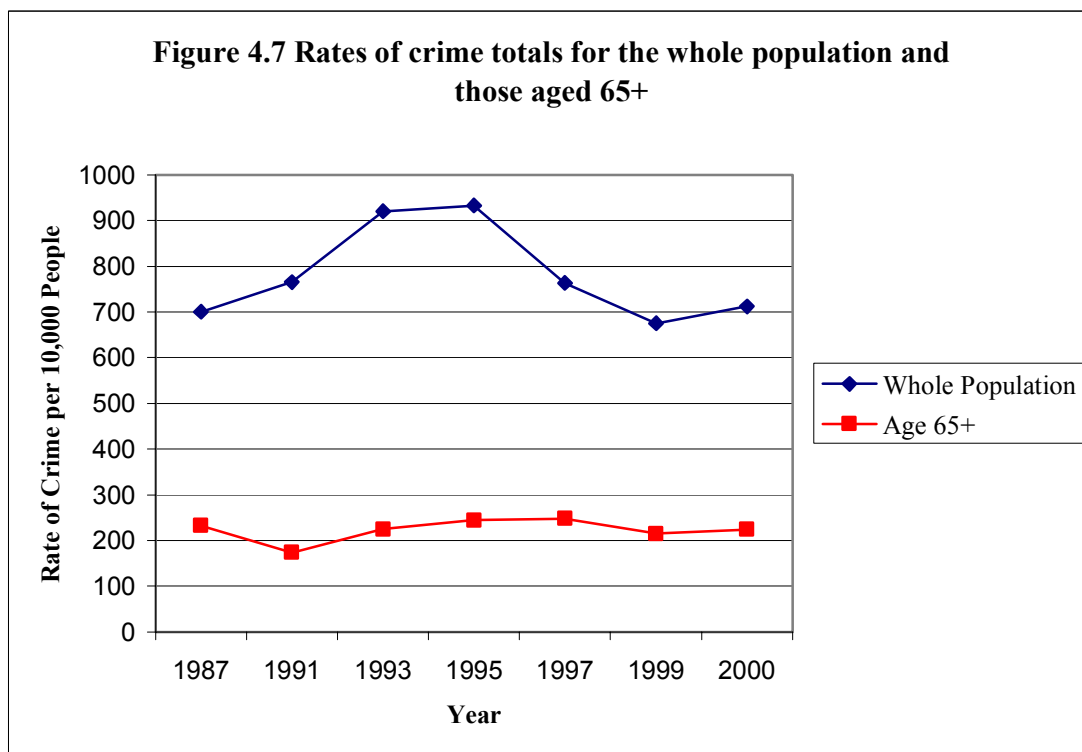
Table 4.3 Number of BCS incidents grouped by Personal, Property and Motor Vehicle offences committed against those aged 65+ (per 10,000 people aged over 65)							
	1987	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2000
Personal	12.10	18.77	22.67	35.63	33.86	28.31	31.28
Property	169.64	112.76	159.01	165.42	161.39	129.72	132.34
Motor Vehicle	51.05	41.90	43.06	43.07	52.43	56.98	60.21
Total	232.79	173.43	224.74	244.12	247.68	215.01	223.83

Note: Source = 1988, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000 and 2001 BCS.

The aforementioned table shows that the crime rate experienced by the elderly peaked in 1997. This is two years after the crime rate peaked for the overall population. Overall, the total rate of crime increased every year up until 1997. Thereafter the rate decreases in 1999 before increasing again in 2000. Figure 4.6 demonstrates how property crime is consistently the highest rate over all sweeps. However, the rate produced for property crime in 1992 appears anomalous. The rate of personal crime peaked in 1995, which corresponds to the overall crime rate. Property crime rates peaked in 1987, a figure that also equates to the highest rate produced overall at 169.64 crimes per 10,000 people aged over 65. The peak of property crime in those aged over 65 does not correspond to the highest property crime rates reported for the overall population. Motor vehicle crime rates for the 65+ group peaked in 2000. This result again fails to match the highest motor vehicle crime rates for the whole population.



