PREYING ON POVERTY: HOW SERIAL RAPISTS EXPLOIT THE VULNERABILITY OF SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE

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Background and Justification

According to crime scholars, socially disadvantaged people are often victimized at a higher rate than people who are not (e.g., Holmes & Holmes, 2009; Thacher 2004). Although this is a generalization, the focus of this research is to evaluate whether or not and why socially disadvantaged people are vulnerable to serial rape. While the literature examines the victimization of the elderly, children, and racial minorities, there is a dearth of literature that details the direct victimization of people who have low incomes. It is essential for empirical data to be developed and researched before being able to determine effective interventions, which could be studied and conducted by social workers and criminologists.

Social work has always been a field dedicated to social justice, helping people in need, and addressing social problems (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). Social workers seek to “promote the responsiveness of organization, communities, and other social institutions to individuals’ needs and social problems” (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). The current study focuses on socio-economic disadvantage and its relationship to victimization. One of the social work theories that informs this research is the Culture of Poverty perspective which is a way of life handed from generation to generation along family lines. The culture of poverty is not just a matter of deprivation or disorganization . . . It is a culture in the traditional anthropological sense in that it provides human being with a design for living, with a ready-made set of solutions for human problems, and so serves a significant adaptive function (Lewis, 1966, p. 19).
If poverty is intergenerational, criminal victimization may also be an intergenerational experience. According to the Culture of Poverty theory, people who are considered below the poverty line show a “hatred of the police, mistrust of government and of [people] in high positions and a cynicism that extends to the church” (Lewis, 1966, p. 23). All of these factors contribute to people’s fit into their environment and point to the intersection of crime within the Routine Activities Approach (Felson 1994).

According to the routine activities perspective, crime is more likely to occur when there is an intersection of a motivated offender, lack of a capable guardian, and a suitable target in time and space. A mistrust of people in authority and feelings of marginality and inferiority could explain lack of reporting or asking for help, rendering socioeconomically disadvantaged people vulnerable compared to other members of society. Furthermore, people who are socially disadvantaged often live in high crime neighborhoods and may be constrained to commuting and traveling in public spaces under periods of relatively low guardianship (e.g. lack of police presence, security systems, and the lack of capable bystanders due to neighborhood transience).

Social Class and Victimization

There is a scarcity of literature that addresses victim selection and the extent to which offenders target people who are socially disadvantaged. Although data suggest that the people considered socially disadvantaged are disproportionately victimized in terms of homicide and other violent crimes (Holmes & Holmes, 2010; Wohfarth,
Winkel, Ybema, & Van den Brink, 2001), little is known about whether people who are socially disadvantaged have a higher probability of being raped or sexually assaulted. This study will examine the victimization of economically disadvantaged individuals by serial rapists and will investigate the special circumstances that render them more vulnerable. An additional goal is to develop a qualitative coding method for determining the socioeconomic status of victims in news accounts. This is important because systematic approaches for estimating social class based on news content is lacking from the literature.

There are a variety of reasons why studying the sexual victimization of socially disadvantaged people is important, especially in the context of class and socioeconomic status. Scholars have demonstrated that people in this group experience a host of negative life outcomes. For example, Wohfarth and associates state that socioeconomic inequality (SEI) “plays a central role, as a vulnerability factor, in the stress-distress literature” (2001, p. 362). People who are considered low on the scale of socioeconomic inequality (SEI) are more likely to suffer a variety of negative life outcomes:

Persons who are disadvantaged in terms of SEI are also expected to display higher levels of distress. This relationship has been long documented and is partly the result of previous life events and long-term difficulties . . . [this population is] expected to be more vulnerable to the negative effects of criminal victimization (Wohfarth et al. 2001, p. 362).
Negative Life Outcomes

There are a significant amount of negative life outcomes that result from being in a lower socioeconomic class such as poor physical and mental health, food insecurity, dependence on sex work, less educational opportunity, increased likelihood for criminal activity, homelessness, and stress (Murnane, 2007; Poverty in America, 2007; Hoefer & Curry, 2012).

Physical health and mental health are both affected by socioeconomic status. Nurius, Uehara, and Zatzick found that “psychiatric disorders also have biological representations, and they intersect with etiologies of physical disorders” (2013, p. 94). Correlated effects include depression and coronary artery disease. Because “the highest overall prevalence rates of psychiatric disorders consistently occur among persons of lowest socioeconomic status” (Nurius, Uehara & Zatzick, 2013), people who are below the poverty level are more likely to experience physical and mental health issues. Nurius, Uehara & Zatzick further explain how stress contributes to mental illness in poverty: “Early life stress and chronic conditions of adversity such as poverty, abuse, and discrimination are gaining increasing scrutiny as incremental roots of later health and behavioral health disparity” (Nurius, Uehara, Zatzick, 2013, p. 92). That is to say that different theories and models are linking early life stressors, socioeconomic status, mental health, and physical health. Seventeen of 20 true prevalence studies reported higher rates of psychopathology in the lowest compared to the highest social class. Mental disorders, on average, were 2.6 times more prevalent among individuals in the lowest than in the highest socioeconomic stratum (Kohn...
&Mirotznik, 1998). These adverse effects from childhood and adulthood can lead to mental illnesses such as PTSD and ADHD (Nurius, Uehara, Zatzick, 2013; Russell, Ford, Rosenberg, Kelly, 2014). Not only is poverty a precursor to mental illness, but severe mental illness predisposes one to poverty. Draine states that “people with mental illness are more likely to be poor, and that this is linked to problems in adequate housing and employment and greater involvement in substance use and the criminal justice system” (2013, p. 88).

People with a low SEI have a predisposition to poor physical health as well as behavioral health. The study entitled Poverty in America states that adverse health outcomes are due to limited access to health care, “exposure to environmental hazards and engaging in risky behaviors” (2007, p. 2). Environmental conditions such as air pollutants caused by people in poor urban areas living close to highways can lead to “acute health conditions” (Poverty in America, 2007, p. 2).

Food insecurity is also part of the reason why physical and mental disorders are so prevalent among people living in the lower socioeconomic strata, which adds to the increased stress people who live in poverty experience. People who are considered food insecure meet the following conditions:

- worry of running out of food before getting money to buy more, the food supply did not last and there is no money to buy more; unable to afford food to make balanced meals; adults felt they ate less than they should, or adults
reduced the size of their meal or skipped meals for 3 or more months (Hoefer & Curry, 2012, p. 61-62).

The above qualifiers for food insecurities can be exacerbated by other stressors people with low SES experience, such as poor educational opportunities, dangerous neighborhoods, unsafe living conditions, and low wages. However, food insecurity is most prominently linked with lack of financial resources, and thus could work as a potential indicator of low socioeconomic status. Poor education is also linked with the lack of financial resources and could also serve as an indicator: “Children living in poverty...tend to be concentrated in low-performing schools staffed by ill-equipped teachers. They are likely to leave school without the skills needed to earn a decent living in a rapidly changing economy” (Murnane, 2007, p. 161).

Murnane points out that children living in poverty are likely to leave high school without a diploma and without the necessary skills to earn a living (Murnane, 2007). Poverty is not only a dramatic stressor and influences physical health, mental health, and food insecurity, but becomes a vicious cycle due to the lack of educational opportunities in these areas.

As suggested by the empirical literature, people living at the low end of the SEI scale are likely to experience high levels of stress. Not only can the negative life outcomes they experience act as stressors, but falling victim to a severe crime can increase stress and therefore negative outcomes. Thus, it is important that researchers explore offender selection and the social context of victimization. Factors such as the
environment that affect offender selection can inform crime control programs and policies that protect potential victims.

