

RESEARCH INTO CRIMES AGAINST THE ELDERLY
(PART II)

JOINT HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING

THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC AND
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC PLANNING,
ANALYSIS AND COOPERATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

AND THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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THE FEAR OF CRIME AMONG THE ELDERLY

Introduction

An examination of existing evidence regarding the fear of crime in America seems to indicate clearly that the elderly bear the heaviest psychological costs of crime. Today, I would first like to review briefly what we know about the magnitude of the problem. This will entail a comparison of levels of fear among the elderly and other age groups, an analysis of what special kinds of crime appear to be most feared by aged Americans, and an examination of high-fear subgroups within the oldest segment of the population. I would then like to address the question of why the elderly seem to be so fearful of crime. While the issue is complex, I think a simple summary answer can be found: the aged fear crime because they have fewer resources for coping with victimization and its consequences. Finally, I will address briefly the question of what is to be done. The evidence on "what works" is skimpy, and I can report reliably only on what is being done rather than the effectiveness of those programs. However, even that information may be suggestive, for it indicates that much currently is not being done to help the elderly cope with victimization and its aftermath.

The Problem of Fear

Evidence about the magnitude of the fear-of-crime problem primarily is to be found in sample surveys conducted by social scientists.¹ Their data is remarkably congruent on the point at hand. It is clear that the elderly are more anxious and fearful about crime than any other age group in the American population. When asked in various surveys how safe they feel on the streets of their own neighborhoods, anywhere from 40 to 60 percent of elderly respondents indicate that they feel "very unsafe," percentages far higher than those of other age groups. Our recent survey at Northwestern indicates that those over sixty report "dangerous places" to be avoided which are much closer to home than those bothering other groups; in Philadelphia, those places averaged only two blocks away!

Not surprisingly, the elderly are more likely than others to report changes, in their activity patterns because of fear of crime. LEAA's surveys indicate that the elderly are more likely to change their behavior in all of the big cities they covered, and studies in Hartford and Philadelphia document that they are far less likely to go out after dark for walks or for amusement.

Finally, the elderly themselves often rate crime among the most serious of the problems they face. In Louis Harris' well-known survey of the concerns of the elderly, they ranked criminal victimization first—even above health—on the list.

It is important to note, however, that the concerns of the elderly seem to be focused on particular types of victimization. Their fears are not indiscriminant, but revolve around personal attack. My analysis of three surveys which were conducted in Hartford, Kansas City, and Philadelphia, suggests that the elderly are distinctively worried about assaults on their person rather than property offenses, and that they are often less bothered by other things than are younger adults.

In the Hartford survey, for example, respondents were asked how "worried" they were about various sorts of victimization. In that city, the elderly were among the least worried about burglary. We found in our Philadelphia survey that the elderly were no more likely than others to think that burglary is a "big neighborhood problem." In both cities respondents were asked to estimate their "risk" of being burglarized, and in both they fell below the mean. In Kansas City, they were the least likely of all age groups to think that it was "probable" that they would be victimized by burglars.

¹ A brief description of some of the data analyzed especially for this report is appended to my testimony.

This should be no surprise, for the Hartford data demonstrate that the elderly are much more likely to be at home both during the day and at night, and someone being at home is the best deterrent of burglary.

Not surprising is the relative tolerance or lack of extreme concern often expressed by the elderly about general conditions in their neighborhoods. When asked about things which generally are presumed to indicate a decline in the level of public order in the community, the elderly in two cities surveyed were the least concerned about them of any age group. In Hartford, respondents to the survey were asked to rank "how big a problem" were drunks, teenagers on the streets, prostitutes, and the use and sale of drugs, in their neighborhoods. The elderly were less rapid than others to label these "big problems," and they were also less concerned about the property crimes of burglary and auto theft. The same general pattern holds in Philadelphia, which we recently surveyed by telephone.

When it comes to crimes of violence, however, the elderly no longer fall in the "less concerned" column. When ranking neighborhood problems, the elderly were as likely as everyone else to think that robbery, holdups of stores, and assaults were big neighborhood problems, and when asked about their own condition they were distinctly more concerned. The elderly fear personal attack.