A visual comparison of the overall crime rate and those aged 65+ can be seen in figure 4.7. This graph demonstrates that the 65+ age group crime rates have remained relatively constant over time. This is especially true when comparing those rates to the overall crime rate. The overall rates show a vast amount of variance over the thirteen years covered by the BCS used in this study.



4.10 Phase Two Key Findings

A summary of the key findings from phase two is as follows:

- The overall crime rate peaked in 1995.
- The rate of crime for those aged over 65 peaked in 1997.
- Property crime was consistently the highest crime rate afflicting the elderly.
- In 1995, personal and property crime rates peaked for those aged 65+.
- Motor vehicle rates peaked for the elderly in 2000.
- The rate of crime experienced by the elderly remained relatively constant over time.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter will explain the key characteristics and differences in victimisation of the elderly produced by this study.

5.1 Phase One Results

The phase one results show that those aged 65+ are consistently suffering the lowest proportion of crime in all the years analysed. This demonstrates how the 65+ age group is the least vulnerable age group for criminal victimisation. This finding reiterates previous work conducted in this field by Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002), Midwinter (1990) and Clarke et al. (1985). Despite displaying the lowest percentage share of crime, the 65+ age group are experiencing a small increase in the proportion of crime they suffer. The levels increase from 5.88% in 1991 to 8.09% in 1999. This shows how those aged above 65 are becoming more vulnerable to criminal victimisation than they were in the past. Similar findings have been reported by Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002), who dismiss the possibility of these findings being alarming, claiming that the small fluctuation demonstrates a stable level of risk despite the increase in vulnerability. In essence, this is true when compared to other age groups levels of victimisation. This study shows that the 45-64 age group displayed a marked increase in the proportion of victimisation they experienced, from 19.51% in 1987 to 27.74% in 1999, a difference of 8.23%. The difference in elderly levels of victimisation is only 2.21%, a quarter of the fluctuation of the 45-64 age group. The youngest age group, 16-24, displayed an opposite pattern of victimisation to the 45-64 age group. One speculative reason for this occurring could be the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which was targeted at curbing drugs offences. Although these are not measured specifically by the BCS, the knock on effects of violence associated with young people and drugs (Carrabine et al., 2004), may have been reduced. Hence, reducing the overall crime suffered by the youngest age band, especially due to the high levels of 'street crime' and personal crime traditionally associated with that group (Hough and Mayhew, 1983). Although not directly associated with the victimisation of the elderly, it does provide insight into the distribution of crime within society which impacts upon the lives of elderly people.

The highest proportion of total crime experienced by the elderly in phase one of this study was 8.09% in 1999. This is slightly comparable to the percentage of crime Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) report of between 12 and 14%. However, there are a number of factors to consider when making this comparison. Firstly, Chivite-Matthews and Maggs calculated their percentages from rates data which is a more reliable data source than the phase one data used here. A full evaluation of this aspect and the study in general will follow later in this chapter. Secondly, the previous research used different age groups that were more general than the specific ones used in this research. They had three age bands 16-29, 30-59 and 60+. The difference in age group selection will obviously produce different results, but the important factor is that the common theme of the elderly being less vulnerable to criminal victimisation is running throughout this study, making it comparable with previous research. In terms of the distribution of total crime, 1999 also represents the year when crime was at its lowest for the youngest age group, 17.99%. This denotes a shift in the way crime is distributed between the age groups as the level of crime in 1999 was 10% less than the level in 1987. This may be the result of societal changes that can only be cogitated from this research. Could the generation of young people who were highly victimised in 1987 be moving through the age bands over time and retaining a high level of victimisation? Could victimisation be generational and not chronological?

The results from phase one indicate this may be possible due to a rise in personal crime in the 25-44 age group through the years, which is normally associated with the 16-24 age group. Bearing this in mind, how does this impact upon the 65+ age group? Will there be an increase in victimisation of the 65+ age group in a number of years time? However, the BCS does not provide an accurate measurement of this speculation. This is due to factors of age, the cohort studied and period effects. Period effects may include people experiencing victimisation because they have grown older, or because they were born at a precise time. Also, societal change may impact upon victimisation levels in general. Further research in the field of criminal statistics and sociology would be needed to explore this pattern as it is inconclusive at present.