**Environmental Indicators and Victimization**

The people living at the lower end of the social hierarchy have significantly different environments than their “higher status counterparts.” These settings are characterized by higher levels of both physical and social forms of environmental stress and toxins. Examples include environmental pollutants, crowding, and chronic noise as well as relatively high levels of crime, violence, discrimination, and conflict, with cascading circumstances or events such as job loss, high conflict within families, maltreatment, loss of family members, residential instability, and developmental disruptions. (Nurius, Uehara, & Zatzick, 2013, p. 99).

The literature suggests that people who have a lower socioeconomic status are at a significantly increased risk of being victimized, and are more prone to experience the aforementioned negative life outcomes. There are several indicators identifying a lower socioeconomic status including unemployment, chronic homelessness, using public transportation and engaging in prostitution. Quinet (2001) listed a number of factors associated with higher crime victimization rates for people experiencing homelessness: lack of shelter, physical proximity to high crime areas, engaging in high
risk behaviors such as sex work, a history of previous victimization, mental illness, and substance abuse. Even when considering property crime, the people of lower socioeconomic status who were considered “worse off” demonstrated risk factors such as a “young head of household, children in the household, lone-parent household, and low level of household security” (Hope, 2008, p. 202).

In Wohfarth et associates’ study, unemployment is “hypothesized to play a central role in the occurrence of criminal victimization and in the consequently ensuing distress” (2001, p. 362). Subjects showed a higher rate [of appearance in the victimization pool] (11%) compared to all other classes combined (6%), Furthermore, Quinet (2011) found that unemployed people, homeless individuals, and prostitutes are not only victimized at a higher rate generally, but are victimized at a higher rate for more severe crimes: “A closer inspection of the relationship according to type of victimization indicates that the higher rate of victimization experienced by the unemployed is due to higher rates of more severe crimes, rather than to property crimes” (Wohfarth et al, 2001, p. 364).

Quinet found that “32% of all female victims of serial murder were known prostitutes” (2011, p. 93). Not only does this suggest that female prostitutes are targets for serial murder offenders, but further research shows that this specific targeting has been increasing over time. However, there was at least one discrepancy found in the literature that surprised the authors. Wohfarth et al report that: “The relationship of SES (measured in terms of education) with victimization risk is in the opposite direction to that of class” (Wohfarth et al, 2001, p. 368). Wohfarth and his colleagues
found that as amount of education increased, the risk of being victimized increased as well.

Victimology is concerned with how offenders select their victims whether meticulously or impulsively. Victimologists also attempt to discuss and investigate the characteristics of the victims that render them more or less likely to be selected by the offender. New victim focused research has explored the experience of crime from the victim’s viewpoint, and uncovered new information about the complex set of circumstances that lead to a criminal act taking place; circumstances which have as much to do with the opportunity and chance as the pathology of the criminal (Author?, Ch. 7, p. 197).

In the victimization literature, Wohfarth et al. (2001) used a general categorization of crimes rather than conducting the study based on the type of crime the victim experienced. The subjects were self-identified victims of household burglary, contact robbery, threat, assault, or sex-related crimes. Their research is unique because the authors focused on living victims of crime, whereas much of the literature that exists on crime victimization details victims of homicide or serial homicide. Wohfarth and his colleagues provided a broader, all-encompassing approach to victimization of people with low socioeconomic status. Their findings were consistent with much of the other literature detailing victimization patterns.

**Repeat Victimization Literature**

Research implies that people who have been victims of violent crimes or
assault will be at an increased risk for victimization after. Victims will engage in increasingly risky behaviors, go out at night, etc. Previous research suggested a range of possibilities: “victimization causes individuals to engage in risky behaviors, victimization leads to protective behaviors, or victimization has no influence on lifestyles” (Bunch, Clay-Warner, & McMahon-Howard, p. 588). While the previous studies indicate that routine activities following victimization are the variables responsible for re-victimization, Bunch, Clay-Warner, and McMahon-Howard (2013) found that

Victims tend to possess riskier lifestyles than non-victimized individuals, suggesting that they are at a greater risk of repeat victimization. These differences are not caused by victimization; rather, they are the result of underlying differences-demographic, environmental, and lifestyle differences-between victims and nonvictims. The heterogeneity leads to victimization, subsequent risky lifestyles, and-by implication-increased risk of subsequent victimization (p. 588).

If the above researchers’ findings are consistent, this suggests that demographic data such as socioeconomic status is important because of the increased chance of victimization and re-victimization.

**Serial Rape Definition**

Although there is data detailing victimization of people who are living in
poverty pertaining to general crimes, the research is limited on the specifics of the underclass being disproportionately victimized by rape. Rape is commonly defined as “the forced compliance or submission of an individual to unwanted or coerced sexual activity” (Burgess, 1991, p. 143). According to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2010), forcible rape involves the use of sexual penetration against one’s will. Attempts or assaults to commit rape by force or threat of force are also included; Statutory rape (without the use of force) and other sex offenses are excluded. Other legal definitions define rape more broadly. For example, the Ohio Revised Code (2907.02) defines rape as coerced sexual conduct, which includes:

vaginal intercourse between a male and female; anal intercourse, fellatio, and cunnilingus between persons regardless of sex; and, without privilege to do so, the insertion, however slight, of any part of the body or any instrument, apparatus, or other object into the vaginal or anal opening of another. Penetration, however slight, is sufficient to complete vaginal or anal intercourse (2011).

In order to categorize rape as a serial crime, it is necessary to use the definition of serial murder as a base. Serial Murder is “the killing of three or more people over a period of more than 30 days, with a significant cooling-off period between the killings” (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p. 6). The Crime Classification Manual (1992) defines serial rape as “three or more separate events, with an emotional cooling off
period [between offenses] . . .” (p. 12). Graney and Arrigo (2002) state that “a serial rapist is a person who has committed two or more acts of sexual assault on at least two victims on separate occasions. Finally, Hazelwood and Warren (1989) define a serial rapist as “a predator who had offended against at least 10 victims.” These different definitions are along the lines of the FBI definitions of serial killings:

The term ‘serial killings’ means a series of three or more killings, not less than one of which was committed within the United States, having common characteristics such as to suggest the reasonable possibility that the crimes were committed by the same actor or actors (2008, p. #).

Because serial rape as a definition was gleaned from the definition of serial murder, it is important to look at the implications of serial murder victimization literature. The literature considering serial homicide (Holmes & Holmes, 2010) suggests that there is an important link between the socioeconomically disadvantaged and serial rapist victimization.

In terms of serial murder, there is evidence that people of lower socioeconomic status are victimized at a higher rate. Holmes & Holmes (2010) report that “victims [of homicide] are more likely to come from (1) areas with high rates of divorce, (2) one-person households, and (3) areas of high rate of unemployment” (2010, p. 222), all of which are indicators of lower socioeconomic status. Not only have those indicators
proved significant in the relationship between serial homicide and victim selection, but Holmes and Holmes (2010, p. 227) also found that certain victims are under “extreme risk: because of these people’s daily activities, they are in situations where they risk vulnerability and victimization. What kinds of people might these be? Prostitutes. Exotic dancers. The homeless and indigent.”

