# THE VICTIM–OFFENDER OVERLAP IN CONTEXT: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOOD STREET CULTURE*

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*Although numerous studies have found a strong relationship between offending and victimization risk, the etiology of this relationship is not well understood. Largely absent from this research is an explicit focus on neighborhood processes. However, theoretical work found in the subculture of violence literature implies that neighborhood street culture may help to account for the etiology of this phenomenon. Specifically, we should expect the magnitude of the victim–offender overlap to vary closely with neighborhood-based violent conduct norms. This*

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*research uses waves 1 and 2 of the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS) to test the empirical validity of these notions. Our results show that the victim–offender overlap is not generalizeable across neighborhood contexts; in fact, it is especially strong in neighborhoods where the street culture predominates, whereas it is significantly weaker in areas where this culture is less prominent. These results indicate that neighborhood-level cultural processes help to explain the victim–offender overlap, and they may cause this phenomenon to be context specific.*

Von Hentig's (1948) research was perhaps the first to draw attention to the fact that those who perpetrate violence and those who suffer from it often are the same individuals. Subsequently, numerous studies focused on the "victim–offender overlap" have documented a strong positive association between victimization and violent conduct, and between violent conduct and victimization risk.[1] These patterns are among the most durable empirical findings in the criminological literature. Although victimization and offending often are considered two separate domains, they are so intimately connected that perhaps it is not possible to understand them fully apart from one another (Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub, 1991: 267). An increasing amount of attention is directed at unpacking the complex nature of the victim–offender overlap, but there is only an embryonic understanding of why it comes about. Lauritsen and Laub (2007: 62) noted that, despite several important studies, more is known "about the factors that do not" produce this phenomenon than "about those that might be responsible."

Good theoretical reasons support the notion that neighborhood-level mechanisms may influence the nature of the victim–offender overlap. Up until now, most research in this domain has focused on the potential explanatory role of various individual-level factors. Largely absent from this research has been an explicit focus on neighborhood social processes. Strands of subcultural theory suggest the overlap *varies* across neighborhoods according to spatial differences in the salience of honor-based norms. More specifically, the magnitude of the victim–offender overlap should be pronounced in areas defined by an honor culture and should be significantly weaker where such a cultural milieu is absent. Implicit here is the idea that neighborhood-based cultural mechanisms cause the victim–offender overlap to exhibit significant variation. An explicit test of these ideas has not yet been conducted with theoretically relevant indicators of cultural

1. Throughout the article, we employ the conceptual term "victim–offender overlap" interchangeably when referring to the relationship between offending and victimization, and between victimization and offending (see Lauritsen and Laub, 2007).

processes. Some empirical studies have inferred evidence of "subcultural effects" if they observed a correlation between offending and victimization, or vice versa (e.g., Singer, 1986). Moreover, a recent multilevel study demonstrated that the victim–offender overlap varied as a function of structural deprivation—a measure intended as a proxy for aggregate cultural processes (Berg and Loeber, 2011). Although the findings from these studies are suggestive, more direct evidence is needed to determine whether neighborhood conduct norms are a mechanism governing the nature of the overlap as the literature implies. If these notions are empirically valid, it would mean that the victim–offender overlap is context specific and, therefore, cannot be fully understood apart from the neighborhoods in which individuals reside.

In short, hypotheses about subcultural processes permeate discussions of the victim–offender overlap, although without strong empirical backing. The main purpose of the current investigation is to take a step toward filling this void in the literature. To this end, we use multilevel data on a sample of African American adolescents to examine whether the victim–offender overlap varies across neighborhoods as a result of differences in contextualized honor-based conduct norms. According to theory, where a subculture is prominent in the social order, interpersonal conflicts are more likely to evolve into "reciprocal exchange[s] in which violence is followed by retaliation" (Singer, 1986: 61). Based on this notion, it is important to evaluate whether subcultural processes have implications for the bidirectional relationship between offending and victimization (Sampson and Lauritsen, 1994: 31). Thus, we examine whether subcultural processes moderate the effects of offending on the probability of victimization, and of victimization on the probability of offending. To develop our study's hypotheses, we integrate strands of research explicitly focused on this phenomenon, as well as studies on the cultural context of interpersonal violence. Our overall aim is to contribute to a theoretically grounded approach to the study of the victim–offender overlap.

We begin with a brief overview of existing research on this topic, and then we outline hypotheses from a subcultural perspective; this is followed by a description of the methodology and results. Finally, we conclude by outlining the implications of this study for future research involving interpersonal violence.

## BACKGROUND

Several leading conceptual schemes provide the frameworks for developing hypotheses about the mechanisms responsible for the victim–offender overlap. Most of the empirical research in this literature models the unidirectional relationship between offending and victimization using

lifestyles/routine activities theory (Lauritsen and Laub, 2007: 60). A core premise of this theoretical framework suggests that demographic variation in victimization risk is attributable to differences in lifestyles—a concept comprising routine vocational and leisure activities.[2] Certain lifestyles are especially likely to expose people to situations that are conducive to victimization. Moreover, a prevailing interpretation of Hindelang et al.'s (1978) model posits that victims and offenders have a similar sociodemographic profile as a result of their "similar" lifestyle characteristics (see also Cohen, Kluegel, and Land, 1981).Therefore, the relationship between offending and victimization is explained by factors such as age, leisure activities, and residential proximity to crime (see Sampson and Lauritsen, 1990). On the whole, empirical research does not offer sufficient support for this proposition. For example, Sampson and Lauritsen (1990) discovered that self-reported offending increased the probability of victimization, irrespective of lifestyle characteristics and neighborhood crime rates. Similarly, other studies find that measures of alcohol use, peer associations, and gang membership do not significantly diminish the link between offending and victimization (Haynie and Piquero, 2006; Lattimore, Linster, and MacDonald, 1997; Lauritsen and Quinet, 1995; Peterson, Taylor, and Esbensen, 2004; Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta, 2000).

Despite its appeal as a theory of victimization, the routine activities/lifestyles framework is logically ill equipped to explain the effects of victimization on involvement in violence; thus, the theory cannot sufficiently account for the reciprocal nature of the victimization–offending association. Singer (1981) found, for example, that retrospective self-reports of victimization were strongly related to arrests for violent offenses. Moreover, a subsequent study by Singer (1986: 66) indicated that "the best predictor of committing an act of violence is being the victim of serious violence." Multivariate studies have since documented a strong relationship between victimization and violent conduct that cannot be explained away by traditional demographic and social correlates of violent encounters (see Sampson and Lauritsen, 1994). Empirical developments in this area of research have prompted alternative theoretical frameworks that are designed to explain the reciprocal connection between offending and victimization.

A perspective developed to account for the bidirectional nature of the victim–offender overlap posits that offending and victimization are mutual outcomes of common factors and therefore do not exert a genuine causal influence on each other. Known as a risk-heterogeneity perspective, this view maintains that the "processes which produce high rates of offending . . .

