

The Links Between Victimization and Offending

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The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime

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KEY FINDINGS

At sweep 4 (age 15) a broad measure of delinquency was seven times as high among those who had been victims of five types of crime as among those who had not been victims of any. The variation in serious delinquency was still more extreme.

Being a victim of assault with a weapon and of robbery were more strongly associated with delinquency than were other forms of victimization.

Being harassed by adults was also strongly associated with delinquency. This could be because rowdy youths draw attention to themselves, which they interpret as harassment. However, this could not apply to all of the harassment items. It could not explain, for example, why youths who said adults had indecently exposed themselves to them or followed them in a car had higher rates of self-reported delinquency than others. It seems that offending makes youths vulnerable to adult harassment.

The strongest link is between victimization and offending over the same time period, but there remains a fairly strong association after a period of three years. Victimization predicts delinquency three years later; and also, delinquency predicts victimization three years later.

The more often victimization is repeated, the more strongly it predicts delinquency. Consistently repeated victimization (without any gaps) predicts delinquency most strongly of all.

The most important factors explaining the link between victimization and offending were getting involved in risky activities and situations, and having a delinquent circle of friends. This is because the same activities, situations, and social circles lead both to victimization and to offending. To a small extent, also, the same personality traits underlie both.

There is evidence for a genuine causal link between victimization and offending, running in both directions. This is because the two are linked over time, after allowing for the effects of many explanatory variables.

The findings reinforce the Kilbrandon philosophy, which insists on dealing with young people according to their needs arising from their various troubles, and not primarily as offenders or as victims.

INRODUCTION

In our current study of a cohort of around 4,300 young people in Edinburgh, we have found a close relationship between crime victimization and self-reported delinquency. The purpose of this paper is to describe and explore this relationship between delinquency and victimization in young people, and to consider some possible explanations for it. The paper draws on findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (The Edinburgh Study), a longitudinal research programme exploring pathways into and out of offending among a single cohort of young people who started secondary school in the City of Edinburgh in 1998. The key aims and methods of the study are summarized below.¹

Aims of the programme

- To investigate the factors leading to involvement in offending and desistance from it
- To examine the striking contrast between males and females in criminal offending
- To explore the above in three contexts:
 - Individual development
 - Interactions with formal agencies of control
 - The social and physical structures of neighbourhoods
- To develop new theories explaining offending behaviour and contribute to practical policies targeting young people

Overview of methods

- Self report questionnaires (annual sweeps)
- Semi-structured interviews (40 undertaken in sweep 2)
- School, social work, children's hearings records (annual sweeps)
- Teacher questionnaires (1999)
- Police juvenile liaison officer and Scottish criminal records (from 2002)
- Parent survey (2001)
- Geographic information system

Participating schools

- All 23 state secondary schools
- 8 out of 14 independent sector schools
- 9 out of 12 special schools

Response Rates

- Sweep 1 96.2% (n=4,300)
- Sweep 2 95.6% (n=4229)
- Sweep 3 95.2% (n=4296)
- Sweep 4 92.6% (n=4144)

Research Team

- David Smith, Lesley McAra
- Susan McVie, Lucy Holmes, Jackie Palmer

Study Funding

- Economic and Social Research Council (1998 - 2002)
- The Scottish Executive (2002- 2005)
- The Nuffield Foundation (2002 - 2005)

¹ See also Smith et al (2001) and Smith and McVie (2003) for further details of the study.

Context

For some time there have been scattered indications that victimization and offending are linked, in the sense that offenders have a higher than average risk of being victims of crime, and victims have a higher than average likelihood of being offenders. The main sources pointing to such a link were earlier reviewed by Ezzat Fattah (1991). Among the most important were the pilot study for the first British Crime Survey (Sparks et al., 1977), the 1981 survey of Londoners carried out for the study of Police and People in London (Smith, 1983), and the British Crime Survey (Gottfredson, 1984; Mayhew et al., 1989). However, this link has not been highlighted or explained by mainstream criminological theories. Victimization and offending have not been brought together within a single explanatory framework. Instead, criminologists have adopted different and separate ideas to explain offending and victimization; this framework of thought has only begun to shift with the growth of interest in situations as a cause of crime. As an example, Braithwaite (1989) set out to produce a synthesis of the best elements of the main theoretical traditions in criminology, but did not mention any theory that addressed the connections between victims and offenders. In his chapter on 'facts a theory of crime ought to fit' he made no mention of the victim/offender link.