The proportion of different crime types that elderly victims suffered remained constant throughout all the years studied. Property crime was always the highest, motor vehicle crime the second highest and personal crime the lowest. The opposite pattern is apparent in the 16-24 age group. In the 25-44 age group motor vehicle crime is the highest, followed by property crime then personal crime, however from 1997 personal crime graduated into the second highest category. For the 45-64 age group motor vehicle crime was the highest proportion suffered, then property and finally personal. However in 1994 property crime was the highest. Due to the unique use of crime categories, there are no direct comparisons from existing research available for these results. Therefore this research is contributing to the wider field of knowledge due to the lack of previous research in this area. Nevertheless, these results again reinforce the consistency of crime distribution among elderly victims. They also demonstrate that society is also quite consistent over time as each age group's crime distribution remains relatively constant over time. Returning the focus to the 65+ age group shows that personal crime was consistently the lowest. This contradicts prevalent images of 'battered' elderly people in the media. Karmen (1996) claims that the sensationalist reporting of crime against the elderly may increase the fear of crime. This has been shown by the phase one results and other research to be unnecessary as the proportion of elderly victimisation is low. It has been suggested by Clarke et al. (1985) that the low levels of elderly victimisation are due to elderly people altering their daily lives to reduce their risk of victimisation. However, they found that when elderly people went out at night and during other periods of increased risk, they still experienced low levels of victimisation. Therefore exposure to the risk of victimisation is not a factor in experiencing victimisation.

The percentage of personal crime suffered by the elderly peaked in 1999, at 3.99%. As mentioned previously, there are no direct comparisons. However, Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) examined incidents of violence, which also peaked in 1999. They suggest that the peak was due to a slight increase in the number of elderly people, a fact reinforced by the Office for National Statistics (Office for National Statistics Website).

Motor vehicle crime also peaked for the 65+ group in 1999, reaching 7.08%. This figure can be compared to the result generated by Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002), who examined vehicle related theft. They found that this category actually decreased in 1999. However, this only charts one offence. Other offences included in the BCS could increase the percentage of this category in the phase one results, for example: criminal damage to a motor vehicle. A full list of motor vehicle offences included in this study can be found in Appendix D. The increase of motor vehicle victimisation in the elderly category may be for a number of reasons. It may be linked with the increase in number of elderly people, as suggested by the Office for National Statistics. Furthermore the General Household Survey

(2002) shows that the number of people with access to a motor vehicle has increased from 52% in 1972 to 71% in 1995 and 75% in 2002. Therefore the elderly are more likely to have access to a motor vehicle in 1999 than they ever have. Should this trend continue, motor vehicle crime would be expected to gradually increase over time. Only further research could confirm this.

Property crime peaked in 2000, a year later than the other crime categories, for those aged over 65 at 11.81%. Property crime is the highest victimisation category for those in the 65+ age group. This is reinforced by the work of Klaus (2000) who suggests that the elderly are disproportionately affected by property crime. Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) found a different pattern for this type of victimisation. They found that burglary was beginning to reduce in the year 2000. However, the BCS considers more offences than burglary alone, therefore their findings do not discredit the results found by this study. Furthermore, property crime experienced by the elderly also experienced the biggest percentage increase from one survey to the next, taking all crime types into consideration during the thirteen years surveyed. The proportion of property crime increased by 1.72% between 1993 and 1995, taking the percentage of property victimisation over the 10% threshold for the first time. It has continued to maintain its position over 10% since then. The results from phase one not only show the increase in victimisation for those aged over 65, they also demonstrate a decrease in the proportion of property victimisation for all the other age groups. Why should this occur? Perhaps there are not enough crime prevention initiatives aimed at those over the age of 65. Are they aware of basic crime prevention techniques? This may be so, as Clarke et al., (1985) propose that elderly people are not in need of any special crime prevention measures due to their low risk of victimisation. Maybe this idea should be reassessed in light of the increases in the proportion of victimisation they now face? However, this fact has already been addressed to some extent by the introduction of the 'Better Government for Older People' programme that was introduced in 1998 to run for two years. Its aim was to improve public services for older people in order to meet their specific needs. This does not appear to have made much impact considering the increase in the proportion of criminal victimisation they face has increased. Conversely, perhaps those in the younger age groups have a number of crime prevention measures in place? This may be because of a greater appreciation of technology among the younger generation. Although, older people do have access to crime prevention measures over the internet from sites such as Age Concern and the ITV region of Meridian. Despite having this information in place it does not appear to be making an impact with the 'silver surfer' generation as their victimisation levels suggest. Alternatively, the levels of elderly victimisation may be due to the areas where the elderly live. Previous research by Midwinter (1990) and Clarke (1984) has suggested that the elderly are economically and environmentally vulnerable to crime and experience poor housing conditions. However, this may no longer be as salient a factor. The Annual Abstract of Statistics (2003) shows that a retired pensioner received £34.90 in benefits in 1997, compared to £39.50 in 2000. This shows that the elderly are more economically wealthy than they have been in the past, therefore they should not be as vulnerable if Clarke (1984) is correct. Nevertheless, this does not provide an explanation as to why the proportion of property crime has increased for the elderly. More research would be needed in this area to fully assess the reasons behind the increase.

