

Elder Abuse and Neglect

Elder Abuse and Neglect

A Victimological and Psychological Perspective

Beverly Dolinsky

PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY
ENDICOTT COLLEGE

Robert A. Jerin

PROFESSOR OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND VICTIMOLOGY
ENDICOTT COLLEGE



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To our mothers, Diana Rolker and Marjorie J. Jerin

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Preface

When we talk about old age, each of us is talking about his or her own future. We must ask ourselves if we are willing to settle for mere survival when so much more is possible.

Robert N. Butler, M.D. (1975)

This book pays homage to all senior citizens who have been victimized, to the dedicated individuals who provide them with services, and to the first psychosocial in-depth analysis of the victimization of the elderly by Robert N. Butler, M.D. In his revolutionary, Pulitzer Prize-winning textbook, *Why Survive? Being Old in America* (1975), Dr. Butler examined numerous issues related to growing old in America and challenged society to do better. Included in his book is a study of crime victimization in Chapter 10: "Victimization of the Elderly." While Dr. Butler's initial psychological and victimological study of elder abuse and neglect was only 20 pages long, he provided an early insight into this often ignored victimization. The study of elder abuse has now blossomed into a unique discipline which seeks to create a greater appreciation of the elderly along with a more comprehensive understanding of elder abuse and neglect.

In this book we examine who the elderly are, why they are victimized, the types of victimizations that occur to the elderly, how they are different than other groups of victims, and their treatment by society at large as well as the justice and social systems in particular. Additionally, we seek out the answers to what society can do to lessen the impact and reduce the amount of victimization directed at the elderly. The authors have a wide variety of experiences working with victims, social services, and the criminal justice system. We have between us worked as a legal advocate in the court for victims of abuse, a domestic violence victims' advocate, rape crisis and domestic violence counselor, a grant writer of programs for the elderly, a teacher of interpersonal relationships for the elderly, and an advisor to community senior support programs. We have also participated in and led university-wide victim advocacy programs, community victimization surveys, and crime prevention/safety committees. We also belong to the international victimology organization (The World Society of Victimology), the national crime victims' advocacy organization (The National Organization for Victim Assistance), along with the national criminal justice and psychological organizations (The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, The American Society of Criminology, and The American Psychological Association). In addition to practical experience, we have over 50 years of academic experience where we have conducted many research projects studying crime victims'

issues and studies on the elderly supporting their well-being, along with teaching numerous courses on victimology, elder victimization, domestic violence, social psychology, and crime prevention on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. We have also experienced crime victimization. This book incorporates all of our practical and academic experiences.

When we first decided to write this book we surveyed academics in the victimological field and interviewed professionals working in elder legal and social services programs to help us identify issues and concerns students, researchers, and professionals have voiced over the years. The contents and organization of this book were based on this feedback and attempt to provide answers and resources to address these concerns.

Overview of the Book

This book is broken up into three sections to provide a systematic understanding of elder abuse and neglect. Section I, *Understanding the Elderly and Their Victimitizations*, includes Chapters 1–3, and provides a foundation for understanding the discipline of elder victimization, who the elderly are, why they face abuse and neglect, and what the theoretical understandings for abuse and neglect are. Chapter 1, “Understanding Elder Abuse: The Big Picture,” offers an overview of the historical treatment of elderly victims by the justice systems and society at large. Included in this presentation is our working definition of elderly abuse, an initial examination of the various typologies of elder abuse and neglect, legislation impacting elderly victims, and the prevalence of elder victimization. Chapter 2, “The Elderly and the Aging Process,” seeks to compare the differences in demographics within adults 65 and older as it pertains to gender, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation. In addition, the chapter describes the biological, cognitive, social, and lifestyle changes associated with aging and then provides the reader with an explanation of how changes that occur within the aging process can lead to potential victimizations. Chapter 3, “Theories of Elder Victimitization,” provides a comprehensive analysis of crime and neglect theory. The chapter lists the risk factors associated with someone becoming a victim of elder abuse as well as the risk factors associated with someone becoming an offender of elder abuse. The chapter also describes how the demographic, physical, and psychosocial factors of the victim and offender vary dependent upon the form of abuse experienced/perpetrated. Also included in this chapter is a list and description of the theories that explain why an offender abuses elderly victims as well as how an individual finds themselves as a victim.