For example, when asked in Kansas City "how probable" it was that they would be robbed and assaulted in their neighborhoods, the elderly were most likely to give themselves a substantial chance of being attacked. This was especially true of robberies and assaults "during the day," a time when most people feel relatively secure. They were also the most likely to report a high probability of home invasion. Similar questions were asked in Hartford about "how worried" respondents were about street crimes, and the elderly again placed themselves highest on the list.

This is doubtless why the city victimization surveys sponsored by LEAA rank the elderly as the most fearful group in major cities. The attitudinal component of the LEAA questionnaire asks only one question measuring fear, and it refers only to street crime. This analysis of other surveys suggests that the fear-of-crime issue is more complex. We know that the special fears of the elderly are rather narrowly focused, rather than reflecting omnibus concern, and that not every crime problem of the elderly is a distinctive one.

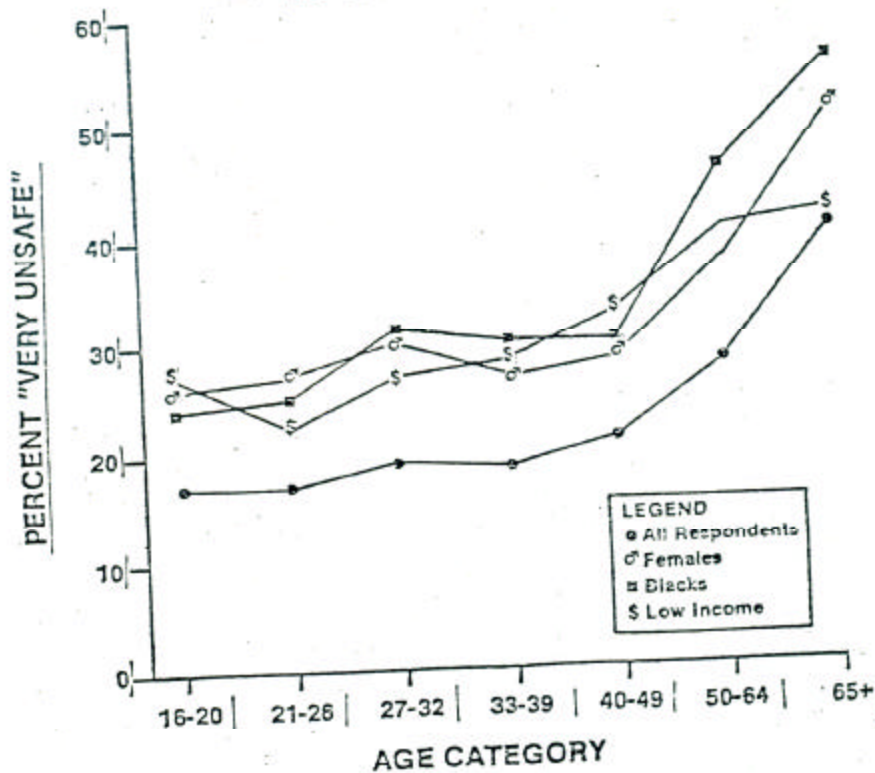
We also know that the fears of the elderly in this area are relatively independent of other, related concerns. The fear of crime among the elderly does not simply reflect a general suspicion or distrust of others, or any presumed dissatisfaction with social change among the aged. In a detailed analysis appended to this testimony I argue that fear of crime among the elderly is distinct from other related concerns, and note that they are in fact often the most trusting of all age groups. Their fear of crime is special and unique, as it is for other age groups.

The analysis also suggests that fear of personal attack is not simply a question of age. Almost every survey that asks about personal victimization finds a large and highly significant jump in levels of fear at about age 60. This increase is nonlinear. Being older does not affect fear in any smooth fashion; rather, being old is what counts.

My final points about the magnitude of the problem concern subgroups within the elderly population. While they are as a group more fearful than others, some among the elderly bear the heaviest psychological burdens. They are, not surprisingly, blacks, women, and the poor.