5.2 Phase Two Results

Phase two examined the crime rate, which is a slightly different concept to that of phase one. Firstly, overall crime rates were examined. Overall crime peaked in 1995. This is

consistent with BCS findings reports (Kershaw et al., 2001) as it is essentially the same information that has been produced.

The results for the 65+ age group remain relatively constant over time. This is congruent to previous research by Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002), Midwinter (1990) and Clarke et al., (1985). The consistency of findings also matches the phase one results of this study, although they cannot be directly compared because they measure different things, the general theme is consistent.

The crime rate for those aged over 65 peaked in 1997. This peak was two years after the peak in overall crime rate. Perhaps they were not aware of crime prevention initiatives introduced in the aftermath of the peak rates in 1995, this factor has already been discussed, along with further possible connotations. Nevertheless there are some similarities between the 65+ and overall population rates. Both figures declined from their peaks until 1999, where they increased slightly into 2000. There are no comparisons available from research as these are the first rates data to examine the 65+ age group longitudinally.

Property crime was consistently the highest rate over time for the 65+ age group, compared with motor vehicle crime for the whole population. Tentative comparisons can be made with the phase one results as they also demonstrated this trend. The property crime rate peaked in 1987, with the highest rate calculated for the 65+ age group of 169.64 victimisations per 10,000 elderly people. The overall property crime rate in 1987 was not one of the highest values, therefore the 65+ values does not correspond directly. The 1992 property rate for those aged over 65 appears anomalous. There is not an identifiable reason for this as the syntax used to generate the figure was directly from the UK Data Archive, see Appendix E. For the purposes of this study that result can be omitted from interpretation without hindering the study in any way, due to its discrete nature and the longitudinal basis of this study. Since peaking in 1993, the property crime rates for the overall population have decreased, which is congruent to the patterns apparent in other countries (Kershaw et al., (2001). The 65+ rates are slightly different, having a second peak in 1995 before decreasing through to 1999 and increasing slightly into 2000. Why are these rates different to the overall crime rates? It has already been suggested that older people were poorer in the earlier years of the time period studied, this may have made them vulnerable to victimisation (Clarke, 1984). The issue of crime prevention for older people has also been raised previously in this chapter, this may be a factor here too. The extent of car accessibility has also been examined. Perhaps there were greater levels of property crime in earlier years because there were fewer cars available to victimise? One potential contributor to the increase in property crime rates is unemployment, a link which Kershaw et al., (2001) have previously made. Unemployment in Britain peaked in 1993 at nearly 3 million during the recession (Social Trends 35, 2005). This corresponds to the peak in property crime rate for the overall population, but does not explain why the 65+ rates were elevated during 1987. When comparing the rates data to the phase one results a different pattern emerges. The proportion of property crime peaked in 2000. This demonstrates how the rate of property crime experienced by those aged over 65 was at its highest in 1987, but in 2000 that group had a greater share of the proportion of property crime. These comparisons are made with caution due to the rates data being more reliable, a factor that will be discussed later in this chapter.