In order to properly procure the dataset, it was necessary to establish a working definition of a serial rapist. The following definition was created using the FBI’s definition, and other information about serial murder, as a guide:

Three or more separate events of sexual coercion (with or without penetration) that occur over a period greater than 72 hours. The offenders are actively seeking, hunting, or luring victims as their principal goal. Attacks are linked together (by police, media, or both) by some set of offense characteristics that may include the offender’s physical characteristics, a common style of attack, or characteristics of the victim. Rapists that kill their victims are not included to distinguish from serial killers. (Vander Ven, Wright, & Fesmire, 2014, p. 24).

Although there is a significant amount of literature that generally points to victimization of people with lower socioeconomic status, there is a gap when considering direct links from serial rape to victimization of people who live with low SES. The current study, using the above definition, will attempt to determine what
link, if any, exists between serial rapist victimization and socioeconomic status with special attention to the reasons for lower-class vulnerability.

**Theoretical Perspective**

**Criminological Theories**

Three criminological theories offer useful insights into understanding victimization probability. These related, but distinct, perspectives are: The Lifestyle Approach (Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garofalo, 1978), the Routine Activities Approach (Cohen & Felson, 1979), and the Broken Window Hypothesis (Wilson & Kelling, 1982):

**The Broken Window Hypothesis**

The Broken Window Hypothesis discusses the way in which neighborhoods decline. Wilson and Kelling state that:

> at the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence. Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken *and is left unrepaired*, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken” (1989, p. 466).

Essentially, if the rest of the windows in that building are broken they would be a symbol of a lack of social attachment in the community and signals that “no one cares” (Wilson & Kelling, 1989, p. 466). Wilson and Kelling also state that disorder and crime are linked; if the community signals indifference and disorder there will be...
an increase in the crime rate. When crime increases many become frightened and “avoid one another” (1989, p. 467). Citizens may call the police, but “crime continues and disorder is not abated and...the citizens may soon stop calling the police, because ‘they can’t do anything’” (1989, p. 467). Because of the fear in the community, citizens no longer trust each other, while they also mistrust the police as well because of their seemingly ineffective mechanisms. The Broken Window Hypothesis fits in with Routine Activity Approach because it demonstrates the decay of capable guardianship and loss of informal and formal social controls.

The Lifestyle Approach

The Lifestyle Approach states that

the probability of convergence in space and time of these three components of a criminal violation depends on the structure of normal, everyday activities.

People’s daily routines vary by age, marital and work status, and living arrangements (Cao & Maume, 1993, p. 15).

Another facet of the Lifestyle Approach includes the amount of risk in one’s daily life: “as risks become regular or routine-or, alternatively, as risk-generating routines proliferate-so risks become embedded into the structure of everyday life” (Hope, 2001, p. 196). People who are considered “lower class” are more prone to offending, and “more vulnerable to the risks of crime, in all its forms, since they [are] socially,
culturally, and spatially proximate to and familiar with offenders” (Hope, 2001, p. 197). In a sense, people who are more advantaged and have more resources buy safety and capable guardianship: “Poverty attracts an unfortunate abundance of risks. By contrast, the wealthy (in income, power, or education) can purchase safety and freedom from that risk” (Beck, 1992, p. 35). Risk has been evaluated as a good predictor in serial murder as well. According to Quinet (2011)’s findings, the risk of victimization increased for serial murder victims as their routine activities became riskier.

**Routine Activities Approach**

Routine Activity Approach states that crime occurs at the convergence of time and space of three factors: lack of a capable guardianship, a motivated offender, and a suitable target. A capable guardian could be “any sort of measure that would deter a criminal because of its presence, such as: locked doors and windows, alarms systems, dogs, and the presence of other people” (Cohen & Felson, 1979, p. 588). When these three factors coexist in time and space, the likelihood for criminal activity increases. Routine Activity Approach provides one framework for researchers to explore how offenders choose their victims.

Material capable guardianship such as surveillance cameras and security systems are predominantly available to people who have a higher socioeconomic status. The higher the socioeconomic status, the more resources are available. Lack of resources could serve as a theoretical indicator of social disadvantage in terms of
victimization because resources offer the opportunity of buying the people with a higher socioeconomic status out of risk (Beck, 1992). Having a higher socioeconomic status offers the opportunity to purchase capable guardianship and varying degrees of protection.

**Social Work Theories**

**Culture of Poverty Theory**

Lewis asserts that the culture of poverty is primarily a western phenomenon (1966). As mentioned in the introduction, the culture of poverty provides people with a specific way of living and solving problems, meaning a culture or family system’s disadvantage can affect their routine activities. Because problem solving can be intergenerational, the culture of poverty is passed down through family lines. Lewis (1966) states

> wherever it [the culture of poverty] occurs, its practitioners exhibit remarkable similarity in the structure of their families, in interpersonal relations, in spending habits, in their value systems and in their orientation in time (p. 19).

The above qualities: interpersonal relations, family structure, and orientation in time, are intertwined with routine activities and capable guardianship. If families pass down their routine activities, and their routine activities can lead to increased risk of victimization, one can reasonably assert that victimization risk can also be passed down through generations.
Lewis (1966) identified 70 traits that “characterize the culture of poverty” (p. 21). Some of them include:

the relationship between the subculture and the larger society; the nature of the slum community; the nature of the family, and the attitudes, value and character structure of the individual. The disengagement, the non-integration, of the poor with respect to the major institutions of society is a crucial element in the culture of poverty (p. 21).

Many of these aforementioned traits are related to the characteristics of the populations listed in the key terms in Appendix A. Prostitutes and undocumented workers will be more disengaged from the larger society because they are illegal due to their status. The “nature of the slum community” is addressed with the “housing projects” key term (p. 21).

**The Person-In-Environment Perspective**

The Person-In-Environment perspective is a key theory in the social work profession. It originally stemmed from the ecological systems theory, both originated by Bronfenbrenner (1979) which suggests that “organisms have an interdependent relationship with other organisms in their environment” (Dybcz, 2015, p. 238). This biological definition is applied to human behavior in the Person-In-Environment perspective. It:

begins from a position that recognizes the interdependence of phenomena in
affecting, changing and sustaining human life. Such phenomena are conceptualized as if they occur and operate on different ‘levels’—micro, meso, macro—in attempts to categorize and account for the complexity within which social and human life exists and to which social and human life contribute” (Green & McDermott, 2010, p. 2146-2147)

According to the above description, person-in-environment fit involves how different aspects of a person’s environment contribute to their way of life. Within these levels, people are seen as “working with environments, rather than working despite environments. We see ourselves as part of a context” (2147).

The Person-In-Environment theory fits well with the Routine Activities Approach and Lifestyle Theory. If a person’s environment includes the intersection of lack of a capable guardian, likely offenders, and a suitable target, they are more likely to be a victim of a crime, which demonstrates the environment is not protecting them or fitting their needs. The above theories also have implications for social work practice: “if crime is, as Durkheim suggests, normal and inevitable, [people] who commit crime need not be written off as evil monsters or pathological deviants” (Crime, p. 177). If crime is inevitable and related to the environment, this suggests that scholars and practitioners can develop strategies that help people who are socially disadvantaged to safely navigate risk in their daily routines.
Data

The current study is part of a larger project geared towards creating an offender profile for serial rapists. This study will be conducted using an extensive qualitative dataset of 1037 serial rapists (Vander Ven, Wright, & Fesmire, 2014). Instances of serial rape were identified through a systematic search of a national newspaper database which was entitled Proquest. Although the time parameter for this study is 1940 until 2010, the current study focuses on data from 1990-2010, because of a significant spike in occurrences of serial rape, and more detail on offender and victim characteristics were found (Vander Ven, Wright, & Fesmire, 2014). Qualitative newspaper research was identified as an innovative and effective method of data collection because serial rape affects a multitude of people and is extreme enough to be considered newsworthy (2014). This method of research is innovative because other research has been focused on quantitative data analysis on incarcerated offenders. Using newspaper articles allows for serial rapists who have not been incarcerated to be studied as well. Newspapers also tend to provide more information such as ages of victims, location of crimes, and further background about the victim. This allows for a more thorough understanding of the crime and the victim, providing more opportunities for research. Newspaper articles also allowed for at-large and deceased offenders to be noted, rather than limiting the offender pool to only people who were detained, incarcerated or otherwise officially processed.