The following graph charts the distribution of fear of street crime in five of the cities surveyed by LEAA. It contrasts the population as a whole with those subgroups, illustrating both levels of fear among the elderly and the demographic correlates of high levels of fear within age groups.

AGE AND FEAR OF CRIME IN NEIGHBORHOOD



Source: Calculated from LEAA's 1974 surveys in Chicago,
Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and New York

These data reflect typical findings regarding fear of personal attack among subgroups. Among the elderly, the largest discrepancies are found along racial lines, with the black aged reporting substantially more fear than whites. The next strongest are sex differences, then income effects. The small gap between all elders and those in the low income category shown in the graph does not indicate that income differences are not important among the elderly; rather, so many of them fall in the low income category that they predominate in the over-all figure as well.

These findings suggest an important point about the elderly as a status as opposed to an age group. Throughout, I deal with the elderly as a group of people over the age of sixty or sixty-five. However, people in their later years have much in common other than their age. The elderly as a group are, for example, much more heavily female than the general population (for men tend in our society to die off more rapidly than women), and their incomes are substantially lower than those of other groups of adults. Because of changes in the educational system, they also are much less likely than those in younger categories to have gone to college, or even to have graduated from high school. More of them than other adults live alone, and a disproportionate number are found in institutions, public housing, and high-rise dwellings. Many of these factors are things which individually are related to high levels of fear in the population as a whole. Among the elderly they are over-concentrated and over-lapping features of life. I call this an "aggregation effect"; that is every age group is a characteristic conglomerate of demographic features. Some of these features (such as education levels)

reflect generational effects, and others (such as the sex ratio) reflect biosocial processes. Among the aged, social and biological forces combine to aggregate together a number of strongly fear-related life conditions.

Finally, it is important to note the extent to which the fear of crime is concentrated in big cities. A recent national survey by the National Opinion Research Center enables us to break down opinions by the place of residence of each respondent, and that data illustrates the high levels of fear evidenced by the urban elderly. In that 1976 survey, fully 80 percent of all those over sixty years of age who lived in big cities indicated that there was "an area right around here" where they were "afraid to walk alone at night." In the suburbs around those cities that proportion dropped to 68 percent; it was 53 percent in outlying towns and villages, and only 22 percent in rural areas. However, there was nothing particularly distinctive about the fears of the urban elderly, for everyone's responses shifted in about the same fashion. Further, if one examines where the fearful elderly live one finds that the bulk of them, like most aged Americans, do not live in big cities. Fully one-half of the fearful elderly in that national survey lived in towns, villages, and rural places, and another twenty percent in suburban areas. By this measure, while the fear of crime among the elderly is high in big cities, it is not distinctively a big city problem.

Why Are the Elderly More Fearful of Personal Attack?

We know why the elderly are fearful of personal crime: they can get hurt, or killed, and lose their valuables. The problem is, why are they so much more fearful than other age groups, for every reasonable study of the problem indicates that the aged generally are the same or even less likely than others to fall prey to the very crimes which have been identified as constituting their major concern? I recently compiled a list of 39 major classes of reasons which have been given to explain high levels of fear among the elderly. Some of the reasons given fit existing data and explain the distinctive fears of the elderly, and many do not. Most of those that do seem to be variations on a basic theme: the elderly are more fearful because—compared to other age groups—they have fewer resources for coping with victimization and the consequences of crime.

The relatively low rates of victimization suffered by the elderly in personal crime categories have been documented most thoroughly in LEAA's victimization surveys. The following table presents victimization for major personal crime categories, by age, for 1973, 1974, and 1975. There it can be seen that only in one category—purse snatching and picked pockets—are victimizations suffered by the elderly higher than (due to sampling error, they are really the same as)—the population average. There, they still are less than those suffered by those in the high-risk 16-24 category.