In the 65+ rates, personal crime peaked in 1995, the same year as the overall crime rates, which are reinforced by Kershaw et al., (2001). The 65+ personal crime rates increased until 1995, then dropped into 1999, before a slight increase in 2000. This replicates the trend of the whole population data only with a much smaller scale of fluctuation. Why was 1995 such a bad year for personal crime? It could possibly be due to an unsettled society emerging from the grips of recession which dogged the early 1990's. Unemployment was also near its peak at that time, which has been linked to crime as mentioned earlier. Methodologically speaking, respondents of the BCS may have fabricated some incidents of victimisation in order to demonstrate to the government that changes needed to be made (Coleman and Moynihan, 1996). Such a factor is not able to be assessed. It appears that whatever was causing levels of victimisation to increase in the 65+ age group, was also causing victimisation levels to increase as a whole. Comparing the rates data to the phase one results also shows a different pattern. The proportion of personal crime experienced by the elderly peaked in 1999, which demonstrates how the older age group suffered a greater share of overall crime. This comparison is reiterated by Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) who also demonstrate that violence peaked in 1999. However, this does not correspond with the phase two results and both are generated by rates data. There could be a number of reasons for this. Only one offence was measured by Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) compared to the general personal crime category measured in this study, which counts a number of offences (these offences can be found in Appendix D). Furthermore their use of different age bands may have also impacted upon the differentiation in results. In general, their results correspond slightly with those produced by this study.

For the 65+ age group, motor vehicle crime peaked in 2000. This is different to the overall crime rates for motor vehicle crime that peaked in 1995, which is consistent with the overall high rate of crime in that year. No unequivocal comparisons can be made to previous research, although data produced by Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) shows a decrease in the offence of 'vehicle related theft' in 1999. However, this corresponds with the motor vehicle crime rates for the whole population which then increase into 2000 similar to the elderly. The increase in motor vehicle crime among the elderly may again be linked to the increasing accessibility to cars as mentioned previously. Slight comparisons can be made to the phase one data, which demonstrated that the proportion of motor vehicle crime experienced by the elderly peaked in 1999. There are no strict links between these two figures, but it confirms the general increase in motor vehicle crime experienced by the elderly.

Overall, where comparisons can be made to previous research the results from this study replicate the existing findings. In addition, data has been produced that contributes to the field of knowledge by providing new information about the distribution of crime in the three generic categories of personal, property and motor vehicle crime. Furthermore, although not linked directly with the purpose of this study, a potential pattern of generation victimisation has been noticed, which could lead to further research.

5.3 An Evaluation of this Study

The next sections will attempt to outline some potential problems specific to this study. Due to the nature of the study there are various aspects that can be critiqued.

5.3.1 The Use of Quantitative Methods

A justification for using the quantitative research strategy was outlined in chapter 3. However there are a number of weaknesses to the quantitative strategy that should be taken into account when considering this study. There are three main weaknesses related to this study. According to Bryman (2004), firstly, quantitative strategy ignores the differences between the social and the natural world. Therefore the dynamic nature and subjective interpretation of events are not possible. This has been evident in some aspects of this study. For example, if a more subjective view was adopted, reasons for the levels of victimisation and the changes in crime distribution would be evident. This would combat speculative inferences about certain events that have been made, which need further research. Secondly, it is assumed that measurement is standard. However, when using questionnaires conducted by interview, respondents can interpret questions differently. Thirdly, the quantitative strategy provides a static view of society, which is independent of people's lives. All the above factors are true, however the positive aspects of using the quantitative strategy outweigh the negatives. This is because this study is characterised by transparency and accountability that is reinforced by objectivity. Therefore the method of conducting this study is easily replicable, as has been shown with the number of sweeps of the BCS, hence making longitudinal study possible. Overall, the quantitative strategy was the best method of study for this research.