Some classic criminological theories might be adapted to explain it. Perhaps the clearest example is labelling theory (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1967). On this account, people become confirmed criminals as a consequence of being caught, publicly labelled, and stigmatized. After being denounced and rejected, the emergent criminal finds a new set of associates among other law-breakers, who are needed to make crime viable (for example, to distribute stolen goods). Becoming criminal is partly a process of learning from these new associates, and coming to think of oneself as a consequence in a different way. Although Lemert and Becker did not mention the point, extensive interactions with other deviants must make the emergent criminal a likely victim. This is not only because criminals are exposed to other criminals with whom they associate, but also because they are more vulnerable than the average person, since their social circle tends to be beyond the reach of conventional controls.

Although these issues are of central importance, they have been very little discussed because victims and offenders are placed in separate compartments. In essence, this is because the drama of criminal justice depends on a sharp contrast between a guilty offender and an innocent and suffering victim. Criminological theory has generally adopted this framework, and most methods of research have then been designed and used to investigate either offending or victimization, but not both at once. On the one hand longitudinal studies of offending, such as the Cambridge Study (Farrington, 2002) have had little or nothing to say about victimization. On the other hand, national crime surveys have focused on victimization and crime patterns, with occasional and limited questioning on self-reported offending.

An understanding of the links between victimization and offending is likely to have important implications for crime prevention and for criminal justice policy. For example, situational prevention should be simultaneously concerned with reducing risks for potential victims and potential offenders; and supervision of convicted offenders should be concerned with reducing their vulnerability to crime as a means of reducing the risk that they will offend again.

Structure of the paper

The first section describes the relationship between victimization and offending at a single point in time, and considers whether specific forms of victimization and offending are related. The second section analyses the relationship longitudinally over a three-year period, showing that earlier victimization is related to later delinquency, and earlier delinquency to later victimization. The third section outlines possible explanations for the link and summarizes the results of an analysis designed to evaluate some of these explanations. The final section briefly reviews some policy implications.

THE LINK BETWEEN VICTIMIZATION AND OFFENDING AT AGE 15

Findings for sweep 4 when cohort members were aged 15 are given to illustrate the strength of the relationship between victimization and delinquency. The questions and summary measures on self-reported delinquency and experience of crime victimization are explained in the panel below.

<p>REFERENCE PERIOD Sweep 1: 'ever' Sweeps 2-4: last 12 months (the last school year and summer holidays)</p> <p>CRIME VICTIMIZATION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Did anyone threaten or hurt you?2. Did anyone hurt you by hitting, kicking or punching you?3. Did anyone hurt you or try to hurt you with a weapon?4. Did anyone steal something of yours that you left somewhere?5. Did anyone use threats or force to steal or try to steal something from you? <p>DELINQUENCY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. fare dodging2. shoplifting3. noisy or cheeky in public4. joyriding*5. theft at school6. carrying a weapon*7. writing or spraying graffiti8. damage to property*9. housebreaking*10. robbery (theft with force or threats)*11. theft from home12. fire-raising*13. assault14. car-breaking*15. truancy <p>*Items included in the measure of 'serious delinquency'. These are the items rated as most serious by respondents at sweep 2. All 15 items are included in the measure of 'broad delinquency'.</p> <p>VARIETY MEASURES A count of the number of items (e.g. the number of different types of delinquency the person had engaged in).</p> <p>VOLUME MEASURES A count of the number of occasions (e.g. the number of occasions on which the person had engaged in a delinquent act).</p>
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Figure 1 illustrates how the mean volume of delinquency at sweep 4 varied according to the variety of victimization. Broad delinquency ranged from a mean of 7.5 among those who had not been victims of crime to 53.7 among those who had experienced all five types of victimization. The variation in serious delinquency was still more extreme.