2. Hindelang et al. (1978) argued that lifestyles are determined by adaptations to differential role expectations and structural constraints.

are also productive to high rates of victimization" (Gottfredson, 1984: 17). For example, researchers propose that low self-control accounts for the empirical connection between offending and victimization (Schreck, 1999). Likewise, other key indicators of risk heterogeneity, such as impulsivity and low verbal ability, theoretically serve as sources of spuriousness (Berg, 2011). Contrary to these predictions, however, empirical research finds that violent offending promotes victimization risk and vice versa, after controlling for low self-control, impulsivity (Haynie and Piquero, 2006; Schreck, 1999), verbal intelligence, stress, and time-stable unobserved heterogeneity (Berg and Loeber, 2011; Hay and Evans, 2006; Loeber et al., 1999).[3]

In short, despite important efforts over the past five decades to isolate the etiology of the victim–offender overlap, questions remain about the circumstances under which the phenomenon is likely to emerge. Until now, studies have generally focused on the explanatory role of individual-level mechanisms. In noting this trend, Lauritsen and Laub (2007) suggested that processes found within neighborhoods may hold the keys to help unlock this puzzle. Moreover, the authors urged researchers to broaden their analytical focus beyond standard sociological and lifestyle variables. Absent from current empirical research is an explicit empirical focus on neighborhood processes; however, there is a strong rationale to expect that neighborhoods represent an important backdrop for the victim–offender overlap. In fact, an interpretation of subcultural theory suggests that neighborhood-based cultural processes govern the dynamic link between offending and victimization, and may explain why it is evident for some people but not for others. We outline these ideas in the next section.

## SUBCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE VICTIM–OFFENDER OVERLAP

In their comprehensive overview of violence research, Sampson and Lauritsen (1994: 31) noted that subcultural theory is "the traditional explanation of the link between victims and offenders." Indeed, explanations derived from subcultural models have an extended history in research involving the victim–offender overlap, dating back to Wolfgang's (1958) study on patterns of homicide in Philadelphia. His findings were some of the earliest to illuminate the empirical correlation between offending and victimization, revealing that many victims precipitated their own death, and nearly two thirds had arrest records—about half of whom had committed

3. We recognize that many empirical studies of the victim–offender overlap are somewhat limited by their inability to isolate the true causal relationship between offending and victimization because of simultaneity bias.

crimes against persons. Wolfgang affirmed von Hentig's (1948) earlier conclusion that the victim often "assumes the role" of offender in violent encounters (see Sparks, 1982: 24). In view of these patterns, Wolfgang (1958: 329) speculated that the exceptional levels of interpersonal violence among certain groups could be "symptoms of unconscious, destructive impulses laid bare in a subculture where toleration–if not encouragement–of violence is part of the normative structure." From his perspective, social groups that codify subcultural preferences are quick to "resort to physical combat . . . in defense of status" and to enforce grievances (Wolfgang, 1958: 189); thus, exposure to norms favoring violence may explain why the same people often commit violence and suffer from it.

Subsequent to Wolfgang's (1958) study, several other criminologists have speculated as to whether oppositional norms contribute to the overlap between victims and offenders. Singer (1986), for instance, posited that much of the empirical link between offending and victimization perhaps reflected retaliatory violence driven by oppositional conduct norms. Although not explicitly focused on explaining the victim–offender overlap, a related body of ethnographic and theoretical research also clarifies the dynamic interplay among violent offending, victimization, and neighborhood-based norms of honor. Implicit to this body of research is the notion, shared by Wolfgang (1958) and his contemporaries (e.g., Singer, 1986), that contextualized cultural processes constitute a social backdrop for aggressive interaction, giving rise to overlapping victim and offender populations.

## NEIGHBORHOOD STREET CULTURE AND THE VICTIM–OFFENDER OVERLAP

More recent empirical literature highlights several adverse structural conditions that promote a normative system in urban neighborhoods that redefines expectations about personal conduct in ways that are incompatible with conventional culture. Social scientists often use the conceptual labels of "subculture" or "honor culture" interchangeably when referring to the character of this alternative system (Anderson, 1999; Cooney, 1998; Horowitz, 1983; Pitt-Rivers, 1966; Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967). The set of norms inhered in a modern honor culture place a premium on the maintenance of respect, lower the threshold of personal insult (Horowitz, 1983), define violations of self in an adversarial manner (Cooney, 1998; Horowitz and Schwartz, 1974), and endorse violence as an appropriate means to regulate interpersonal disputes. An individual's reputation often hinges on having the ability to overcome adversaries with brute force. Anderson (1999) referred to the honor culture he observed in poor neighborhoods as the "street code" (see also Horowitz, 1983). By his account, young men will precipitate violent altercations to promote their street credibility, and

many "crave respect to the point that they would risk their lives to attain and maintain it" (Anderson, 1999: 76).

Cultural systems that are organized around codes of honor often sanction retaliatory aggression as an appropriate response to an affront. Where an honor culture is entrenched, conflicts are prone to evolve into ongoing physical confrontations (see Cooney, 1998). An individual who has been disrespected is expected to "immediately enforce [his or her] precedence" by punishing wrongdoers with violence of like proportion (Horowitz, 1983: 82). Status is assigned to those who do not allow others to exploit them easily. Victims who opt against retaliation may run the risk of imperiling their own reputations (Horowitz and Schwartz, 1974). Mixed-method research on lethal violence has found that disputants from distressed neighborhoods often believe they have little choice but to retaliate, even over relatively trivial transgressions (e.g., Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Under these circumstances, occasional displays of aggression are "instrumental for marketing [one's] reputation as a badass" (Katz, 1988: 184).

Moreover, within these environments, many residents, especially young men, come to believe that violence is critical to the maintenance of an intimidating image. A behavioral imperative exists that one must not yield to challengers because doing so conveys weakness, which ultimately enhances one's probability of future victimization (see also Felson and Steadman, 1983). By Anderson's (1999) account, the context of poor, high-crime neighborhoods is organized around the code of the street; although residents have an interest in avoiding violence, the constant threat of exploitation, coupled with the lack of legal recourse, provides a strong incentive for young men to develop an aggressive image (pp. 110, 116). As an illustration of these notions, an informant in a recent study reasoned that even if the smallest affront is overlooked, others will "try to come at me, the same day, the next day because [they'll] think, Aw he's a punk … he can't handle it" (Jacobs and Wright, 2006: 32). Young men often believe a reputation for toughness shields them against predation. On balance, however, this reputation promotes more victimization than it prevents based on empirical evidence (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Stewart, Schreck, and Simons, 2006).