The data were gathered using samples from The Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, and the Washington Post. The
newspaper selection was based on outlets being readily available within the database, and being major national newspapers that cover most major geographical areas in the United States. The data were collected using Proquest: a global research database used by libraries consisting of scholarly articles, newspaper databases, and books.

**Methods**

As previously noted, the research question is: do serial rapists victimize people who are socially disadvantaged and, if so, in what ways are victims vulnerable to serial offenders? There is a vast amount of information detailing the offenders’ methods, offense date range, race, and other variables. Part of this approach is dedicated to identifying characteristics of the offense site that may indicate the socioeconomic status of the victim. Although different ages and races are factors in the offenders’ victimization choice, the data available on socioeconomic status is more widespread. The data on race and age is more concrete, yet limited. Therefore, the methodology will be more focused on creating indicators of people who have low socioeconomic status. The methodology is based on Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory strives to derive theory from qualitative data. Glaser and Strauss state that

theory based on data can usually not be completely refuted by more data or replaced by another theory. Since it is too intimately linked to data, it is
destined to last despite its inevitable modification and reformulation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 4).

The process of Grounded Theory is described in Getting Wasted (2011) Vander Ven’s study of college drinking culture. After data is collected, the data is coded for content, which is then reviewed multiple times. Upon reviewing, recurrent themes are identified. For example, creating these themes included a set of key terms pulled from the data: bus stop, middle class, immigrant, etc. which will identify the range of information that is available in the newspaper articles. If these terms were identified in an article, they were noted on coding sheets and catalogued into thematic categories (i.e. immigrants, homeless). Using Grounded Theory, the data was analyzed and formed into assertions about why socially disadvantaged people in these themes are victimized. Another method known as analytic induction, formulated by Znaniecki, was used in conjunction with Grounded Theory (Tacq, 2007). Znaniecki emphasized the principle of abstraction and then generalization, and describes it in four steps:

1. Discover which characteristics in a given datum of a certain class are more, and which are less essential.
2. Abstract these characteristics, and assume hypothetically that the more essential are more general, i.e., must be found in a greater variety of classes.
3. Test this hypothesis by investigating two kinds of classes, those in which the more essential and those in which the less essential characteristics are found.

4. Establish a classification, i.e., organize all these classes into a scientific system, based on the functions of the respective characteristics (Tacq, 194).

The approach will include identifying the primary offense site(s) used and/or the occupation of the victims in order to determine the socioeconomic status of the victim. In order to definitively measure class, Wohfarth et al. used two different measures of SEI (Socioeconomic Inequality): social class and socioeconomic status (SES). Upon examination of these two measures, the authors determined social class and SES are not interchangeable and subsequently used both types of SEI measures. The authors state that socio-economic status is related to the “unequal distribution of socially valued commodities, such as income, prestige or education” (p. 362).

Whereas, four criteria were used to determine social class: being an employee or self-employed, control over labor power, control over decisions in the workplace, and control over one’s work” (p. 362). Within these parameters, seven social classes were defined. However, there are other indicators that signaled a lack of resources in the lower class and even those who experience homelessness and have no resources at all. Quinet states the victimization of those experiencing homelessness includes:
lack of shelter (no desk, no door, no counter to block an offender), physical proximity to high crime areas, engaging in high risk behaviors such as sex work, a history of previous victimization, mental illness, and substance abuse (Quinet, 2011, p. 80).

Along with these aforementioned factors, Quinet (year) also mentions poor health, sex work, substance abuse, and homelessness as a separate variable. Not only do these factors directly correlate with homelessness, but with the characteristics of prostitution as well. It is argued that the nature of sex work itself renders someone socially disadvantaged and possibly lower class. There are more behavioral patterns that could occur due to the variables Wohfarth et al. (year) used including crime, offending, and victimization.

As mentioned, these sexual offenses occur due to the internal logic of Routine Activity Approach, and the qualities of Routine Activity Approach are environmental. These qualities, essentially, have an impact on the person, their environment, and the person-in-environment fit. Because social workers are trained to gauge person-in-environment fit, it is important for them to be able to assess a client’s likelihood of victimization (citation).

The data were examined from the offense date range of 1990-2010 because there was a spike of offenses documented between those dates and because those years provide rich detail in terms of offender and victim characteristics. Within these time parameters, multiple variables identified within the dataset were examined including
offense site, time of the attack, occupation of the offender, and offender attack methods. The "attack methods" section included details such as patterns and specifics about singular cases that did not fit alternate variables. These variables were coded for specific SES content. The SES content led to the list of "SES Terms" found in Appendix A. The key terms that were most prominent in the dataset turned into "vulnerability themes." The researcher examined the newspaper articles associated with the "vulnerability themes" and cataloged a "vulnerability quote log," used to assess why socially disadvantaged people seem to be at a greater risk for victimization.

The key terms were identified by examining the dataset as well as the literature. Some key terms such as “INS/Immigration agents” were selected because of an immigrant’s predisposition to social disadvantage and vulnerability due to immigration status, forcing them into working-class jobs and leaving them susceptible to manipulation. Other key terms such as “bus stop” and “subway” were found to be significant based on the literature. Steinmetz-Wood and Kestens (2015) found that those living in neighborhoods possessing a lower socioeconomic status were less likely to walk or use other forms of active transport methods to travel. This is especially true during the day when more capable guardians are around. People who are poor are constrained to walking or taking public transportation in relatively high crime neighborhoods. Using public transportation or walking in high crime areas at night increases their access to likely offenders and decreases their access to capable guardians. Methods of public transportation were also evaluated with other variables.
such as time of day. Many working class jobs involve working outside the 9:00-5:00pm range, exposing people who have lower socioeconomic status to attack on buses or subways late at night, or earlier in the morning, when less capable guardianship is around.

The definition of serial rape used for this particular study states that offenders actively seek and hunt victims. Newspaper articles were used in order to determine "why" the socially disadvantaged are "hunted" or "what" puts them at an increased risk, rather than "how much" or "how often" are they victimized. Because social workers aim to help the socially disadvantaged, identifying why they are victimized can help build awareness and create prevention strategies throughout the social work community.

**Findings**

There were 6 main themes pertaining to the traits or routine activities of the victims that emerged from analyzing the data. These include: 1) transportation without capable guardianship, 2) immigrants as suitable targets, 3) socially disadvantaged people live and work in proximity to likely offenders, 4) occupational risk as a factor in victimization of socially disadvantaged people, 5) homelessness as a risk factor, and 6) the middle and upper class as attractive targets. Due to the review of the literature, homelessness, transportation without capable guardianship, occupational risk, and location and proximity to likely offenders were expected as themes. Although the literature did not explicitly point to immigration status, and occupational
risks such as store clerks as themes, they were not surprising. The one theme that was surprising was that the middle and upper class were attractive targets, which contradicted the literature.