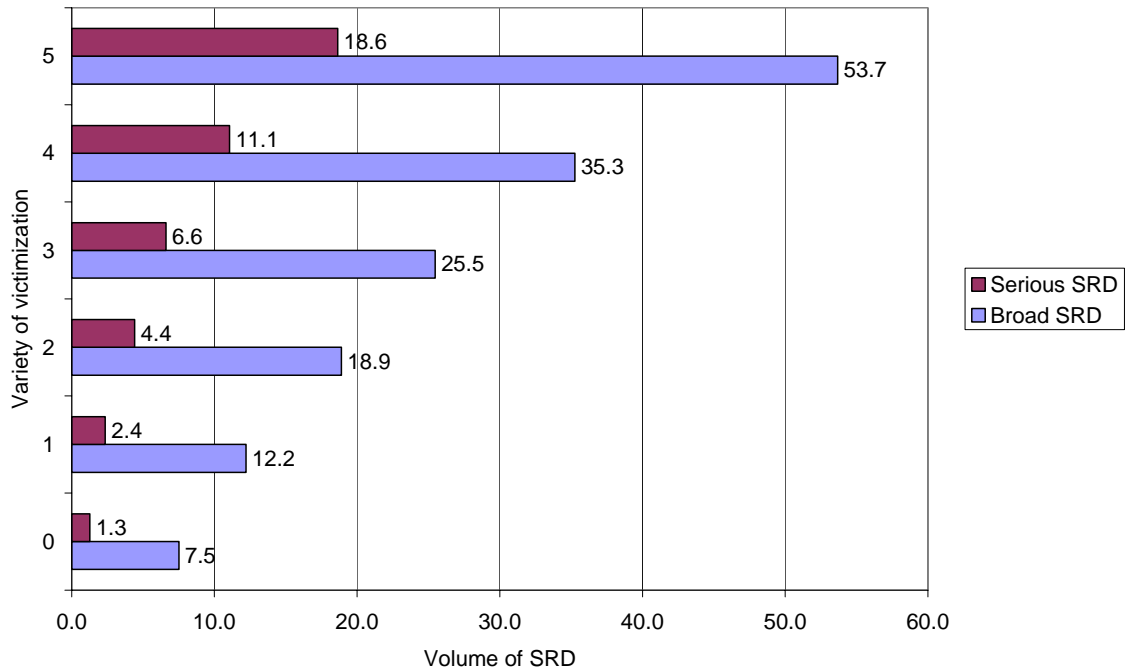


Figure 1: Mean volume of delinquency by variety of victimization at sweep 4

Figures 2 and 3 show how broad and serious delinquency varied at sweep 4 according to experience of each of the five particular kinds of victimization. Being the victim of assault with a weapon and robbery were more strongly associated with delinquency than were other types of victimization. This was particularly striking in the case of serious delinquency.