AGE AND VICTIMIZATION RATES

| | Age category | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Total | 65+ | 50-64 | 35-49 | 25-34 | 20-24 | 16-19 | 12-15 |
| Purse snatching and picked pockets: | | | | | | | | |
| 1973..... | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 2.0 | 2.7 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 2.2 |
| 1974..... | 3.1 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 3.4 | 3.7 | 3.1 |
| 1975..... | 3.1 | 3.3 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 4.3 | 3.3 | 3.0 |
| Robbery: | | | | | | | | |
| 1973..... | 6.7 | 5.0 | 4.4 | 5.1 | 5.5 | 11.3 | 9.3 | 11.3 |
| 1974..... | 7.1 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 5.5 | 7.0 | 10.7 | 11.3 | 12.7 |
| 1975..... | 6.7 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.6 | 6.3 | 10.8 | 10.6 | 11.4 |
| Assault: | | | | | | | | |
| 1973..... | 24.7 | 3.4 | 8.5 | 16.2 | 27.6 | 49.5 | 49.8 | 43.3 |
| 1974..... | 24.7 | 4.9 | 7.3 | 15.2 | 30.2 | 48.3 | 54.1 | 38.5 |
| 1975..... | 25.1 | 3.4 | 8.9 | 15.6 | 31.7 | 45.8 | 51.1 | 42.4 |

Source: Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1973-74 change report and 1974-75 change report (LEAA).

They also are extremely low, averaging only 3.3 per 1,000 persons. It also can be seen here that victimization rates among the elderly are not increasing in any significant way; if anything, they most recently have declined.

This is not to discount the significance of victimization in generating fear, for victims of personal crimes generally are more fearful than those who have not recently been victimized. My research indicates that purse snatching seems to

have a substantial attitudinal impact upon its victims, and the relatively high frequency of that crime among elderly women is an important problem. However, none of these victimization rates are at all congruent with the magnitude of the fear problem revealed by the same surveys. In big cities, about two percent of those over sixty-five report that they have been robbed in the past year, yet a majority indicate that they feel unsafe on the streets at night.

Let me review briefly my argument that a major cause of fear among the elderly lies in their lack of resources—broadly construed—to deal with victimization and its consequences.

The elderly are poor. Compared to other age groups, their family incomes are low, making it difficult for them to replace stolen items, pay for damages, and restore their lives. Insurance does not help much, for they are among the least likely (along with very young heads of households) to have insurance coverage of their losses.

The elderly are physically more frail, and have special difficulty recovering from broken bones and other serious injuries. In fact, they face the prospect of never recovering. They often are not very agile and suffer disabilities that make it difficult to evade attackers or fend off those who might harass them.

Especially as they advance in age, the elderly are more likely to live alone. They have no one to share their fears with, no one to escort them, and no one to take care of them if they are hurt. Those who live alone in the later years also are overwhelmingly female. They are already the most fearful demographic group, and this may compound their concern.

Largely because they are poor, frail, and alone, the elderly are over-concentrated in highrise dwellings and/or public housing projects, which themselves are environments of fear. They also are more tied to public transportation. All of this reduces their control over the security of their environment.

What Can Be Done?

This is a difficult question. As I indicated at the outset, it is easier to report on what is being done than upon the effectiveness of those programs. Currently, the National Council of Senior Citizens is evaluating a number of services being provided on an experimental basis to elderly crime victims in six cities, and part of their evaluation design includes an assessment of levels of fear in the elderly population. Until their report is out, there is little systematic research on program effectiveness in this area to depend upon for policy recommendations. However, existing data does indicate that the elderly do not appear to have any distinctive problems relating to the delivery of police services, and our own survey in Philadelphia indicates the often low frequency with which the elderly there take simple precautions to prevent personal and property victimizations. Together, these may suggest some areas where it is, and is not, fruitful to make further investments in protecting the elderly against victimization. It should be remembered, however, that the fear problem among the elderly seems largely to be one of fear of the potential consequences of personal victimization. It thus seems likely that only dramatic and very improbable reductions in both crime against the elderly and the overall crime rate would have much of an effect on attitudes in this area. More to the point might be programs aimed at reducing the potential hardships imposed by victimization; that is, programs which target on the ability of victims to recover from the experience in as satisfactory a manner as possible.