Transportation without capable guardianship

Some of the key terms used involved transportation including bus stop, bus, and subway. Peters (1986) states that “transportation is general easier for the more affluent, whereas the poor rely on public transportation” (p. 269). To the working class, public transportation is a necessity. It is “desired by many but is even more important for lower-income people who can’t afford cars” (White, 2015). Although public transportation in large cities is not directly an indicator of disadvantage, there are mediating variables such as time of day and guardianship that put people who are socially disadvantaged more at risk of victimization when using public transportation. Time of day can indicate disadvantage because many night-shift or extremely early day-shift jobs indicate working class status:

“It was in early 1990 that police noticed a serial rapist was preying on lone Latinas as they walked to bus stops early in the morning, most of them on their way to domestic jobs or factories, where they worked as seamstresses” (Bustillo, 1993, para. 11).
There is demographic data available pertaining to Los Angeles commuters who take public transportation. The median income of commuters is around $15,000, and 22% of public transportation commuters live in poverty, vs only 11.1% of all commuters (Walker, 2014). Walker states about 71% of commuters using public transportation are Hispanic (2014). The data represents a higher portion of socially disadvantaged people using public transportation in LA than all commuters. Transportation for socially disadvantaged people without capable guardianship was found as a theme as well as a victimization risk. Unfortunately, this risk only increases late at night or early in the morning:

All of the attacks have taken place between 5:45 and 8 a.m. police said. Many of the victims were on their way to work or school, and were assaulted as they waited at bus stops or walked on sidewalks (Leovy, 2003, para. 3).

He would often pose as a handyman to enter victims’ homes, or assault women as they walked to bus stops in the early morning, authorities said (Bustillo, 1993, para. 6).

Because there is less activity early in the morning or late at night, there is less capable guardianship. The risk of victimization increases as capable guardianship decreases. Although the above cases involved only bus stops, other methods of public transportation increase victimization as well:
“A man arrested last week in the rape and robbery of a 27 year-old German ballerina in a Manhattan PATH station. . .The ballerina, who was taking dance lessons in the city, was attacked about 1:50 A.M. on August 11” (Sullivan, 1991, p. B3).

“A man wanted in connection with four rapes at subway and bus stops in 65-Brooklyn. . .Six months later, on Sept. 5, the police said, a man fitting Mr. Smith’s description robbed, raped, and sodomized a 20-year-old woman after following her onto a G train at the Smith-Ninth Street Station in Carroll Gardens shortly after 11:30 pm” (Roane, 1998, p. 39).

In this particular study, hitchhiking is considered public transportation because of the increased access to likely offenders vs. private transportation:

charging him with raping three women hitchhikers he picked up on separate occasions in the San Fernando Valley and took to a North Hollywood trailer park where the assaults occurred (Los Angeles Times, 1991, para. 5).

The increased exposure to likely offenders contributes to the increased victimization of hitchhikers. Hitchhikers, because they enter closed vehicles with possible likely offenders, also experience a lack of capable guardianship. The potential offender is
mostly in control of that environment and can take the hitchhiker to locations at their
discretion (with no guardianship). Generally, people who are socially disadvantaged
are more inclined to use methods of public transportation late in the evening or early
morning or decide to hitchhike. Hitchhikers are considered disadvantaged because of
their lack of access to alternate and safer methods of transportation.

**Immigrants as Suitable Targets**

There are many reasons why likely offenders would choose to victimize
immigrants. There was evidence in the data that specifically Hispanic/Latina
immigrants were sought out:

> The rapist targeted Latinas in their late teens and early 20s, and typically struck
in the predawn hours” (Blankstein, 2004, para. 3)

> The case against Fuentes, who was described by police as a religious man who
loves his family, stemmed from a string of sexual assaults, mainly against poor
Latinas” (Bustillo, 1993, para. 5).

> Tyler Fox, an attorney who helped the three immigrants contact authorities
about Fharah, said the victims may have been selected because they appeared
vulnerable. All three immigrants are men in their 20s and 30s who lived in East
Boston and are Spanish-speaking (Wong, 1992, para. 4).
In many instances, serial offenders will victimize immigrants because they have a fear of the authorities. This aligns with the Culture of Poverty, which states that those who are impoverished experience a hatred and mistrust of those in authority, including the police, and are disengaged with the larger institutions of society. The immigrant’s hesitation to contact the police decrease their access to capable guardianship.

“The police said they believed the rapist preyed on immigrants because many are afraid to contact the police for fear that they will be reported for immigration violations” (Wski, 1995, para. 26).

“Dunn explained that there may be several other women who are afraid to come forward because of their status as illegal aliens. At a press conference Wednesday, he said that police investigators will not turn any illegal aliens who came forward as victims over to immigration officials” (Connelly, 1990, para. 16).

INS agents with predatory intentions may present a risk to some immigrants because they could use their badge and threaten the victims with more specific concerns such as deportation. For example, one INS agent used his federal authority to isolate and rape Latina immigrants:
Dunn said that in the incidents under investigation, Riley approached Latinas on the street while he was off duty but driving his federal car. Police said Riley, who is bilingual, showed his INS badge and, after determining that a woman had no green card or legal status for being in the United States, placed her under arrest. (Connelly, 1990, para. 8)

Others gave false addresses because they were illegal immigrants and feared deportation, he said. And many refused to testify, including the victim whose house yielded the fingerprints that resulted in Fuentes’ arrest last year” (Bustillo, 1993, para. 10).

The man apparently seeks out Hispanic women who he believes are illegal immigrants, knocking on their doors and asking, in Spanish, to see their immigration papers (Wski, 1995, para. 26).

“Dunn said she has been the only alleged victim to voluntarily come forward to authorities, and at times during the investigation she was reluctant to fully cooperate because she feared deportation.” (Connelly, 1990, para. 15).

Although the above were more afraid of deportation or generally their status as illegal aliens, there are other examples where women were hesitant to come forward because of their cultural values:
“Los Angeles police said Jose Romeo Fuentes was a leading suspect in 27 other rapes for which charges were never filed because the victims—mostly poor Latinas—were unwilling to go to court, largely for cultural reasons. .

Even the women who reported their assaults to authorities often did not tell their families, Laird said, because ‘there are very old family traditions that if you were raped, you were somehow to blame” (Bustillo, 1993, para. 2).

Immigrants had a multitude of factors that theoretically fit with victimization of the people who were socially disadvantaged. There were specific indicators of the culture of poverty, which include the disengagement from larger institutions such as the police as well as the court systems, as well as cultural values passed on to generations. In terms of sociological analysis, there were clear intersections of likely offenders, suitable targets, and lack of capable guardianship. The victims were labeled as “vulnerable” as stated in the above newspaper articles, rendering them suitable targets. Some of their vulnerability was attributed to their age: young men and women from late teens to early thirties, and their language barrier. In terms of capable guardianship, the offenders often knew that Hispanic immigrants would be fearful of deportation, and would not have access to the same guardianship as others.
Socially Disadvantaged People live and work in Proximity to Likely Offenders

Routine Activity Approach states that crime happens at the intersection of lack of capable guardianship, a likely offender, and a suitable target. Consequently, the closer suitable targets live to offenders, the probability of victimization increases:

“Fidencio Palomera weighed tough options common to this working-class neighborhood. . .with slow times in the construction business, Palomera can spare the time to pick up his son and daughter, he said. But he also has to provide them with food and shelter. ‘You have to teach them to be careful,’ he said. ‘but I have to work. I can’t watch them all the time” (Mohan, 1993, para. 15-17).