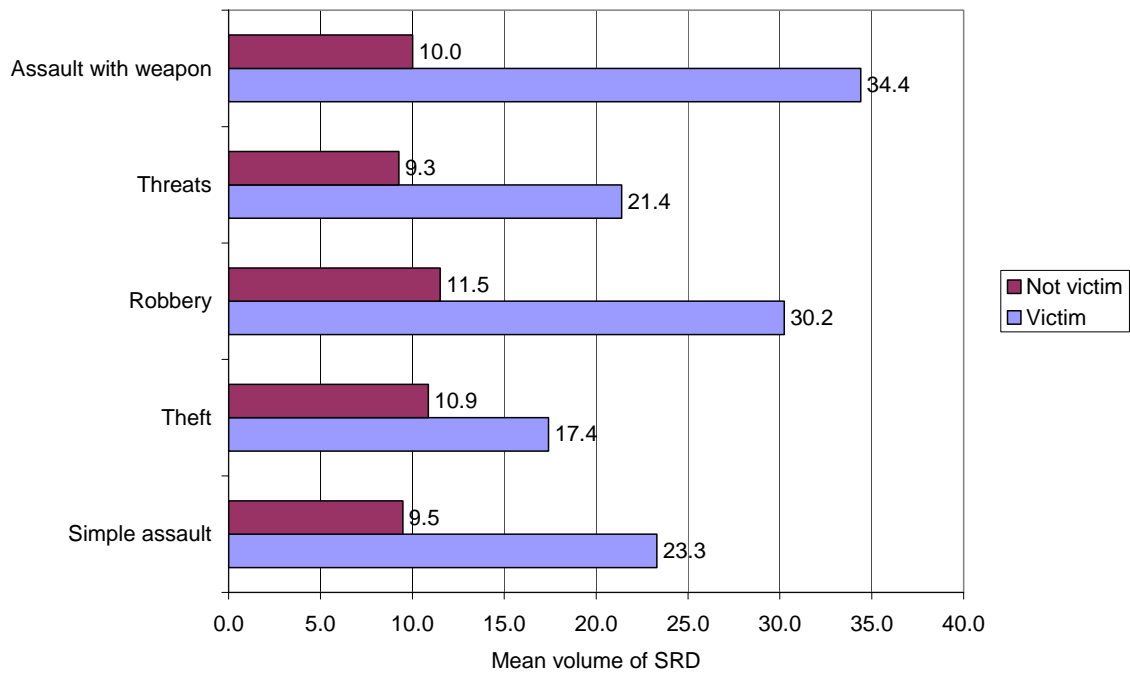


Figure 2: Mean volume of broad delinquency by victimization at sweep 4

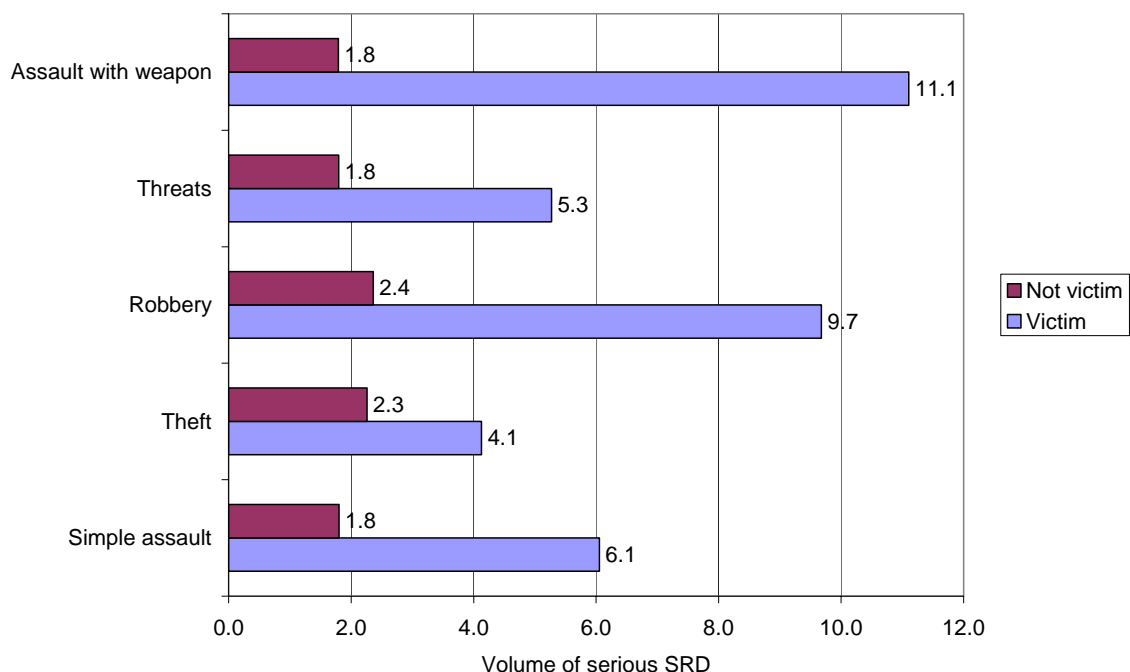


Figure 3: Mean volume of serious delinquency by victimization at sweep 4

VICTIM OF BULLYING

During the past year, how often did somebody or a group of people bully you in the following ways?

- Bullied by somebody hitting, punching, spitting or throwing stones
- Bullied by somebody saying nasty things, slagging you or calling you names
- Bullied by somebody threatening to hurt you
- Bullied by somebody ignoring you on purpose or leaving you out of things

BULLYING OTHERS

During the last year, how often did you do each of these things to someone you know?

- Ignore them on purpose or leave them out of things
- Say nasty things, slag them or call them names
- Threaten to hurt them
- Hit, spit or throw stones at them
- Get other people to do these things

VICTIM OF ADULT HARASSMENT

During the last year, how many times have you been bothered by an adult doing the following things?

- An adult staring at you so that you felt uneasy or uncomfortable
- An adult following you on foot
- An adult following you in a car
- An adult trying to get you to go somewhere with them
- An adult indecently exposing themselves to you (flashing)

Young people were also asked about experience of being bullied, bullying others, and being the victim of adult harassment (see panel above). Although all of the measures of delinquency and victimization are filtered through the perceptions of cohort members, these perceptions are probably particularly influential in the case of adult harassment, because much of the behaviour described is ambiguous and capable of various interpretations. For example, when youths behave in a cheeky or rowdy way, they end up feeling ‘hassled’ by adults because they have drawn attention to themselves. Nevertheless, it

should be noted that the five items include some that are fairly unambiguous, yet correlations between answers to all five items were high.