5.3.2 Study Specific Choices

Despite using the BCS as a method of secondary analysis, a number of choices had to be made about the nature of this study. Studying the elderly involved making a decision about what age would provide the benchmark of 'old age'. This was not easy as there is no general consensus of what this figure should be in previous research. Various ages have been used in the past, with the main ones being 60 and 65. It was decided to use 65 as the defining age. Those using 60 have often used wide ranging age groups such as Chivite-Matthews and Maggs (2002) and this contradicted the aim of conducting an in-depth study. 65 was the benchmark used by Klaus (2000) and corresponds with the ageing population. It is important to recognise Pain's (1997) warning about not treating the elderly as a homogenous group. This has been acknowledged, however, a greater understanding of the victimisation of the elderly is needed before a further sub-division can be attempted in this area of study.

Phase one of the study included the use of 'invalid' offence codes within the data analysis. For example, offence codes for threats were included which are not regimentally included by the Home Office (Budd and Mattinson, 2000). Furthermore, offences that took place outside of England and Wales were also included. These are not usually officially included, but were in this study under the premise that a victim is a victim, be it inside or outside of the country. This decision made no significant impact upon the results. These offences however, were excluded from the phase two analysis as this was conducted to Home Office specifications. To achieve this, officially produced syntax was used (UK Data Archive, 2005). This allowed an exact replication of official findings and saved time as a study specific set of syntax did not have to be written. However, a number of changes had to be made to the syntax in order for it to be specific to this study. This was time consuming, a fact that was added to by a number of faults within the Home Office syntax. An annotated copy of the syntax used in this study can be found in Appendix E. It is also important to consider that the BCS data produced for the year 2000 was produced using

different methodology to the other years analysed, due to the introduction of annual sweeps. This does not make any difference to the results produced.

Finally it is worth considering the prospect of human error within this study. Due to the use of secondary analysis, data collection errors are minimal. However, there was the potential for error when editing syntax, data input and calculating the percentages.

5.3.3 Secondary Analysis

Using secondary analysis as a basis for research created a number of minor problems. At the beginning there was a lack of familiarity with the data and it took time to become accustomed to the idiosyncrasies of the BCS. The data used was also very complex, in size, variable names and manageability. This took further time to become confident in using, however the results at the end were worth the time taken. The above two points have been raised by Bryman (2004), alongside a criticism over the quality of data that is used for secondary analysis.

5.3.4 Methodological Issues with the BCS

The problems that may be encountered as a result of using social surveys have been discussed in chapter 1, however there a number of BCS specific problems that should be taken into account when interpreting the results that have been produced by this study. The BCS does not provide a complete picture of crime (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). This is because some offences are not counted, specifically fraud (Clarke et al., 1985) and elder abuse. This is a problem when considering the elderly as there have been numerous reports of bogus callers and overseas lotteries – frauds that have been reported in the print media (The Guardian Newspaper Website), which are not counted by the BCS. This may result in an underestimation of the criminal victimisation of the elderly. Although it has already been noted how the print media sensationalises crimes that afflict the elderly, the true extent of this type of crime cannot be measured if it is not included in the BCS, print media or not. Secondly, the BCS does not measure the severity of the offence committed, therefore provides an unrealistic picture of crime (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). This is true, as the BCS cannot distinguish between serious and non-serious offences. Therefore it is unknown whether or not the victimisation of the elderly is more or less serious than that which is affecting the rest of the population. This would need further study. There are also some problems linked to the representativeness which the BCS achieves (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). Prior to 1992 the electoral role was used as a sampling frame, which marginalised those not registered to vote such as ethnic minorities and the young. These groups may have suffered disproportionate levels of crime. Although this does not directly impact upon the crime experienced by the elderly, it may affect the comparisons made between age groups. This problem has been reduced by the introduction of the PAF sampling frame, although institutions and the homeless are still marginalised (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). Finally, national results may overlook local crime trends (Southgate and Ekblom, 1984), although the lack of research in the gerontological aspect of victimology calls for nationwide survey at present. The minor faults associated with the methodology of the BCS do present some problems, especially in relation to studying the elderly. However, any discrepancies of the BCS are consistent over time, allowing reliable longitudinal study and “the best estimates of the true number of incidents in the population” (Chivite-Matthews and Maggs, 2002:5).