The data which I have been able to mobilize which speaks to the question of police service indicates uniformly that the elderly are the most satisfied of all age groups with the quality of that service. LEAA's surveys in the nation's five largest cities indicate that the elderly were the most likely to rate police performance in their community as "good." In Hartford, the elderly were most likely to rate the police "job" in their neighborhoods as satisfactory, they were the most likely to think that the police treat people well and understand people's problems, and the most likely to agree that the police "try to do their best." The same could be reported based on the Police Foundation's survey in Kansas City and San Diego. Finally, there is no evidence that the elderly are unwilling to turn to the police in the first place; in LEAA's surveys in five cities, they were the most likely—if victimized—to report crimes to the police.

This high level of support for the police shown by the elderly is not mirrored in their own crime-fighting efforts, however. Our recent survey in Philadelphia indicates that the elderly fall at the average or below on measures of the extent to which they attempt to avoid personal victimization and burglary. To the

degree to which those strategies are efficacious, programs to encourage more watchfulness may increase the actual security of the elderly and reduce their chances of being victimized.

Regarding measures to reduce burglary, we find that the elderly are the least likely to be involved in property marking ("Operation Identification") programs, and they are the least likely to report that they stop deliveries of newspapers, etc., or have neighbors take them in, when they are away from home. They are only about average in their use of special locks and bars, and in their likelihood of notifying the police or neighbors when they are away from home.

Turning to strategies for reducing personal victimization, we find that the elderly are below average in their use of peepholes or small windows to identify persons at their doors, and they are least likely to report attempting to avoid dangerous places in their neighborhoods when they walk. They are about on the average on questions about how often they drive (or are driven) rather than walk because of crime, and on the frequency with which they walk with escorts, or others.

Finally, we find that the elderly are the least likely to be involved in neighborhood groups which are concerned about crime, and are the least likely to report that they participated in any such group activities.

All of this suggests that there is considerable room for programs which aim at decreasing the vulnerability of the elderly to victimization, and in increasing their contact with community efforts organized around crime. Most of the programs relevant here (but none of their actual consequences) are well known. The physical security of many of the elderly could be upgraded by zoning laws which require buzzers for apartment building entrance-ways and peepholes for unit doors. Weaknesses in individual security systems could be located by home and apartment security surveys, which often are conducted by local police departments. The National Council of Senior Citizens is experimenting with programs to provide new security to victims, including changes in locks and doors and the boarding up of damaged windows.

Programs also have been devised to encourage the elderly to take measures to reduce their vulnerability on the street. These include both citizen education programs, which give very concrete advice on issues like how best to safeguard one's purse, and "Buddy Systems" which facilitate the formation of pairs or groups when the elderly must extensively use the streets or public transportation. Even the old issue of the advisability of age-segregated as opposed to age-integrated housing has been raised anew by the crime problem. It seems clear that, whatever their other advantages, age-integrated housing—which generally brings into juxtaposition the poor elderly and poor youths—does not encourage a sense of safety and security among elderly residents.

Finally, the low level of involvement of the elderly in crime programs indicates that groups and community organizations attempting to deliver information or services to them have an open, if not particularly fertile, field in which to work. The elderly tend to be less involved in everything, so this age differential is not particularly surprising. However, it is widely argued that one cause of fear of crime among the elderly is that they have reduced social contacts and thus fewer opportunities to discuss their fears and share their problems with others. Organized group activity thus might fill two functions in their lives, providing them with information or services and reducing their isolation.

Finally, these and other programs should have as their focus not only crime reduction, but the amelioration of as many as possible of the hardships imposed by criminal victimization, once it has taken place. Fear of crime among the elderly seems to be a fear of the potential consequences of victimization, and programs aimed at helping elderly victims cope with those consequences may go a long way toward reducing their anxiety about those objectively rather rare events. On the financial side, Professor Cook's testimony documented the extent to which the elderly are not covered by insurance when things of value are stolen from them. Given their low incomes, even relatively small losses of this sort can impose great and perhaps permanent hardships. More difficult to deal with are potential physical injuries. Medicare programs will provide assistance to the elderly who are physically injured during the course of a crime, but the fear of death, or of never fully recovering during the remainder of one's life, will remain a real one for them.