Most people living in distressed neighborhoods do not embrace violent conduct norms; instead they espouse the standards of mainstream culture (see Harding, 2010). But to navigate the landscape of these environments safely, all residents must be familiar with the behavioral imperatives of the honor culture, irrespective of whether they adhere more closely to the normative expectations of a conventional or an oppositional orientation. Those knowledgeable of the honor code recognize how to comport oneself properly in public, how to circumvent serious confrontations without losing respect, and the appropriate strategies to manage interpersonal conflicts,

including incidents in which they were victimized (see Anderson, 1999). Residents who are ignorant of the rules of the code may inadvertently act in a manner that jeopardizes their own safety. As Matsueda, Drakulich, and Kubrin (2006: 339) noted, the honor culture is an institutional feature of street life and it produces a "strong incentive to acquire knowledge of its expectations."

Conventional modes of conflict resolution often have little force where norms of honor are salient because the criteria for respect are based on principles that discourage peaceful resolutions of disputes (Jacobs and Wright, 2006; Schwartz, 1987: 215). A prevailing climate of legal hostility also sustains the code of honor, making residents reluctant to enlist the State to intervene in conflicts (Cooney, 1998). Many come to perceive the criminal justice system as unfair, unresponsive, and discriminatory against minorities. In fact, several studies demonstrated that young men avoid any interaction with the police, as a result of collective fears about being harassed or targeted for unwarranted searches (Brunson, 2007; Carr, Napolitano, and Keating, 2007).[4] Cooperation with the authorities, even if only to report being victimized, may make one look vulnerable and appear as a "snitch" (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright, 2003). In fact, studies conducted in poor, high-crime neighborhoods demonstrated that punishments administered by the legal system are considered far less intimidating compared with violent methods of informal social control (Horowitz, 1983: 82; Jacobs and Wright, 2006). A salient belief among street criminals is that regardless of the circumstances, any interaction with police is likely to invite undeserved legal trouble; therefore, many strive to "avoid the police whenever possible" (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright, 2003: 298). An honor culture emerges as a type of "street justice" to fill the void left by the virtual absence of formal law. In this context, then, the victim–offender overlap should be especially strong.

By contrast, in environments where mainstream conduct norms dominate the social order, violent conduct is unlikely to confer an individual with status or respect. Moreover, conflicts are short lived and rarely erupt into ongoing "aggressive confrontation" (Baumgartner, 1988). Disputants often adopt nonviolent forms of conflict management; for instance, they may call on the police to prosecute violence (Cooney, 1998; Singer, 1986), avoid an adversary altogether, negotiate a settlement, or tolerate another's offensive actions (Black, 1998; Ellickson, 1991). Where conventional norms are prominent, seldom are offensive people directly confronted about their behavior. Local cultural imperatives expect residents to ignore insulting

4. Because some victimization incidents occur in the context of unlawful behavior, the police are theoretically unavailable to certain victims as a matter of course (Rosenfeld et al., 2003).

treatment. Baumgartner (1988) argued that the "moral minimalism" that defines the culture of affluent communities discourages the airing of sensitive grievances. Likewise, Anderson (1990) found that residents of The Village, a middle-class urban neighborhood, rarely responded forcefully when threatened. Similarly, Baumgartner (1988) observed that even when residents of a suburban community were the target of volatile insults, they often refrained from engaging in violent retribution to punish their aggressors. In short, the violent offender in this situation is less likely to experience a violent reprisal, which does not mean that no sanctions are forthcoming, but that they take a distinctly different (and more peaceful) form than is the case in areas where an honor code predominates.

## CURRENT STUDY

Taken together, research on violence and subcultural processes implies two main hypotheses about neighborhood context, cultural mechanisms, and the victim–offender overlap. Each is tested in the current study. First, in neighborhoods where honor-based violent conduct norms are widely endorsed, violent offending will have a strong positive effect on risk for violent victimization and, alternatively, victimization will have a strong positive effect on offending. Put differently, the victim–offender overlap should be magnified in the context of an honor culture, where retaliation receives greater sanction and a violent reputation serves as a method of status attainment and social control. Second, where these norms lack strong cultural support, we expect to find that violent offending will have a weaker effect on victimization risk, and likewise, victimization will demonstrate a weaker relationship with subsequent offending. As discussed, subcultural theory provides a strong rationale to apply these hypotheses to the bidirectional relationship between offending and victimization. Thus, we expect that the neighborhood-level honor culture will exhibit comparable effects across both causal specifications. Combined, the foregoing hypotheses suggest that the victim–offender overlap is not spatially fixed.

A small body of quantitative research has evaluated the linkage between subcultural mechanisms and the victim–offender overlap; but most of this work does not employ indicators of aggregate cultural mechanisms. Singer (1981), for instance, found that victimization was strongly correlated with official arrests, particularly among gang members and African Americans, which he believed supported the notion that subcultural processes influence the homogeneity of victim and offender populations (Wolfgang and Singer, 1978). Another investigation found that youth who adhered to the street code were more likely to be victimized—especially those from distressed neighborhoods, but the authors did not examine whether violent youth had a greater probability of victimization in places where the street code was

entrenched (Stewart, Schreck, and Simons, 2006). More recently, Berg and Loeber (2011) discovered that the offending–victimization relationship was magnified in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods and significantly weaker in low-poverty areas. Insofar as neighborhood compositional characteristics capture cultural processes, the results from Berg and Loeber's study support the notion that a culture of honor moderates the victim–offender overlap. Still, it is plausible that findings from their research may reflect the causal effects of other aggregate mechanisms that also vary closely with other neighborhood compositional characteristics such as, "criminal opportunity structure" (Meier and Miethe, 1993; Wilcox, Land, and Hunt, 2003) or "collective efficacy" (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997), therefore making it difficult to determine whether cultural processes are at indeed work.

On balance, the literature does not contain a strong empirical basis on which to evaluate the effect of neighborhood culture on the nature of the overlap. If aggregate conduct norms *do not* have moderating effects, this would mean the victim–offender overlap *is* generalizeable across neighborhood contexts and would challenge the validity of propositions derived from a subcultural perspective. Stated otherwise, if the subcultural perspective is valid, we should find that the magnitude of the victim–offender overlap varies with the strength of neighborhood honor-based conduct norms. These possibilities are evaluated in the next section.

## DATA AND METHODS

### SAMPLE

Our research is based on waves 1 and 2 of the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS), a multisite (Georgia and Iowa) investigation of neighborhood and family effects on health and development (Simons et al., 2002). FACHS was designed to identify neighborhood and family processes that contribute to African American children's development in families living in a wide variety of community settings. To facilitate this objective, sample members were recruited from neighborhoods, defined here as census tracts, that varied on demographic characteristics, specifically racial composition (i.e., percent Black) and economic level (i.e., percent of families with children living below the poverty line).[5] Specifically, using

5. Whether census tracts represent neighborhoods has been a subject of debate. Census tracts generally have stable boundaries and tend to be internally homogenous with respect to a common set of population, socioeconomic, and geographic characteristics: racial composition, socioeconomic status, poverty, family organization, housing density, and employment status (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley, 2002: 445).

