**Chapter 09: The Elderly and the Criminal Justice System**

**Summary**

This chapter explored the phenomenon of elderly crime. There can be little doubt that as the population gets older, the number of people involved in crime, whether as victims or as offenders, will likely increase. Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1960, represent the newest group of elderly in this country. As a generation, they have redefined the face of America with the Civil Rights Movement, protests against the Vietnam War, and they represent some of the leading figures in politics, economics, and social activism. As this generation becomes older, it is likely that they will also redefine the criteria used to evaluate the concept of aging. Generation X, or Gen Xers, are those individuals born between 1968 and 1979. This group is generally considered an underachieving generation, critical of the self-indulgence of Baby Boomers, and who grew up amid a host of social problems in the 1980s and 1990s. Generation Y, more commonly known as Millennials, born approximately between 1977 and 1994, are characterized by their willingness to embrace cultural diversity, are educationally and technologically sophisticated, and have a strong sense of self including feelings of entitlement, self-confidence, and impatience in climbing the ladder of success.

Conventional wisdom concerning elderly crime typically focuses on elderly victimization. As this chapter has shown, the elderly are the least likely to be victimized of any other age group, but this should not be interpreted to mean the elderly are not victimized. There is a great deal of empirical evidence on elderly abuse as well as research on elderly offenders.

Early predictions of an elderly crime wave, based largely on population and demographic shifts, have failed to emerge. However, the research on elderly criminals, found primarily in the official crime statistics, shows that elderly crime is not as frequent as crime committed by younger offenders, however, it is sufficient to warrant more attention. Generally speaking, most of the elderly crime noted in the data relates to minor forms of crime, usually alcohol related or some type of larceny. Despite noted cases where elderly criminals commit violent acts, these instances are relatively rare.

Where most of the research interest on elderly criminals has focused has been in the area of incarceration and prison life in general. As inmates are sentenced to longer prison terms, issues relating to healthcare and the overall quality of life for inmates become a topic of keen interest to researchers.