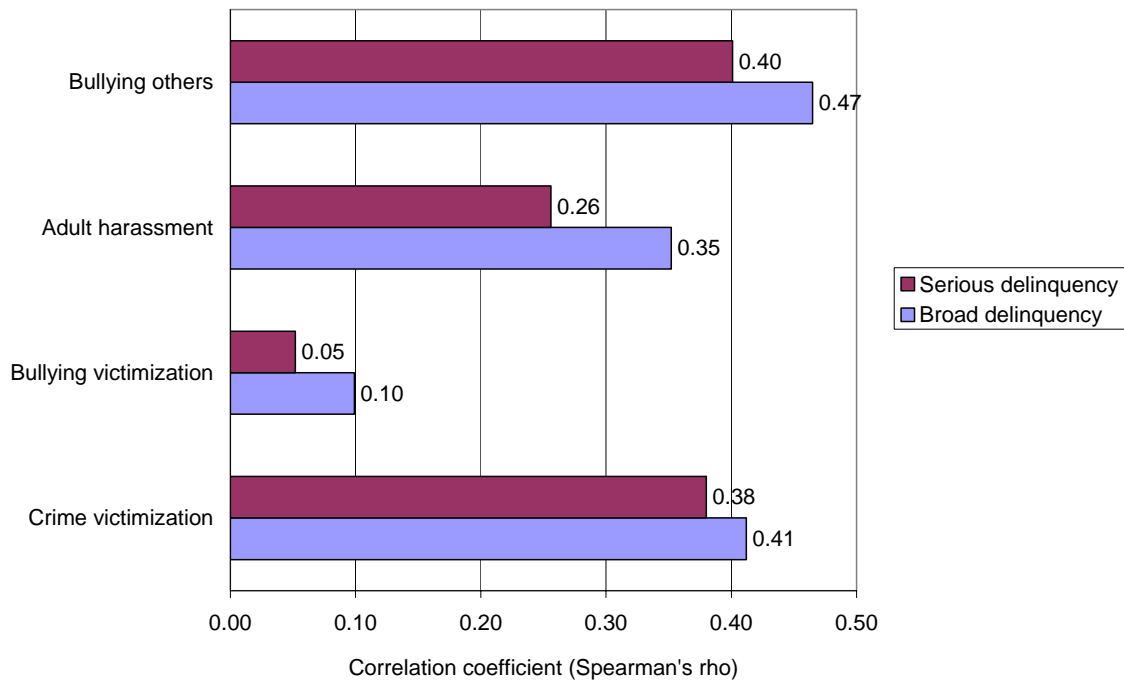


Figure 4: Correlation between delinquency and various forms of victimization and bullying at sweep 4

Note: all of the correlation coefficients shown above are significant at more than the 99.9% level of confidence.

Figure 4 shows the contemporaneous correlation at sweep 4 (age 15) between delinquency and various forms of victimization, all measured by scales derived from several items (see panel on previous page). The figure uses a different statistic from before to demonstrate the fairly strong correlation between crime victimization and delinquency. It shows, in addition, that adult harassment was quite strongly associated with delinquency. To some extent this could be because rowdy youths draw attention to themselves, which they then interpret as harassment. However, analysis of individual items shows that each specific form of harassment, including the more definite and unambiguous ones, was clearly associated with delinquency. For example, youths who said adults had indecently exposed themselves to them or followed them in a car tended to have higher rates of self-reported delinquency than others. This suggests the interpretation that delinquent youths make themselves vulnerable to adult harassment, because of time, place, and situation, and because guilt makes them reluctant to call the police. Figure 4 also illustrates the finding that being bullied, in contrast to being the victim of crime, was only weakly associated with delinquency. Although bullying others was strongly associated with delinquency, it is notable that the association between delinquency and victimization was almost as strong. Finally, Figure 4 shows that broad delinquency was rather more strongly associated with victimization than serious delinquency.

LONGITUDINAL LINKS

The first section considered the contemporaneous association when cohort members were aged 15 between victimization and delinquency. Much the same pattern was found at each of the earlier sweeps (ages 12, 13, and 14). A different issue is whether victimization at an earlier time predicts later delinquency, and contrariwise, whether earlier delinquency predicts later victimization. Figure 5 shows the results of a simple analysis that tackles this question. It gives the correlations between broad delinquency (SRD) and crime victimization (VICT) at successive sweeps: for example, the bottom group of bars shows the correlation between broad delinquency at sweep 1 and victimization at sweep 1, then at sweep 2, sweep 3, and sweep 4.