APPENDIX: MAJOR DATA SOURCES ANALYZED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS TESTIMONY

Most of the empirical claims made in this testimony are based upon my analysis of survey data archived at Northwestern University. This archive and the analysis was supported in part by the Reactions to Crime Project of Northwestern's Center for Urban Affairs, which is funded by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

1. *LEAA's City Victimization Surveys*.—These surveys were conducted in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia, early in 1974 by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. There were approximately 50,000 respondents 16 years of age and older interviewed in the attitudinal component of these surveys, about 15 percent of them aged 65 and older. My analysis is based upon a 20 percent random sample of the original data set.

2. *Northwestern University's Philadelphia Survey*.—This survey includes interviews with approximately 1,550 Philadelphians. It was conducted by telephone, with samples reached by random digit dialing, during the last three months of 1977. Approximately 15 percent of the respondents were aged 60 and older. This survey was conducted by the Center for Urban Affairs, as part of its Reactions to Crime Project (see above).

3. *NORC National General Social Survey*.—This survey was conducted in 1976 by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago. It is a national survey with approximately 1,550 respondents, 18 percent of whom were aged 65 and older.

4. *The Hartford Survey*.—This survey was conducted during 1973 in Hartford, Conn. by the Survey Research Program of the Harvard/M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies. It was the first wave of a survey to evaluate an LEAA experiment in environmental design in that city. There were 556 respondents, 17 percent of whom were over sixty-five.

5. *The Kansas City Survey*.—This survey was sponsored by the Police Foundation as part of an evaluation of their Preventive Patrol Experiment in that city in 1972. There were 1,200 respondents in the wave of the survey I analyzed, 25 percent of whom were over sixty-five.

APPENDIX: THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE FEAR OF CRIME FROM OTHER CONCERNS STATUS OF THE CONCEPT

While "fear of crime" is a household term in common use and a rhetorical phrase of considerable political relevance, it is not clear that it is a psychological construct of any particular significance. An important attitudinal domain, in our view, is one that is relatively independent of other, related predispositions. That is, unless it has unique causes and effects, it is undesirable to elevate a new concept to lofty theoretical status. This parsimony is necessary both to reduce conceptual clutter and to provide a standard for deciding priorities for pure and policy-oriented research.

This criteria for assessing attitudinal constructs is particularly important in the case of the elderly, for one rejoinder to the empirical observation that measures of fear of crime are strongly related to age is that, as people get older, they become more fearful of "everything." One version of this argument is generational—that the old, whose experiences are rooted in the past, find the present less comfortable than the days when they went through primary socialization into basic values. Thus, the old are always "out of step with the times." As a result, every opinion item asking if things are getting worse, or if some untoward trend is developing, will inevitably find more support among the elderly. Because society changes, they may be right. Other versions of the argument are physiological—because the elderly are more prone to physical frailty, they thread their way carefully through their environment, and they always will be more likely to perceive risks around them. It's a survival mechanism. While they may be wrong, they cannot so easily afford the potential consequences of taking a chance. Finally, some versions of the argument are biological—because the elderly are near death, many have confronted the reality of their mortality. Unlike the young, they no longer assume that nothing can happen to them.

One deduction from these arguments is that the fear of crime is not a completely independent psychological trait. Rather, the fear of crime registered in

public opinion polls may be merely another manifestation of more fundamental predispositions, including distrust, suspicion, and anxiety about change. And, because the elderly have many good reasons to evidence these predispositions, they will register "high" on their reactions to crime-related items. Following this argument, responses indicating fear of crime simply are outcroppings of other, more fundamental psychological traits.

If this is true, we should reject the widespread use of the concept "fear of crime." Neither its causes nor its effects would be unique or distinct. In practical terms, this implies that crimes and crime-related programs would have no strong effect on fear. In measurement terms, it implies that measures of fear of crime would fail tests for discriminant validity.