The above case is a prime example of the experience many working parents have. Warren states that “The higher up the occupational hierarchy, the more ‘time elasticity’ is available over the work week” (2003, p. 736). Workers who have a higher socioeconomic status are “less likely to be controlled by the clock” (Warren, 2003, p. 736). Thus, there is more flexibility for them to seek and/or provide capable guardianship for themselves or to their children. This phenomenon is known as Time Poverty. There is an especially “high incidence of time deficit among the employed single parents with children” (Harvey, 2007, p. 75). Harvey also found that it is increasingly difficult to escape this time poverty, leaving people who have a low
socioeconomic status in increasingly difficult situations: close to people who are motivated offenders with no capable guardianship.

There are many locations that are riskier due to proximity to likely offenders. For example, neighborhoods that have gang violence and high levels of crime:

To tell you the truth, I’ve always been afraid for my children, for drugs, gangs, everything else. . .the gangs shoot up the place, and they can get hit by a bullet (Mohan, 1993, para. 2).

Although housing projects are not specifically related to gang violence, they are known for housing people with a lower socioeconomic status, and are another location which could contain likely offenders:

A paroled rapist was arrested yesterday, charged as a serial rapist who sexually assaulted four young girls and teen-agers in public housing projects in East Harlem and the Lower East Side since December. . .The suspect followed a strict pattern of attack. He prowled the lobbies of the Washington Houses, in the block defined by Second and Third Avenues and 98th and 99th Streets, and the two Lower East Side projects waiting for young girls to come home in the middle of the afternoon (Krauss, 1994, p. B3).

The two theories that primarily fit this particular theme are Lifestyle Theory, especially when considering risk, and Routine Activities Approach. Risk can be
considered, in terms of routine activities, as the amount of times one regularly enters the intersection of the graphic listed in Appendix B. Often, predators will seek out situations where no capable guardians are present: “came and went in apartment complexes and town houses, which women returned home alone, which homes men never seemed to enter” (Fernandez & Shaver, 1998, p. B1). When someone without a capable guardian is living in a neighborhood with a lower socioeconomic status, they are putting themselves closer to likely offenders, and at more of a risk to be victimized.

Another important theory to consider when considering proximity to likely offenders is the Broken Window Hypothesis. Broken windows, battered houses, and other lower class indicators signal that “no one cares” about the community. Wilson and Kelling state that disorder and crime are linked, and if disorder is present in a neighborhood then crime will proliferate. Living in a neighborhood with increased disorder leads to increased crime, and an increase in victimization risk.

**Occupational Risk as a Factor in Victimization of Socially Disadvantaged People**

There are a multitude of occupations that inherently have more risks associated with them. Occupations in the dataset that had an increased risk of victimization included prostitution and store clerks working in certain areas as well. One particular offender primarily victimized store clerks: “Mr. Sanchez would pose as a customer just as a store was closing and force employees into the back, the police said” (The Associated Press, 1990, p. B5). Sanchez most likely victimized store clerks because
late at night there was little to no guardianship in the store. However, some victimization depended on the victim’s connection to larger institutions that provide guardianship.

Many serial rapists who specifically solicited prostitutes because they were less likely to contact the police:

“The problem, as Lambkin and other authorities put it, is that Harris allegedly preys on the types of victims who so fear police because of their own illicit activities that they vanish even before charges can be filed” (Meyer, 1990, para. 11).

Prostitutes live a naturally more risky lifestyle because the occupation involves “working alone, in dangerous areas, at night, and with cash on hand” (Quinet, 2010, p. 79). One man in particular selected prostitutes as victims because of access, opportunity, lower risk of detection, victims would not be missed, and because he had a fervent hatred for prostitutes (Quinet, 2010). Ridgeway was not alone in his actions. Other documented reasons for selecting prostitutes as victims include the “secretive, unprotected, isolated, and solitary nature of prostitution work; the location of prostitution in high crime areas, and the unwillingness of prostitutes to talk to the police (Quinet, 2010). The hesitation of prostitutes to go to the police was also evident in these data:
For the women to go to the police for help was uncommon and took courage, said the chief, because the women are engaged in illegal activity (Carroll, 2008, para. 10).

“The plea agreement covers charges that Botschen attacked four prostitutes on consecutive nights along a deserted cul-de-sac in Brooklyn Park in September 1992 and that he attacked and left for dead a fifth prostitute in Frederick County on May 25, 1991” (The Associated Press, 1994, p. B6)

Prostitutes, although naturally at risk due to their occupation, are also considered among the socially disadvantaged population for a multitude of reasons. Quinet (2010) found that prostitutes were victimized also because the public seemed to be less concerned with their welfare. One of the reasons could be because prostitution is seen as a move of “desperation:”

Police were warning prostitutes to be careful and the prostitutes were trying to be as helpful as possible,” said Cummings. ‘They aren’t out there because it is a glamorous lifestyle; they are out there because they are desperate,’ said Conlon (Carroll, 2008, para. 11-12).

In one of the cases, prostitution is put in the category of “down-and-out” women, along with “drug addicts.” These factors that are related to poverty include
lack of education, problems with employment, substance abuse, and a low likelihood of prosocial attachments (Draine, Salzer, Culhane, & Hadley, 2002). Although substance abuse may seem unrelated to occupational risk, not only could substance use disorders lead to poverty but also to the “desperation” that Conlon points out.

Los Angeles Police Detective David Lambkin said the current case matches a pattern in which Harris has lured prostitutes, drug addicts and other “down-and-out” women to his apartment and kept them against their will for days (Meyer, 1990, para. 8).

“Down-and-out” generally denotes some form of disadvantage when referring to people or whole populations. Some of the connotation of “down-and-out” can be attributed to the victim’s occupation, such as prostitution. Theoretically, prostitution is risky because they are consistently surrounded by likely offenders, with little to no capable guardianship. Prostitutes also fall into a culture of poverty because there is a disconnect between their subculture and larger society, and typically a “slum” environment (Quinet, 2011).

Store clerks and other workers who lack capable guardianship at times when likely offenders will target victims are at higher risk as well. Store clerks in cases such as the one mentioned above may have some sort of guardianship such as video cameras or panic buttons that will serve as some semblance of protection. If the stores
are in lower income areas and cannot (in this sense), buy their way out of risk, the higher risk for victimization will remain.

**Homelessness as a Risk Factor**

In other studies, prostitutes are part of a broader category of victims including people who are homeless, transients, and have run away. Kohm states that homeless people are at a much higher risk of being criminally victimized (2006). Factors that contribute to increased risk criminal victimization for people who are homeless include: “lack of shelter, physical proximity to high crime areas, engaging in high risk behaviors such as sex work, a history of previous victimization” (Quinet, 2010, p. 80). Quinet also refers to the “web of disabilities, which make the homeless vulnerable to crime victimization—poor health, sex work, substance abuse, and homelessness itself” (80). This higher victimization rate also seemed significant in the serial rape dataset:

Police have arrested a taxi driver suspected of terrorizing several homeless women on skid row by luring them into his cab and raping them (Winton, 2009, para. 1).

Mr. McKelvey, 41, is accused of raping and sodomizing two homeless women, the police said” (*The New York Times*, 2006, para. 2)
A suspected serial rapist who Los Angeles police believe targeted homeless women was chased down and captured early Thursday after trying to elude officers by running across the Hollywood Freeway (Blankstein, 2004, para. 1).