1990 census data, tracts were identified for both Iowa and Georgia in which the percentage of African American families was high enough to make recruitment economically practical (10 percent or higher), and in which the percent of families with children living below the poverty line ranged from 10 percent to 100 percent. From these criteria, 71 usable census tracts were identified, and the FACHS sample was selected from these areas.[6] In Georgia, families were selected from 36 census tracts from metropolitan Atlanta areas, such as South Atlanta, East Atlanta, Southeast Atlanta, and Athens, that varied in terms of economic status and ethnic composition. In Iowa, the 35 census tracts that met the study criteria were located in two metropolitan communities: Waterloo and Des Moines. In both research sites, families were drawn randomly from rosters and contacted to determine their interest in participation.[7] Interviews were completed with 72 percent of eligible Iowa families and slightly more than 60 percent of eligible Georgia families who could be located, which is comparable with other community studies of families using intensive measurement procedures (Capaldi and Patterson, 1987).

The first wave of the FACHS data was collected in 1997 from 867 African American children ages 10 to 13 years old (400 boys and 467 girls; 462 from Iowa and 406 from Georgia), their primary caregiver, and a secondary caregiver when one was present in the home. In the second wave of data, 763 of the children (12 to 15 years of age) and their caregivers were interviewed again in 1999. Our analysis is based on 763 of these participants who had complete data on the variables of interest.[8] We focus on waves 1 and 2 given that this is a period for escalating rates of delinquency (Loeber et al., 2008). Given the sampling design, these subjects represent a sample of African

6. A total of 94 census tracts were identified. However, 16 tracts had no data and 7 tracts were not residential areas, which resulted in 71 usable census tracts for our analyses. We also tested the study hypotheses using block-group level data, instead of census tracts, to assess whether the results were generalizeable to differing specifications of neighborhood units. Results from this specification check were virtually identical to those reported here with the census-tract data.

7. In the study areas for Georgia, African American community members were hired by the University of Georgia to serve as liaisons between the research team and the communities, and the liaisons compiled rosters of children who met the sampling criteria from school districts within each tract. In Iowa, families with African American children within the age criterion were identified through the Waterloo and Des Moines public school districts, and Iowa State University hired African American college students and community members to serve as liaisons between the research team and the communities.

8. This retention rate was 88 percent. Analyses indicated no significant differences in economic, neighborhood, family, educational, and school performance characteristics between the families who did and did not participate in waves 1 and 2 of FACHS.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables**

| Study Variables | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Neighborhood Level | | |
| Neighborhood street culture | 14.56 | 4.37 |
| Neighborhood disadvantage | 9.51 | 4.07 |
| Neighborhood homicide rate | .15[a] | .47 |
| Neighborhood social ties | 13.19 | 2.42 |
| Violent Events | | |
| Violent delinquency$_{T1}$ | .17 | .39 |
| Violent victimization$_{T1}$ | .23 | .42 |
| Control Variables | | |
| Family SES | 13.41 | 4.14 |
| Family structure (1 = two) | .52 | .50 |
| Target gender (1 = male) | .46 | .50 |
| Adolescent monitoring | 18.61 | 3.54 |
| Violent peer network | 4.21 | 1.72 |
| School attachment | 28.41 | 5.48 |
| Urban (1 = urban) | .52 | .48 |
| South (1 = South) | .49 | .46 |
| Dependent Variables | | |
| Violent victimization$_{T2}$ | .27 | .42 |
| Violent delinquency$_{T2}$ | .28 | .45 |

[a]per 1,000.

American youth from the two research sites that come from extremely poor to middle-class families and who reside in neighborhoods that exhibit significant variability in economic status, racial composition, and other factors, sampling features that are well suited for studying neighborhood effects.

## MEASURES

### Dependent Variables

We model two distinct outcomes, violent victimization and violent offending, in separate multilevel equations to evaluate our study hypotheses. To take advantage of the longitudinal design, both dependent variables are measured at wave 2, and we also control for the dependent variables at wave 1. Our models provide a conservative test of the proposed research hypotheses because there are strong correlations between violent victimization at waves 1 and 2 ($r = .54$) and violent offending at waves 1 and 2 ($r = .63$). As a result of incorporating a prior measure of the outcome variable in each equation, little residual variance remains in the dependent variable for other covariates to explain, which yields very conservative estimates. We also estimate all independent variables at time 1. The descriptive statistics for the study variables are listed in table 1.

*Violent Victimization*$_{T2}$. Target adolescents were asked two questions at wave 2 indicating whether someone 1) had physically attacked them or 2)

threatened to attack them in their neighborhood during the previous year. If adolescents reported affirmative responses to either item, they were coded as 1 (victimized) and coded as 0 if they were not the target of either form of violence. Approximately 27 percent of the sample reported being violently victimized at time 2.

*Violent Delinquency*$_{T2}$. The violent delinquency outcome is dichotomous in nature and was measured at wave 2 using eight questions that assessed violent offending. Respondents answered a series of questions regarding whether during the preceding year they had engaged in various violent acts in their neighborhood, such as physical assault, threatening others, bullying people, using a weapon in conflict, and robbing others. If adolescents reported engaging in any of the aforementioned acts of violence during the past year, they were coded as either engaging in the behavior (1 = *engaged in behavior)* or not engaging in the behavior (0 = *did not engage in behavior*). According to table 1, approximately 28 percent of the sample reported engaging in homicide at wave 2.

## INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

### Neighborhood-level Variables

*Neighborhood Street Culture.* A nine-item, self-report scale measured this construct at time 1. Primary caregivers were asked to indicate the extent to which street code values that support the use of violence operated in their neighborhoods (1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*). Combined, these items approximate the norms embodied in an honor code, which is described in Anderson's (1999) and in Horowitz's (1983) research (see also Stewart and Simons, 2010). The questions included the following: With reference to your neighborhood . . . , when someone disrespects you, it is important that you use physical force or aggression to teach him or her not to disrespect you; if someone uses violence against you, it is important that you use violence against him or her to get even; people will take advantage of you if you don't let them know how tough you are; people do not respect a person who is afraid to fight physically for his/her rights; sometimes you need to threaten people in order to get them to treat you fairly; it is important to show others that you cannot be intimidated; people tend to respect a person who is tough and aggressive; sometimes you have to use physical force or violence to defend your rights; and arguing or fighting with other people usually makes matters worse rather than better (question recoded).[9] The items were aggregated to the neighborhood level and yielded an alpha value of .76.

9. To assess the validity of our neighborhood street culture construct, we reestimated all models using adolescents' responses to create the neighborhood street culture

We control for three neighborhood variables (disadvantage, homicide rates, and social ties) that may be related to victimization and offending. By incorporating these predictors, we can estimate the net effect of neighborhood culture on our outcomes while accounting for the potentially confounding effects of neighborhood-level disadvantage, homicide rates, and social ties.