This suggests a test for evaluating the fear of crime concept through an examination of leading indicators of it. Following Campbell and Fiske (1959), the utility of a hypothesized trait can be rejected if measures of it have high correlations with indicators measuring something else, suggesting the proposed trait is not distinct from others already well known and more generally useful.¹ In this case, our measure of fear should be relatively unrelated to indicators tapping suspicion, distrust, and anxiety about social change.

An appropriate vehicle for testing the discriminant validity of one of the most common fear-of-crime items is the 1976 General Social Survey. In that nationwide survey, respondents were asked a variety of attitudinal questions tapping trust, suspicion, and anxiety about change. In addition, respondents were asked:

Is there any area right around here—that is, within a mile—where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?

This item has been used in a number of surveys of public opinion since 1965, and elicits information about respondents' assessments of their circumstances through its impact on their daily lives. Note that the term "crime" is not used in the item, an omission that should favor the hypothesis that the item is not independent of other concerns and fears.

TABLE 1.—THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEAR OF CRIME AND RELATED ATTITUDINAL MEASURES

| Likert-Scale survey items | Multiple R ² with all other items, by age | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | Total sample | 17-20 | 21-26 | 27-32 | 33-39 | 40-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Is there any area right around here—that is, within 1 mile—where you would be afraid to walk alone at night? | 0.02 | 0.12 | 0.03 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.04 | 0.06 | 0.04 |
| Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? | .32 | .28 | .29 | .32 | .41 | .38 | .36 | .31 |
| Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair? | .26 | .12 | .19 | .34 | .39 | .34 | .30 | .23 |
| Would you say that mostly of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are most just looking out for themselves? | .34 | .39 | .32 | .37 | .43 | .32 | .33 | .32 |
| Most people don't really care what happens to the next fellow | .23 | .23 | .31 | .35 | .38 | .18 | .22 | .15 |
| In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better | .18 | .13 | .25 | .23 | .21 | .22 | .18 | .16 |
| Number of cases | 1,424 | 72 | 188 | 211 | 196 | 193 | 324 | 238 |

Source: Computed by the authors from the 1976 General Social Survey.

Table 1 presents one measure of the independence of this leading fear-of-crime measure from other related indicators, its covariation with them. Table 1 presents the squared multiple correlation between each of six related Likert-scale measures from the 1976 survey, computed both for the sample as a whole and for each age sub-group. In general, other measures of trust, suspicion, and social change are mildly related to one another; the multiple R's for those items average about .28. The fear of crime item included in the survey clearly passes this test of its discriminant validity, however. It is correlated only .02 with the remaining

¹ This is, in fact, what they mean by "trait," and without this definition their multi-trait-multimethod matrix technique does not work. This definition implies that the hetero-trait/heteromethod diagonal should be nearly zero; if it is not, the matrix becomes very difficult to interpret.

five measures, and among the elderly this discrimination does not significantly diminish. Only among the youngest members of the sample are perceptions of crime related in any substantial way to measures of trust, suspicion, and social change.

Table 2 presents the distribution of these items, by age. Note that only the fear item differentiates the elderly from other age groups, and that on several items the elderly are among the most trusting of others. Note also that the relationship between age and fear of crime in this data is not in any way linear, but shows a step-level change at age 65.

TABLE 2—AGE AND MEASURES OF FEAR, SUSPICION, DISTRUST AND CAUTION
[In percent]

| Age | (Crime) fearful | People cannot be trusted | People take advantage | People look out for selves | Things getting worse | Don't know who to trust | Most don't care about others |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 17 to 20..... | 45 | 64 | 39 | 58 | 65 | 70 | 58 |
| 21 to 26..... | 39 | 64 | 45 | 60 | 63 | 73 | 62 |
| 27 to 32..... | 37 | 52 | 40 | 47 | 57 | 68 | 53 |
| 33 to 39..... | 44 | 53 | 37 | 52 | 61 | 76 | 60 |
| 40 to 49..... | 41 | 46 | 35 | 47 | 57 | 77 | 54 |
| 50 to 64..... | 45 | 47 | 34 | 51 | 61 | 81 | 61 |
| 65 plus..... | 54 | 49 | 30 | 46 | 61 | 79 | 63 |

Source: Computed from the 1976 General Social Survey.