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion of Main Findings

This study found that rates of crime against the elderly have changed in relation to overall crime rates. One conclusion to be drawn from this research is that the rate of elderly victimisation has remained relatively constant throughout the period of time studied. This is in contrast to the overall crime rate, which has fluctuated dramatically in comparison. Additionally, the peak in crime rate for the elderly was in 1997, two years after the peak in overall crime rate. This demonstrates that the elderly crime rate has followed a different trend to the overall crime rate.

The elderly crime rates also show a different distribution of crime type in comparison to the overall crime rate. Elderly people experience their highest rates in the property crime category which differs from the overall crime rate where motor vehicle crimes produce the highest rates. Personal crime produces the lowest rate uniformly across both the elderly and overall rates. It can be deduced that although the elderly rates of crime have changed relative to overall crime rates, a similarity remains in this area. It can also be concluded that the elderly suffer a lower proportion of crime in comparison to other age groups, although the proportion and rate of crime they experience increased slightly over the thirteen years examined.

The above conclusions state that changes have occurred, but the reasons behind these changes are unidentifiable by this research. Nevertheless it is important to study the trends in victimisation as they provide the basis for further exploration in this field.

6.2 Concluding Thoughts

The results generated by this study demonstrate the importance of studying trends in victimisation, as new information has been yielded in an expanding discipline. Furthermore, the creation of new findings justifies the use of secondary analysis as a method of conducted research. This approach could be used to generate a wealth of additional information regarding victimisation, which is particularly robust due to the design of the BCS.

6.3 Implications for Further Research

These findings hold a number of implications for further research. Mainly, why do the elderly experience different rates of victimisation in relation to the whole population? Furthermore, what policy developments could be implemented in order to reduce their levels of risk? The reasons why the elderly suffer a disproportionate amount of property crime could also be investigated, with the aim being to improve their standard of crime prevention against such crimes. Potentially, the elderly age group could be further subdivided in those aged over 65 and those aged over 80, to examine whether the rate of crime changes between these two ages. Further demographic research could be conducted within the elderly group to determine whether gender or class bears any significance to the rate of criminal victimisation, as warnings have been made about treating the elderly homogeneously. Repeat victimisation could also be examined. All of these possibilities originate due to the lack of gerontological research within the wider spectrum of victimology. It is hoped that this study will provide a starting point for the generation of greater research within this field, thus making society and policy makers more aware of the position of the elderly within the sphere of victimology.

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2000 British Crime Survey Data Set

2001 British Crime Survey Data Set

Those who conducted the original analysis and collection of the data bear no responsibility for the further analysis carried out in this research project.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Complete List of BCS Offence Codes

Appendix B Grouped Offences: Personal, Property and Motor Vehicle

Appendix A**COMPLETE LIST OF BCS OFFENCE CODES (Bolling et al., 2002)**

Offence	Code
Refer to Home Office	01
Duplicate victim form	02
Refer to supervisor	03
Serious wounding	11
Other wounding	12
Common assault	13
Other assault outside the survey's coverage	19
Attempted assault	21
Rape	31
Serious wounding with sexual motive	32
Other wounding with sexual motive	33
Attempted rape	34
Indecent assault	35
Sexual offence outside the survey's coverage	39
Robbery	41
Attempted robbery	42
Snatch theft from the person	43
Other theft from the person	44
Attempted theft from the person	45
Possibly theft but could have been loss/possibly attempted theft, but could have been innocent	48

Other robbery or theft from the person outside the survey's coverage	49
Attempted burglary to non-connected domestic garage/ outhouse	50
Burglary in a dwelling (nothing taken)	51
Burglary in a dwelling (something taken)	52
Attempted burglary in a dwelling	53
Possible attempted burglary (insufficient evidence to be sure)	54
Theft in a dwelling	55
Theft from a meter	56
Burglary from a non-connected domestic garage/ outhouse – nothing taken	57
Burglary from a non-connected domestic garage/ outhouse – something taken	58
Other burglary, attempted burglary, theft in a dwelling, falling outside the survey's coverage	59
Theft of a car/van	60
Theft from a car/van	61
Theft of a motorbike, motorscooter or moped	62
Theft from a motorbike, motorscooter or moped	63
Theft of a pedal cycle	64
Theft from outside dwelling (excluding theft of milk bottles)	65
Theft of milk bottles from outside dwelling	66
Other theft	67
Possible theft, possible lost property	68
Other theft/attempted theft falling outside the survey's coverage	69