*Neighborhood Disadvantage.* Five census variables were used to form this construct at time 1: proportion of households that were female headed, proportion of persons on public assistance, proportion of households below the poverty level, proportion of persons unemployed, and proportion of persons who are African American. This construct reflects economic disadvantage in racially segregated African American neighborhoods. Previous studies have used some combination of these variables to assess community socioeconomic status (e.g., Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). These variables are strongly intercorrelated and principal components, and alpha factor analyses indicated that these variables loaded (>.72) on a single factor in our sample. The items were standardized and combined to form a measure of disadvantage. We added a constant (10) to the term that eliminated negative values. The alpha coefficient was .89.

*Neighborhood Homicide Rate.* This variable was measured using reported incidents of homicide from police records for each neighborhood in 1996 and 1997. Neighborhood homicide captures variation in the violent crime rate for each neighborhood. Homicide is a rare event, so we combined the years of 1996 and 1997 to reduce measurement error and stabilize rates. We analyzed the violent crime rate per 1,000 neighborhood residents.

*Neighborhood Social Ties.* This construct used a cluster of conceptually related items adapted from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN; see Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). The scale required primary caregivers to indicate whether 13 statements described conditions in their neighborhood (0 = *false* and 1 = *true*). The items asked the respondent whether neighbors get together to deal with local problems; their neighborhood is close knit; there are adults in the neighborhood children can look up to; people are willing to help their neighbors; people do not get along (reverse scored); people provide social support to each other (three items); people do favors for each other; people in the neighborhood know who the local children are; and people watch over each other's property when they are away. The items were summed

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measure. The results were almost identical to using the construct generated from primary caregivers' reports. We also combined both target and primary caregiver reports to form the neighborhood street culture measure. Again, the models showed the same pattern of results as found in the target adolescent reports.

to form a composite measure of neighborhood cohesion. The Kuder–Richardson coefficient (KR20) was approximately .91.

## VIOLENT OFFENDING AND VICTIMIZATION

The measure of *Violent Delinquency*$_{T1}$ is assessed at wave 1 using the same eight questions about violent conduct that comprise the wave 2 outcome measure. If adolescents reported engaging in any of the eight possible acts of violence during the past year, they are coded as either engaging in the behavior (1 = *engaged in behavior*) or not (0 = *did not engage in behavior*). At wave 1, approximately 17 percent of respondents committed violent behavior, as displayed in table 1. The *Violent Victimization*$_{T1}$ construct is scored as dichotomous and measured at wave 1 based on the same items from which the wave 2 outcome measure was constructed. Respondents who reported violent victimization in the past year were coded as victims (1 = *victimized in past year*) and those who reported no victimization were treated as nonvictims (0 = *not victimized in the past year*). Approximately 23 percent of respondents reported suffering victimization at wave 1.

## CONTROL VARIABLES

Family socioeconomic status (SES) is measured by primary caregiver education level and family income. These two items were standardized and summed to form a composite measure of family SES. Family structure is a dichotomous variable denoting households in which there are two caregivers in the home, in comparison with single caregiver homes (1 = *two caregiver family* and *0 = one caregiver family*). Target adolescent sex is a dichotomous variable where males were assigned a value of 1. Adolescent monitoring is measured by five questions (answered by the primary caregiver) that focused on child monitoring (e.g., "How often do you know who your child is with when he/she is away from home?"). The alpha coefficient was .81. A violent peer network is measured by three items adapted from the National Youth Survey (Elliott, Huizinga, and Menard, 1989), which asked respondents how many of their *close* friends had engaged in violent acts. We summed the responses to the items to obtain a total score regarding the extent to which the respondents' friends engaged in violent behavior. The coefficient alpha for the scale was .68. School attachment is measured by a 12-item scale that indicated the extent to which the respondents care about school and have positive feelings for school. The items were summed to create an index of school attachment. The alpha coefficient was .79. We also control for urban, a dichotomous variable indicating neighborhoods located in urban areas with nonurban neighborhoods as the reference group.

South is a dichotomous variable indicating neighborhoods located in the southern United States with midwestern neighborhoods as the reference group designation.

## ANALYTIC STRATEGY

We use multilevel modeling techniques to examine the effects of neighborhood- and individual-level factors on violent victimization and offending. Multilevel models are appropriate because we are interested in individual outcomes that are possibly affected by neighborhood- and individual-level characteristics. Multilevel modeling has become customary for estimating contextual effects when individuals are clustered within neighborhoods (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). These models explicitly recognize that individuals within a particular neighborhood may be more similar to one another than individuals in another neighborhood and, therefore, may not provide independent observations.

In such situations, the residual errors are likely to be correlated within neighborhoods in nested data, which violates the assumption of independence of observations fundamental in traditional ordinary least-squares analysis (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). Consequently, failure to account for nonindependence of observations can result in standard errors that are biased downward, increasing the chances of reaching incorrect conclusions. Multilevel models avoid violating the assumption of independence of observations that the traditional ordinary least-squares analysis commits in analyzing hierarchical data. Because our outcome measures are scored with a binary coding scheme, we estimated a series of two-level, hierarchical logistic regressions.[10] It is important to note that because we are including a lag of the outcome as a predictor in the equations, the models capture change in the outcome and not cross-sectional differences.

To address the study hypothesis, we estimate a series of multilevel models wherein we simultaneously control for neighborhood- and individual-level factors. Because our study hypotheses are explicitly concerned with the implications of street culture for both causal specifications of the victim–offender overlap, we estimate separate cross-level interactions in two multivariate models to evaluate these dynamics fully. First, we examine whether the neighborhood street culture moderates the effects of offending on violent victimization. Second, we then shift our analytical focus to examine

10. We used the GLLAMM (generalized linear latent and mixed models) command function in STATA 10 (StataCorp, College Station, TX) to estimate our multilevel models.

whether the effects of violent victimization on offending also are moderated by neighborhood street culture. Combined, these models will provide evidence to evaluate the empirical validity of the study hypotheses.

## RESULTS

Before proceeding with our analysis of the first study question, we estimated an unconditional random intercept and slopes model (not shown in tabular form). The results demonstrated that the dependent variable—violent victimization$_{T2}$—varied significantly across neighborhoods, as did the violent delinquency$_{T1}$ slope coefficient.[11] Moreover, we also estimated a fully specified model without the cross-level interaction term to determine whether street culture ($\beta = .23$, standard error [SE] = .09) and violent offending ($\beta = .54$, SE = .14) exhibited independent main effects on victimization risk.[12] Although the results of this model are not central to the focus of the current research, they inform us as to whether the association between offending and victimization is explained or confounded by neighborhood street culture. It is possible that violent offending and victimization are mutual outcomes of exposure to a normative milieu that endorses violence (Singer, 1986), and thus, the victim–offender overlap is a product of contextualized cultural processes. Contrary to this notion, the main effects results indicated that street culture and violent delinquency significantly increased victimization risk in an additive fashion, which suggests the offending–victimization relationship is not a spurious product of exposure to neighborhood street culture.

