

A man and a woman, both purse snatchers, independently entered a grocery store, each with the intent to steal purses from unsuspecting shoppers. The man approached a victim, grabbed the strap of the purse that was hanging from her shoulder, and pulled. The victim screamed and tried to hold onto the purse, but the man knocked her down, causing her to lose her grip on the purse. The man then escaped with the purse.

During the commotion that arose when the man's victim screamed, the woman approached the shopping cart of a shopper who had turned toward the noise and wandered away from her cart. The woman reached into the now-unattended shopping cart, grabbed the shopper's purse, and quickly walked away, also escaping with a purse.

Both purse snatchers were apprehended a short while later.

Which of the two purse snatchers could properly be convicted of robbery?

- A. Both the man and the woman.
- B. Only the man.
- C. Only the woman.
- D. Neither the man nor the woman.

Explanation:

To convict a defendant of **robbery**, the prosecution must prove all of the following:

The defendant unlawfully **took and carried away the victim's property**.

The property was taken from the victim's person or presence **by force or intimidation**.

The defendant intended to permanently deprive the victim of the property (ie, to steal).

The force element of robbery is only met if the defendant uses **more force than necessary** to take the property. This means that a sudden snatching of property does not amount to robbery unless the **victim resists** and the **defendant uses force to obtain or keep the property**.

Here, the man intentionally stole the victim's purse from her shoulder. Although he did not use the requisite force when he pulled on the victim's purse strap, this element was met when the victim tried to hold onto her purse and the man knocked her down to obtain it. As a result, he can be convicted of robbery (**Choices C & D**). In contrast, the woman cannot be convicted of robbery since she did not use force (or intimidation) when she intentionally took a purse from an unattended shopping cart (**Choices A & C**).

Educational objective:

The force required for robbery is more than was necessary to take the victim's property. So a sudden snatching does not amount to robbery unless the victim resists and the defendant uses force to obtain or keep the property.

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Use-of-force requirement

No force = larceny



Just enough force = larceny



Too much force = robbery