Attempted theft of/from car/van	71
Attempted theft of/from motorcycle, motorscooter or moped	72
Other attempted theft	73
Arson	80
Criminal damage to a motor vehicle (£20 or under)	81
Criminal damage to a motor vehicle (over £20)	82
Criminal damage to the home (£20 or under)	83
Criminal damage to the home (over £20)	84
Other criminal damage (£20 or under)	85
Other criminal damage (over £20)	86
Possibly criminal/possibly accidental damage/ nuisance with no damage	87
Attempted criminal damage (no damage actually achieved)	88
Other criminal damage outside the survey's coverage	89
Threat to kill/assault made against, but not necessarily to respondent	91
Sexual threat made against, but not necessarily to respondent	92
Other threat or intimidation made against, but not necessarily to respondent	93
Threats against others, made to the respondent	94
Obscene and nuisance telephone calls	95
Invalid victim form	96
Other threats/intimidation outside the survey's coverage	97

Appendix B**THE GROUPING OF OFFENCE CODES INTO PERSONAL, PROPERTY AND MOTOR VEHICLE CRIMES (Farrell, 2005)**

Personal Offences	Offence Code
Serious wounding	11
Other wounding	12
Common assault	13
Attempted assault	21
Rape	31
Serious wounding with sexual motive	32
Other wounding with sexual motive	33
Attempted rape	34
Indecent assault	35
Robbery	41
Attempted robbery	42
Snatch theft from the person	43
Other theft from the person	44
Attempted theft from the person	45
Possibly theft but could have been loss/possibly attempted theft, but could have been innocent	48
Threat to kill/assault made against, but not necessarily to respondent	91
Sexual threat made against, but not necessarily to respondent	92
Other threat or intimidation made against, but not necessarily to respondent	93
Threats against others, made to the respondent	94
Obscene and nuisance telephone calls	95

Property Offences

Attempted burglary to non-connected domestic garage/ outhouse	50
Burglary in a dwelling (nothing taken)	51
Burglary in a dwelling (something taken)	52
Attempted burglary in a dwelling	53
Possible attempted burglary (insufficient evidence to be sure)	54
Theft in a dwelling	55
Theft from a meter	56
Burglary from a non-connected domestic garage/ outhouse – nothing taken	57
Burglary from a non-connected domestic garage/ outhouse – something taken	58
Theft of a pedal cycle	64
Theft from outside dwelling (excluding theft of milk bottles)	65
Other theft	67
Possible theft, possible lost property	68
Other attempted theft	73
Arson	80
Criminal damage to the home (£20 or under)	83
Criminal damage to the home (over £20)	84
Other criminal damage (£20 or under)	85
Other criminal damage (over £20)	86
Possibly criminal/possibly accidental damage/ nuisance with no damage	87
Attempted criminal damage (no damage actually achieved)	88

Motor Vehicle Offences

Theft of a car/van	60
Theft from a car/van	61
Theft of a motorbike, motorscooter or moped	62
Theft from a motorbike, motorscooter or moped	63
Attempted theft of/from car/van	71
Attempted theft of/from motorcycle, motorscooter or moped	72
Criminal damage to a motor vehicle (£20 or under)	81
Criminal damage to a motor vehicle (over £20)	82

Omitted Offence Codes (Sysmis)

Other assault outside the survey's coverage	19
Sexual offence outside the survey's coverage	39
Other robbery or theft from the person outside the survey's coverage	49
Other burglary, attempted burglary, theft in a dwelling, falling outside the survey's coverage	59
Theft of milk bottles from outside dwelling	66
Other theft/attempted theft falling outside the survey's coverage	69
Other criminal damage outside the survey's coverage	89
Other threats/intimidation outside the survey's coverage	97
Invalid victim form	96