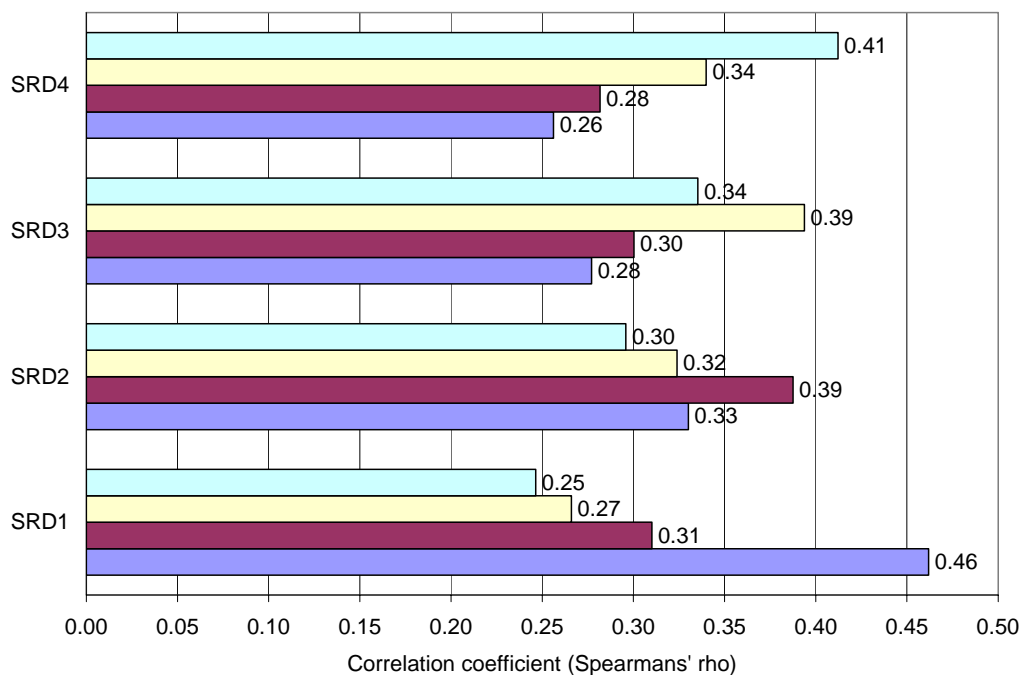


Figure 5: Correlations between broad delinquency and victimization at successive sweeps (volume measures)

The general pattern of findings is that the link between delinquency and victimization is strongest for the contemporaneous measures, and the wider the gap in time between the two measures, the weaker it becomes. Taking the bottom group of bars in figure 5 as an example, the highest correlation was between SRD1 and VICT1; the correlation between SRD1 and VICT2 was markedly lower; then the correlation between SRD1 and VICT3 was lower again, and that between SRD1 and VICT4 was lower again. In the next group of bars, the correlation between SRD2 and VICT2 was the highest one, and so on. Three further points should be noted. First, there were diminishing reductions in the correlation between delinquency and victimization as the time gap between them widened, so it seems likely that beyond three years the association will probably remain about the same. Secondly, the association in any case remained substantial after an interval of three years. Thirdly, there were arrows pointing in both directions between victimization and delinquency. Thus, the top bar in the bottom group shows that delinquency at sweep 1 predicted victimization at sweep 4, and this association was substantial. Also, the bottom bar in the top group shows that victimization at sweep 1 predicted delinquency at sweep

4, and the strength of this association in the opposite direction was almost identical. Although this pattern strongly suggests bi-directional causation (that delinquency causes victimization, and victimization causes delinquency) there are also many other possibilities to be considered, as discussed in the final section.

Findings already presented show that as victimization is repeated, so the likelihood of delinquency increases. This pattern can be further investigated by summing the counts of incidents of victimization across the four sweeps to provide an estimate of the total experience of victimization. The correlation between total volume of victimization and broad delinquency was respectively .461, .461, .450, and .437 at successive sweeps. This was higher than the contemporaneous correlation between victimization and delinquency (figure 5) which reinforces the conclusion that repeated victimization over long periods of time is particularly strongly associated with offending.

CONSISTENCY OF VICTIMIZATION (% of cohort in brackets)	
•	<i>Never victimized</i> : no experience of crime victimization at sweeps 1 to 4 (14.8%)
•	<i>Low-level inconsistent</i> : not victimized at all four sweeps and total variety of victimization across all four sweeps was 1 or 2 (29.1%)
•	<i>High-level inconsistent</i> : not victimized at all four sweeps and total variety of victimization across all four sweeps was 3 or more (37.0%)
•	<i>Medium consistent</i> : victimized at all four sweeps but variety of victimization score was not 2 or more at every sweep (13.6%)
•	<i>High consistent</i> : victimized at all four sweeps and variety of victimization was 2 or more at every sweep (5.5%)

The effect of a history of victimization was further investigated by defining five groups in terms of both their consistency and level of victimization at the four successive sweeps (see panel above). As shown in figure 6, the level of delinquency at sweep 4 varied in a strong and regular fashion between these five groups. This shows that a history of consistently repeated victimization is strongly related to a high level of later offending.