Section II, *Typologies of Elder Abuse and Neglect*, includes Chapters 4–8. This section’s focus is on the various victimizations which are encompassed under elder abuse and neglect. Starting with Chapter 4, “Physical and Sexual Abuse,” an examination of violent crimes by both strangers and individuals close to the elderly are thoroughly analyzed. Using the most current crime data available, a picture of the

amount of physical and sexual victimization of the elderly is made clear. Chapter 5, “Psychological and Emotional Abuse,” defines psychological abuse and describes the power tactics offenders use that result in elder psychological abuse. This chapter also summarizes the potential interventions that can be used to prevent and/or treat psychological abuse as well as the resources available to victims and their families. Chapter 6, “Financial and Material Exploitation,” tackles the modern-day problems of economic victimizations against the elderly. The topics of fraud, identity theft, exploitation, corporate criminality, and other types of economic victimizations that impact the elderly are studied. Chapter 7, “Neglect and Abandonment,” analyzes the role of caregivers and family members play in the victimization of the elderly. The various types of elder neglect are examined along with the signs and symptoms of neglect and abandonment. Chapter 8, “Self-Neglect,” describes what self-neglect is. The chapter examines the balancing act of allowing elders the freedom to choose how they would prefer to live versus assuring their safety and well-being. The chapter also summarizes the symptoms of self-neglect as well as the risk factors and the intervention process.

Lastly, Section III, Elder Abuse and Neglect Interventions and Programs, includes Chapters 9–11. This section examines the justice, medical, and human services systems that react to the occurrence of elder abuse and neglect and seek to provide remedies to the elderly victims. Chapter 9, “Elder Abuse and the Justice Systems,” presents an examination of the issues and programs elderly crime victims find in the criminal justice and civil justice systems. In Chapter 9 the laws enacted to protect the elderly and the elderly crime victim and law enforcement function are examined. Also, Chapter 9 provides information on how the court systems can be used to seek remedies or even to prevent elder abuse and neglect. The use of the civil courts to obtain protection orders, civil monetary judgements, and other remedies is made clear. Chapter 10, “Service Intervention Agencies,” lists and summarizes elder abuse intervention agencies. It describes the multi-step process of activities Adult Protective Services uses when handling cases of suspected elder abuse and describes the assistance Adult Protective Services can provide in cases of suspected elder abuse. Chapter 10 also reviews the important role victim services, area agencies on aging, and health care professionals play in detecting, intervening in, and preventing elder abuse. The final chapter, Chapter 11, “Best Practice Intervention Strategies,” concludes with an analysis of the programs currently available to elderly victims and a prediction of what lies ahead for victims of elder abuse and neglect. Legislative initiatives, victim services, and criminal justice policy issues are all presented.

We believe this book is a comprehensive analysis of who the elderly are and what the victims of elder abuse and neglect need. We have tried to incorporate all the important topics that would fall into an overview of psychological and victimological significance. We thank the professionals who work with the elderly victims for allowing us to pick your brains. Additionally, we acknowledge all of the cutting-edge research currently underway in an effort to provide a better understanding of the elder abuse phenomenon. A special thanks to our editors at Carolina Press and to reviewers for their insightful analysis of our work. We have tried to include all of the recommen-

dations that were provided by these individuals. Still, we know there might be some issues that we have not addressed and as such we invite and encourage comment, critique, and criticism of this work so that it may continue to evolve to better meet the needs of students and professionals in the field.

References

Butler, R. N. (1975). *Why survive? Being old in America*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Acknowledgments

We would first like to thank all the dedicated service personnel who assist elderly abuse and neglect survivors everyday as they try to cope with their victimizations and then put their lives back together. Additionally, to the academicians and practitioners who are providing valuable training, education and research to provide society with an understanding of the elderly abuse and neglect field. The information and encouragement provided by these professionals has been invaluable.

We would like to also thank peers and current colleagues for their support, encouragement and assistance in making this book a reality. There are also many individuals and organizations who have provided information, advise and editorial critique of our manuscript who also must be recognized. We would like to thank Meg Heap, District Attorney of Chatham County, GA, Candace Waldron, Elder Services Program Manager, North Shore Elder Services, Renee Gauthier, Director of Protective Services, SeniorCare Inc., Carole Malone, Assistant Secretary, Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Alex Graham, Former Director of Protective Services, Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Denise Bradley, Director of Operations at the Executive Office of Elder Affairs in Massachusetts, and our publishers, Carolina Academic Press, especially TJ Smithers, Ryland Bowman, and Beth Hall, for taking a chance on a new book in an important field.

Lastly, but most importantly we would like to recognize the tremendous courage of the survivors of elderly abuse and neglect. Their fight for justice continues.