Homeless people also are victimized because they are less likely to contact the police due to their lack of institutional connections:

A lot of the victims thought he was a police officer,” Bergmann said. “He picked on the homeless because they aren’t likely to report crimes” (Blankstein, 2004, para. 7).

When people experiencing homelessness are also vulnerable in another way such as a minority race or elderly, they are more prone to victimization:

The attack on the homeless woman, then 68, took place under a bridge in Riverside Park on Aug. 30, 2005, during the same period as two similar attacks on women in Miami” (Fahim, 2006, para. 2).

Homeless people are continuously at risk for victimization for a multitude of reasons. They cross the intersection of Routine Activity Theory, demonstrated in Appendix B, possibly more than any other target. They are suitable targets because they are often found without a capable guardian. The intersection of these three factors
is a frequent situation for homeless people “or those who live in places like skid row where proximity to motivated offenders is high and guardianship is low” (2006, p. 89). Those experiencing homelessness also may have “literally nowhere to go to flee the dangers of the street” (2006, p. 89).

The Middle and Upper Class as Attractive Targets

There are several serial rape cases where people in the middle class were more of a target than people who were socioeconomically disadvantaged. This finding conflicts most of the available. Normally, middle class people are victimized less often because they have more institutional connections, trust in the government, capable guardianship, etc. Wohfarth and his colleagues (2001, p. 365) found that “persons with a higher level of education run a higher level of being victimized compared to persons with a lower education.” There could be alternate reasons that the middle class could be targeted. In terms of the Routine Activity Theory, these victims still have been caught without a capable guardian:

“All five victims have been white men who were alone and attacked in or near their homes in upscale neighborhood” (The New York Times, 2006, para. 4).

“He allegedly used a 9-millimeter handgun while abducting the women as they left upscale restaurants and other nightspots in Hollywood, West Hollywood and the Wilshire district” (Becker, 1997, para. 6).
The word “upscale” and “nightspots” are class indicators, while other articles used words such as “trendy” to describe class:

“Most of the attacks occurred outside trendy restaurants or homes in Hollywood, West Hollywood and the Wilshire district” (Becker, 1997, para. 2).

This serial rapist seemed to predominantly target only young white middle class males. One attack “took place on Nov. 30 in a prominent Baytown subdivision called Tanglewilde” (The New York Times, 2006, para. 2).

Although theoretically gated apartment complexes provide one additional form of capable guardianship by gating the buildings, in at least one case in the data this did not deter the offender. One man “lurked at night in the carports of gated apartment buildings, watching women before eventually choosing to strike” (Leonard & Moreau, 2000, para. 3)

Many perpetrators use this voyeuristic behavior to ensure no bystanders or other potential guardians are around, supporting Routine Activity Theory.
A rapist targeting young men in a Texas refinery town has struck at least five times since April, stalking each victim in advance to make sure he’s home alone (The New York Times, 2006, para. 1).

He’s always been careful to make sure no one else is home when he confronts them. . .There have been no witnesses (The New York Times, 2006, para. 3).

Online dating and other anonymous forms of contact are offering another option for offenders to select and hunt victims. One male victimized women he found on an upper class dating website:

Orange county prosecutors charged a real estate agent Monday with the rapes of three women, including two he met through a website that claims to be the largest online dating hub for millionaires, authorities said. (The Associated Press, 2006, para. 1).

However, a person does not have to be a millionaire in order to register on this site. The website states the clientele include professional athletes, executives, and models, but “you don’t have to be rich or famous” to sign up. Upon further examination, one of the qualifications is an applicant must make a salary of over $200,000 per year, which would put them in the category of upper class.
Another interesting factor for the middle class is media involvement. In many cases in the database it seemed that the middle class had more media coverage than socially disadvantaged people. The average amount of articles per case for the cases used in this study was 1.77. Cases with middle class indicators often had at least 2 relatively long news stories covering the incident. One of the cases, involving 5 middle class males (which occurred in Baytown) was covered by the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, and was covered by the Texas District and County Attorneys Association. However, cases having to do with prostitutes only ever had 1 article, and most cases pertaining to the homeless had only 1 article as well.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations that should be addressed in order to make inferences about people who are socially disadvantaged. The first is that there are some mediating demographic characteristics that lead to increased victimization. Another is the need for quantitative data to address how often socially disadvantaged people are victimized. Although there is a need for quantitative data to create an intervention method, the qualitative data in this study created a coding method for identifying disadvantage in news print. This coding method could be expanded or used to create an individual assessment to identify the level of risk for victimization in one’s life.

Some of the mediating factors that lead to increased risk of victimization include gender and race. While both can be independent from socioeconomic status,
there are links between poverty, gender, and race. It is important that future studies explore these links in order to effectively determine the causes of victimization. This piece provided theoretical inquiry into why the socially disadvantaged would be targeted and provided qualitative data to support the various theories. However, in order to make more firm assumptions and develop evidence based prevention mechanisms, there needs to be more data supporting the higher victimization of socially disadvantaged people.

Socioeconomic status is emphasized in this piece because of the lack of literature exploring it, though other demographic data such as race and gender can be linked through socioeconomic status. Women are more likely to “earn low incomes, to have interrupted employment records and to work part-time for part of their working lives” (Taylor-Gooby, 1991, p. 30). The principle causes of poverty among women were “old age, sickness and disability (60% of women at or below poverty level), unemployment (20%), and lone parenthood (10%)” (Taylor-Gooby, 1991, p. 30).

There are also examinations in the literature of race-specific poverty:

“To begin, we find that race specific poverty is highly correlated with measures of the percentage of the race-specific population that resides in concentrated poverty equal to or in excess of 40%. The positive association between these variables indicates that as race-specific poverty increases, the percentage of the given racial group living in areas of extreme concentrated poverty also increases” (Parker & Pruitt, p. 565)
As detailed in the aforementioned quote, race-specific poverty is more potent. While Parker and Pruitt did not find significant results when considering the relationship between black homicide offending and blacks residing in 40% concentrated poverty, they found that in general, “race-specific measures of poverty and poverty concentration differentially impact racially disaggregated homicide rates” (Parker & Pruitt, 2000, p. 565).

Both Taylor-Gooby’s article and Parker and Pruitt’s article demonstrate that there is intersectionality of oppression within the category of disadvantage, but the central result is socioeconomic inhibition. It follows that poverty is an all-encompassing indicator that requires further study and analysis in relation to victimization and rape. An important factor for victimization could be race specific poverty. Although this study theorized that immigration combined with race played a role in victim selection for some, there are other ways in which race could affect poverty and thus affect victimization.

Another challenge related to this dataset is having a lack of data about the victims. Although there were data available for qualitative analyses, the data were not detailed enough to conduct quantitative analyses. In order to make more significant inferences about the victimization of socially disadvantaged people. Some of the independent variables could include the victim’s income, gender, race, whether they have access to healthcare, demographic data of where they live, educational attainment, job status, and around what times the victims work. The dependent
variable would be victimization rate. This type of quantitative data would be more appropriate in answering questions such as “how often” socially disadvantaged people are victimized. It could also be used to evaluate the need of victim-focused protection programs from victimization. The current study started to evaluate why, theoretically, socially disadvantaged people would be victimized, as well as to begin to create a qualitative coding method for determining the socioeconomic status of victims in print sources, which are shown in Appendix A. Another opportunity for further study could be found in expanding this qualitative coding method, and create an individual evaluation to assess the risk in one’s life. By creating an assessment, social workers can begin to create evidence-based prevention methods that address person-in-environment fit by increasing guardianship in the environment and other protective initiatives.