As we turn now to our findings in table 2 pertaining to our first hypothesis, we expect to find that the strong positive relationship between violent delinquency$_{T1}$ and violent victimization$_{T2}$ is conditional on neighborhood street culture. As mentioned, we multiply street culture by the focal predictor, violent delinquency, to generate a cross-level interaction term that assesses the aforementioned conditional effects. According to the literature we described, in neighborhoods where the street culture is salient in the social landscape, the victim–offender overlap will be especially strong, although it will be substantially weaker in places where this cultural system is less prominent. Consistent with expectations, the results displayed

11. The variance component for the intercept is .397 ($\chi^2 = 193$, $p < .05$), although the slope variance for violent delinquency is 1.559 ($\chi^2 = 389$, $p < .05$). Additionally, it also bears mentioning that the grand mean intercept for the victimization outcome is –.99, which corresponds to the mean level (.27) of self-reported victimization across neighborhoods [.27 = exp (–.99) / 1 + exp (–.99)].
12. All multilevel models were estimated with the individual-level variables grand mean centered, which enabled us to avoid the possibility of confounding compositional and contextual effects.

**Table 2. Multilevel Logistic Models Predicting Conditional Effects of Neighborhood Street Culture on Relationship between Offending and Victimization**

| | Violent Victimization$_{T2}$ | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Predictor Variables** | **Coefficient** | **SE** | **Exp(*b*)** |
| Neighborhood Level | | | |
| Neighborhood street culture | .32* | .12 | 1.38 |
| Neighborhood disadvantage | .02 | .05 | 1.02 |
| Neighborhood homicide rate | .18* | .08 | 1.20 |
| Neighborhood social ties | −.02 | .04 | .98 |
| Violent Events | | | |
| Violent delinquency$_{T1}$ | .52* | .15 | 1.68 |
| Violent victimization$_{T1}$ | 1.47* | .22 | 4.35 |
| Cross-level Interaction | | | |
| Violent delinquency$_{T1}$ × Neighborhood street culture | .61* | .17 | 1.84 |
| Control Variables | | | |
| Family SES | −.05 | .06 | .95 |
| Family structure (1 = two) | −.06 | .05 | .94 |
| Male | .22* | .09 | 1.25 |
| Adolescent monitoring | −.14* | .06 | .87 |
| Violent peer network | .29* | .08 | 1.34 |
| School attachment | −.19* | .07 | .83 |
| Urban (1 = urban) | .03 | .03 | 1.03 |
| South (1 = South) | .02 | .03 | 1.02 |
| Variance Explained | 49.3% | | |

*NOTES:* $N = 71$ neighborhoods; $N = 763$ individuals.
*$p < .05$.

in table 2 show a significant and positive cross-level interaction term, suggesting that neighborhood street culture magnifies the effects of offending on victimization. More specifically, the results suggest that violent offending increases respondents' risk for violent victimization by approximately 68 percent ($[e\ (.52) = 1.68 - 1.00] \times 100$) when neighborhood street culture is at its average level. It is worth highlighting other findings from table 2; for instance, among the study variables, prior violent victimization exhibits the strongest effects. Immersion in a violent peer network and exposure to higher homicide rates also significantly increase victimization risk.

According to theory, the neighborhood street culture should exhibit a similar moderating effect on the relationship between victimization and offending. Just as the presence of a street culture will amplify victims' odds of suffering a violent reprisal, it also theoretically intensifies the likelihood victims will retaliate against those who have harmed them. Next, to evaluate these ideas, we examine whether the positive effect of violent victimization on violent delinquency is moderated by neighborhood street culture. To do so, we create a multiplicative term between street culture and victimization

**Table 3. Multilevel Logistic Models Predicting Conditional Effects of Neighborhood Street Culture on Relationship between Victimization and Offending**

| | Violent Delinquency$_{T2}$ | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Predictor Variables** | **Coefficient** | **SE** | **Exp(*b*)** |
| Neighborhood Level | | | |
| Neighborhood street culture | .26* | .10 | 1.30 |
| Neighborhood disadvantage | .11* | .05 | 1.12 |
| Neighborhood homicide rate | .14* | .06 | 1.15 |
| Neighborhood social ties | −.05 | .04 | .95 |
| Violent Events | | | |
| Violent delinquency$_{T1}$ | 1.84* | .22 | 6.30 |
| Violent victimization$_{T1}$ | .43* | .12 | 1.54 |
| Cross-level Interaction | | | |
| Violent victimization$_{T1}$ × Neighborhood street culture | .67* | .15 | 1.95 |
| Control Variables | | | |
| Family SES | −.08 | .07 | .92 |
| Family structure (1 = two) | −.09 | .06 | .91 |
| Male | .25* | .09 | 1.28 |
| Adolescent monitoring | −.16* | .06 | .85 |
| Violent peer network | .23* | .07 | 1.26 |
| School attachment | −.22* | .07 | .80 |
| Urban (1 = urban) | −.02 | .03 | .98 |
| South (1 = South) | .04 | .06 | 1.04 |
| Variance Explained | 58.1% | | |

*NOTES:* $N = 71$ neighborhoods; $N = 763$ individuals.
*$p < .05$.

and enter it into the model along with the study predictors. Preliminary analysis revealed significant intercept and victimization-slope variance in an unconditional intercepts and slopes model.[13] Moreover, a supplementary model *without* the cross-level interaction term also showed that violent victimization ($\beta = .40$, SE = .11) and street culture ($\beta = .27$, SE = .09) had independent main effects on violent delinquency, which suggests that the positive relationship between victimization and violent delinquency is not a spurious outcome of street culture.

Estimates from the violent delinquency model with the cross-level interaction term are displayed in table 3.[14] According to the results, the

13. The significant variance component for the intercept is .423 ($\chi^2 = 229$, $p < .05$), although the significant slope variance for violent delinquency is 1.736 ($\chi^2 = 351$, $p < .05$). With regard to the violent delinquency outcome, the results revealed a grand mean intercept of –.95, which corresponds to the mean level (.28) of self-reported offending across neighborhoods [.28 = exp (–.95) / 1 + exp (–.95)].
14. It is worth noting some important patterns in the findings. If we compare the variable estimates across tables 2 and 3, we see similarities; for instance, several

positive effects of violent victimization on violent offending$_{T2}$ are conditional on levels of neighborhood street culture. Indeed, the cross-level interaction term is positive and significant. When street culture is at its sample mean, victims of violence are 55 percent more likely to commit violent behavior. With an increase in levels of street culture, the magnitude of this relationship intensifies.[15] Combined, the findings from models 2 and 3 suggest that the victim–offender overlap is not fixed across neighborhoods but significantly differs according to variation in neighborhood-based street culture.[16]

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factors that predicted victimization risk also predict violent offending (i.e., peer network, school attachment, homicide rates, and sex). These findings further speak to the overlapping etiology of offending and victimization (Lauritsen and Laub, 2007).

15. In separate analyses, we included a measure of individual-level "street code," constructed from youths' reports, into the models displayed in tables 2 and 3 to probe the robustness of the findings. According to the findings, the street code measure significantly increased the probability of violent offending and victimization but had virtually no impact on the magnitude or significance of the cross-level interaction terms. These findings give added weight to the empirical validity of our key findings regarding the moderating effect of neighborhood street culture.

16. The multilevel modeling strategy we employ is a widely used method to assess the contribution of neighborhood and individual factors. The method assumes the control variables have additive effects on the outcome, conditional on the treatment variable. In this case, the treatment variable is the interaction term in each model. Additive adjustments, however, may not account for heterogeneity in the treatment effect across potential confounding factors (see Morgan and Winship, 2007). To investigate this possibility, we conducted supplementary analyses for both specifications of the victim–offender overlap. Here, to preserve space, we only describe the supplementary analysis for the victimization outcome model. First, in a regression framework, we estimated the predicted probability of *violent offending* at time 1 conditional on all covariates, with the exception of street culture and time 2 victimization. Next, the street culture variable was divided at its mean into a high (1 = *yes*) and low (0 = *no*) group or "high street culture." Each person was assigned to a group, depending on his or her level of street culture. Third, via a series of regression models, we determined that subjects in the two neighborhood groups were effectively balanced on all covariates. These regression models were weighted on the predicted probability of violence and contained only high street culture as a predictor. Across the regression specifications, the absolute value of the high street culture coefficient was not greater than .20. Finally, after rank-ordering respondents by their violence probability, we conducted a pair-wise *t* test of violent victimization across neighborhood groups. The results showed that subjects with similar violence probabilities exhibited significantly different rates of victimization at time 2 if they resided in a high street culture neighborhood. Moreover, high street culture significantly increased the odds of time 2 victimization in a logistic regression model that was weighted on the probability of violence. As noted, the supplementary analysis also was conducted for the offending outcome

**Table 4. Predicted Effects of Violent Delinquency on Violent Victimization across Levels of Neighborhood Street Culture**

| | Violent Delinquency Slope Effect | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Level of Neighborhood Street Culture** | **Coefficient** | **SE** | **Exp(*b*)** |
| Extremely High | 1.32* | .27 | 3.74 |
| High | .99* | .25 | 2.69 |
| Low | .12 | .16 | 1.12 |
| Extremely Low | .03 | .07 | 1.03 |

*$p < .05$.

Not only do we expect that the neighborhood street culture will magnify the effects of the victim–offender overlap, but we also expect the overlap to be weaker where the street culture is less salient in the social landscape. Table 4 summarizes the effects implied in the interaction term from the victimization model (see table 2); the table displays the slope effects of violent delinquency across levels of neighborhood street culture. Looking at the table, we observe that in neighborhoods where street culture is "high," adolescents who engage in violent delinquency increase their chances of victimization$_{T2}$ by approximately 169 percent ($[e(.99) = 2.69 - 1.00] \times 100$). By contrast, in neighborhoods where levels of street culture are "low" ($\beta = .12$, SE $= .16$) or "extremely low" ($\beta = .03$, SE $= .07$), violent offending *does not* significantly predict the risk for violent victimization.[17]

Next, table 5 displays the effects implied by the interaction term from the model in which violent delinquency was specified as the outcome (see table 3). Similar to the slope effects derived from the victimization model, the magnitude of the victimization–violent delinquency relationship in table 5 is much stronger in neighborhoods where the street culture is prominent, although it is weaker where this cultural milieu is less salient. For instance, the positive effect of victimization on violent delinquency is not significant in places where the street culture is "low" or "extremely low." Stated otherwise, victimization does not promote violent offending in the absence of a strong street culture. By contrast, victimization

specification, where we found remarkably similar results. Combined, these findings reinforce our earlier conclusions about the conditional effects of street culture on the relationship between offending and victimization, and vice versa. We wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for providing us with helpful information on these procedures.

17. We designate neighborhood street culture as "extremely high" at 2 standard deviations (SD) above the mean on the distribution; it is "high" where it is 1 SD above the mean; it is "low" where it is 1 SD below the mean, and "very low" is 2 SD below the mean.

**Table 5. Predicted Effects of Violent Victimization on Violent Delinquency across Levels of Neighborhood Street Culture**

| | Violent Victimization Slope Effect | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Level of Neighborhood Street Culture** | **Coefficient** | **SE** | **Exp(*b*)** |
| Extremely High | 1.41* | .28 | 4.10 |
| High | 1.11* | .24 | 3.03 |
| Low | .14 | .16 | 1.15 |
| Extremely Low | .02 | .05 | 1.02 |

*$p < .05$.

increases the risk of violent delinquency by approximately 203 percent ($[e\ (1.11) = 3.03 - 1.00] \times 100$) among youth who reside in high street culture neighborhoods. All combined, the fact that we do not observe a significant relationship between offending and victimization, or vice versa, is important because it suggests street culture is a mechanism that causes the victim–offender overlap to be more or less divergent. Neighborhood street culture, therefore, plays an important role in the genesis of the victim–offender overlap.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Little disagreement exists about the empirical validity of the victim–offender overlap, but there is considerable ambiguity with regard to its etiology. As a result, a small but mounting body of research has sought to unpack the mechanisms that cause the bidirectional association between offending and victimization to come about. An important set of findings have emerged from these efforts, providing theoretically informed insights into the source of this phenomenon. But several questions remain unresolved—the answers to which may help to unlock the mechanisms that account for the victim–offender overlap.

Noticeably absent from this body of research is an explicit focus on contextual mechanisms. Interpretations of subcultural theories suggest that we should expect the neighborhood cultural context to affect the magnitude of the reciprocal relationship between offending and victimization. Notions about the explanatory role of subcultural processes have permeated this area of research for several decades, although they have been subject to relatively little empirical scrutiny. These notions must be tested with actual indicators of aggregate subcultural processes if theoretical progress is to be achieved. The current study formalized and tested the hypothesis that neighborhood street culture moderates the association between offending and victimization, and vice versa.

Using multilevel data on a sample of adolescents, our study uncovered an important set of findings. Similar to prior empirical investigations, the results demonstrated that, on average, those who reported committing violence were more likely to suffer from it later on. Moreover, those who were victimized had a greater probability of engaging in violent delinquency. We also uncovered important caveats to this general pattern: The reciprocal association between violent offending and victimization was especially pronounced among individuals located in neighborhoods where the street culture is salient in the social landscape. Adolescents who resided in neighborhoods where the street culture was less prominent *did not* have a greater risk for victimization if they engaged in violent behavior, and nor were they more likely to commit violence if they had been victimized.