Discussion

The main goal of this thesis was to identify traits that rapists target and discuss strategies to prevent victimization. The literature suggested that unemployment and other SES factors play a role in the occurrence of victimization (Wohfarth et al., 2001). These findings were also consistent with a significant amount of literature that also made similar claims. However, there is a gap in the literature linking specifically serial rape victimization to socioeconomic status and indicators. This study evaluated why serial rapists would be more likely to victimize people who are socially disadvantaged.
In order to discuss why socially disadvantaged people would be sought out as victims, the theoretical frameworks that informed this study were the Lifestyle Approach, the Routine Activities Approach, the Broken Window Hypothesis, the Culture of Poverty, and the Person in Environment Perspective. The Routine Activities Approach, as stated, involves the intersection of a lack of capable guardianship, motivated offender, and a suitable target. One of the implications of Routine Activities is that when crime occurs, one or more of these qualifications are being met. In terms of social work, this could mean their person-in-environment fit inappropriate.

The qualitative findings that emerged from this study suggests that there are six main traits or routine activities that contribute to victimization risk: 1) transportation without capable guardianship, 2) immigration status, 3) occupational risk, 4) location and proximity to likely offenders, and 5) homelessness, 6) the middle and upper class as attractive targets. With this information possible prevention strategies can be identified.

To Bunch, Clay-Warner, and McMahon-Howard, they initially believed that first time victimization could impact re-victimization. However, through their study they found that victims tend to engage in higher levels of risky behavior following victimization than do nonvictims at similar points in time but that differences are due to preexisting factors that distinguish victims from nonvictims and not due to the victimization event, itself” (Bunch, Clay-Warner, McMahon-Howard, p. 574).
The authors’ findings have implications regarding the importance of identifying risk factors before victimization. If socially disadvantaged people have an increased risk of re-victimization because of factors such as lower socioeconomic status, they have an increased chance for all the aforementioned negative life outcomes.

The implications of this study are important to social workers because research is the primary way in which social workers create and evaluate evidence-based practice. Evidence based practice is the use of clinical expertise, best research evidence, and the patient values to create an effective care plan for a person (Sackett, Rosenberg, Muir Gray, Haynes, & Richardson, 1996). A major goal of this thesis was to identify certain factors that are associated with victimization and discuss prevention strategies. That specific goal will be discussed further. However, an important idea for further study lies on the other side of the victimization process: to identify factors that precede the act of rape that can lead to prevention. With intervention on both sides of the victimization process, the incidence of victimization could be reduced dramatically.

Situational Crime Prevention is different than the more traditional dispositional perspective. The dispositional perspective attempts to show how “some people are born with, or come to acquire, a ‘disposition’ to behave in a consistently criminal manner” (Clarke, 1980, p. 137). Clarke maintains that the dispositional bias remains and renders criminological theory unproductive in terms of the preventive measures which it generates. People are led to propose methods of preventive intervention precisely where it is most difficult
to achieve any effects, i.e. in relation to the psychological events or the social and economic conditions that are supposed to generate criminal dispositions (1980, p. 137).

Instead of this more traditional approach, Clarke asserts that more situational preventative measures would be appropriate. Instead of focusing on the offender, adjust the focus to manipulate the situations in which victims find themselves. This can be done in two ways: reducing the physical opportunities for offending or increasing the chances of an offender being caught.

One main goal of Situational Crime Prevention is to reduce the probability of offending through making it more difficult for offenders to act. This could mean multiple methods of protection or capable guardianship for victims. One limitation of reducing opportunity is the number of potential targets and the general low level of security. As Clarke (1980) states, “Within easy reach of every house with a burglar alarm, or car with an anti-theft device, are many others without such protection” (p. 137). Anti-theft devices and other ways to increase the risks of being caught is one method that should be considered for people who have increased occupational risk. Workplaces with late shifts could have patrol or escort services as well as requiring security systems or multiple people in a store at once.

Although increasing the risks of being caught could deter perpetrators, there are also other options to decrease opportunity that involve the help of social workers. One significant factor that has presented in multiple themes is a disconnect between these groups and larger institutions or communities. Social workers could have a
significant impact increasing community linkages. By increasing community linkages, there will be more connections between victims and potential bystanders, possible connections with the police force, and victims may have more trust in the police force to call for aid.

It is imperative that the victimization of people who are socially disadvantaged is evaluated and researched. Socially disadvantaged people have a predisposition to a multitude of negative life outcomes such as poor physical and mental health, food insecurity, and dependence on sex work. If people who live in poverty pass down their “way of life” to generations, these negative life outcomes and victimization risk could also be passed down. There are a multitude of reasons that the individuals who are socially disadvantaged are victimized. People living in poverty are more likely to use public transportation and/or walk in high crime areas without capable guardianship, exposing them to motivated offenders. Immigrants have less connection to social institutions and broader forms of guardianship such as police officers, especially because they fear deportation. Prostitutes are also engaged in illegal activity, rendering them suitable targets because they are reluctant to go to the police. They also fit into the larger category of Occupational Risk because store clerks can be victimized working in high crime areas as well, especially as the amount of security measures taken decrease. In a more general sense, people who live in a closer proximity to motivated offenders will be at a higher risk of victimization. If the community signals indifference and disorder, crime will increase, which can cause citizens of that neighborhood to avoid one another, and decrease capable guardianship. Homeless
people are at an increased risk of being victimized partially because of their transient lifestyle. They often do not make connections with their community, decreasing capable guardianship, have a mistrust of the police partially due to the Culture of Poverty, and have an increased proximity to likely offenders.

The aforementioned people all could fall under the category of socially disadvantaged, which supported the hypothesis that socially disadvantaged people are more likely to be victimized. However, there was one surprising theme that emerged: The Middle and Upper Class as Attractive Targets. Some of the offenders used voyeuristic behaviors to wait until there was no capable guardianship available to the victim, while other offenders used an upper class dating website to select his victim.

Generally, the data suggests that socially disadvantaged victims appeal to more opportunistic serial rapists because they are found without capable guardianship, in the vicinity of a motivated offender, more often. However, serial rapists who hunt middle class victims seem to engage in more voyeuristic behaviors when seeking out their victims. For people who are socially disadvantaged, this situation could be ameliorated with methods aligning with situational crime prevention. Methods could include increasing community linkages in order to increase the perpetrator’s risk of being caught, which gives social workers an important role as practitioners. Social workers have an integral role in evaluating the Person-In-Environment Fit, which could involve Routine Activities Theory to determine victimization risk. If offenders are deterred even slightly, the intergenerational victimization risk could decrease dramatically, affecting many individuals in the future.
Appendix A

Social class coding terms

Poor
Middle class
Working class
Millionaire
Projects
Housing Projects
Bus
Bus stop
Vagrant
Prostitute
Apartment
Tourists
Jobs
3rd shift
Store Clerk
Immigrant
Immigration Agent
INS Agent
Aliens
Customer
Hispanic
Subway
Hitchhiker
Trailer Park
Stable
Yards
Shopping Malls
Upscale Restaurants
Nightspots
Homeless
Appendix B

Routine activity theory

Crime

A likely offender
A suitable target
The absence of a capable guardian

Physical convergence in time and space
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