We recognize, however, that there are limitations to our study that both temper our findings and provide opportunities for future research. For instance, because we could not sufficiently control for time-stable unobserved factors, it is possible that the model estimates are, to some extent, affected by omitted variable bias (see Berg, 2011). Time-stable sources of heterogeneity may partially obscure the direction and magnitude of the causal relationships we observed. A recent study found that the algebraic relationships between offending and victimization, and vice versa, switched from positive to negative after controlling for time-stable unobserved heterogeneity (Ousey, Wilcox, and Fisher, 2011). Some discrepancies between these recent findings and those reported in the present study may occur because we did not adjust for unobserved factors nor did we use a similar modeling procedure. We lacked an adequate number of waves to estimate reliably the role of stable heterogeneity with dynamic nonrecursive models (see Alvarez and Glasgow, 2009). We did, however, incorporate a wide array of relevant control variables along with wave 1 measures of the outcomes in both of our models, and therefore, we are confident in the validity of the estimates. Moreover, previous studies have found evidence of a positive link between offending and victimization, even with rigid controls for unobserved time-stable heterogeneity in a quasi–fixed-effects panel design (Berg and Loeber, 2011). But given that omitted variable bias can have consequences for the accumulation of empirical knowledge, its potential impact on the victim–offender overlap clearly warrants further attention. This study also is somewhat limited by the fact that we cannot determine with absolute certainty whether respondents were actually the target or initial aggressor in violent encounters. Yet the wording of our victimization and violent offending items leaves little room for interpretation about whether one was a victim or a perpetrator. Despite these limitations, we believe this study addresses an important gap in the literature on the victim–offender overlap.

Taken together, the results bear importantly on existing criminological knowledge in several ways. First, the evidence uncovered here substantiates theoretical notions suggesting the victim–offender overlap is governed by contextualized honor codes (e.g., Singer, 1981; Wolfgang and Singer, 1978). Our study advances this line of research because it specified theoretically relevant indicators of neighborhood cultural processes—as opposed to proxy measures—to test whether they affect the nature of the victim–offender overlap. The findings seem to affirm similar assumptions reached in a recent study that relied on structural disadvantage as a proxy for aggregate conduct norms (e.g., Berg and Loeber, 2011). On balance, we believe our findings help to inform conceptual efforts to theorize this phenomenon by illuminating how a key neighborhood process affects whether individuals simultaneously fit into the roles of victim and offender.

We believe the evidence generated in the current study represents a step toward understanding the social context of the overlap between offending and victimization. As noted, some researchers propose that culturally reinforced retaliatory violence—or the process of attack and counterattack—culminates in a reciprocal causal relationship between offending and victimization (see Lauritsen and Laub, 2007). Given that we found *both specifications* of the overlap to vary closely with neighborhood street culture, the findings reinforce the perspective that the overlap is an outgrowth of retaliatory violence. Had we not found the effects of offending on victimization, or vice versa, to be pronounced in places where the street culture is prominent then we would have no basis to support these claims.[18] Still, we are careful not to draw firm conclusions because our data do not permit the type of multilevel incident-based analysis needed to determine whether the observed pattern of findings is attributable to retaliation.

Second, the results are important because they suggest that it would be incorrect to presuppose that the victim–offender overlap is ubiquitous; rather, the results indicate that the victim–offender overlap is more nuanced than the empirical literature implies. Indeed, we *did not* find evidence of the victim–offender overlap among youth who resided in places that are not defined by a strong street culture. This result is worth emphasizing because very few multivariate studies have *failed* to detect a positive relationship between offending and victimization, and vice versa (see Berg and Loeber, 2011; Lauritsen and Laub, 2007). Studies commonly isolate the average, direct relationship of either specification after controlling for the confounding

18. Findings from mixed-method research show that "honor" plays a prominent role in the genesis of retaliatory violence (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003: 170). Likewise, Jacobs and Wright (2006: 123) concluded that "criminal retaliation cannot be understood fully without reference to the socio-cultural context that provides much of the motivating force for its exercise."

influence of other relevant study predictors. Building on this research, our study indicates there is theoretical value in conceiving of the overlap as contingent on the context in which individuals are embedded.

If it is the case, as our results suggest, that offensive people are unlikely to be targeted for victimization in places where an honor culture is lacking, we could then assume that processes salient to these neighborhoods are not conducive to the victim–offender overlap. Perhaps in these settings the cultural emphasis on nonviolent methods of conflict resolution minimizes the possibility of retaliation. Where conventional conduct norms are salient, aggrieved actors are more likely to tolerate or ignore disrespectful treatment (see Cooney, 1998). Offensive behaviors are unlikely to promote a violent response in contexts where conventional standards prevail, because "dominant cultural values" not only encourage victims to "repress aggressive impulses" but also dictate calling the police (Singer, 1986: 68). Victims within these settings may find it *unnecessary* to engage in a counterattack against their adversaries because it will have little bearing on their likelihood of future victimization (see Baumer et al., 2003).

Third, although not the core focus of the current study, supplementary analyses from the main effects models also revealed that street culture exhibits a direct, contextual effect on *both* victimization risk and the likelihood committing violence. Previous multilevel research has shown that adolescents are more likely to engage in serious offending if they reside neighborhoods where an honor culture is a prominent contextual feature (Stewart and Simons, 2010). But the fact that we found neighborhood street culture to amplify adolescents' risk of suffering victimization, irrespective of their involvement in offending, is important because this relationship has not been subject to strong empirical scrutiny. Strands of criminological theory would expect street culture to influence the probability of victimization directly. Where the street culture dominates social interaction, relatively minor acts of ill treatment, which would otherwise be brushed aside as a "mere annoyance," are prone to be interpreted as serious personal transgressions (Horowitz and Schwartz, 1974). As our findings suggest, these dynamics may increase the risk of victimization, especially among people who victimize others, but even among those who do not.

From our viewpoint, the current focus on neighborhood cultural context should not obviate the need for additional research concerning the effects of individual-level explanatory mechanisms on the victim–offender overlap. An increasingly popular subject is whether prominent person-level indicators of population heterogeneity have multiplicative effects on the relationship between offending and victimization (see Berg and Loeber, 2011; Lauritsen, 2010). We also urge researchers to examine whether other theoretically relevant neighborhood mechanisms, beyond street culture, moderate the offending–victimization association. A dual

focus on the person-specific and context-specific nature of the victim–offender overlap may be a profitable way to move this area of research forward.

Overall, by focusing on the role of neighborhood processes, this study supports the notion that neighborhood street culture contributes to the etiology of the victim–offender overlap. Additional research on the mechanisms that produce this effect will help to enrich our understanding of the phenomenon and ultimately advance the development of violence theory.

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