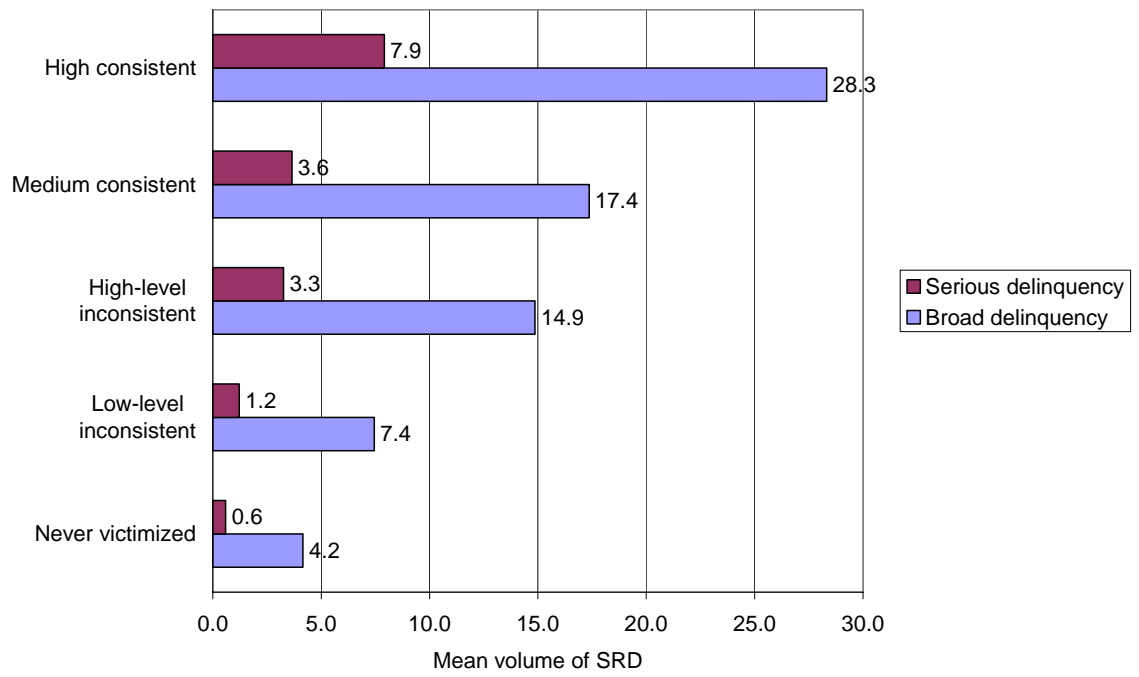


Figure 6: Delinquency at sweep 4 according to the history of victimization at sweeps 1-4

EXPLANATIONS

There are three main types of explanation for the link between victimization and offending. The first focuses on interactions between people within the same social circles. The second highlights common origins of offending and victimization in personal characteristics or the social environment. The third postulates causal links between offending and victimization, which may run in either direction. The following spells out six possible explanations in rather more detail.

1. Interaction within a social circle

a) Polarized circles of acquaintance

People commit offences mostly on others within their own social circle and close to them in time and space. At the same time, social circles tend to become polarized for both social and psychological reasons. As W. J. Wilson set out in his book *The truly disadvantaged* (1987), concentration effects magnify the influence of multiple disadvantages in poor black neighbourhoods in US cities; the middle classes, those in stable employment, and conventional families move out, emptying the area of role models for young people in the families that remain. Concentrated disadvantage is highly correlated with high crime rates at the neighbourhood level. Residents tend to commit offences on others within the neighbourhood or in neighbourhoods nearby, so that high rates of offending coincide with high rates of victimization, and in many cases offenders will also be victims. Similar processes probably operate at the school level, with a tendency towards polarization between high-achieving schools with low levels of bullying, theft, and disorder, and low-achieving schools, with high levels of these problems. Similar processes probably operate within smaller social units, such as groups of friends. Thus, teenagers tend to have friends with a similar level of delinquency to their own, so there is a polarization between high delinquency and low delinquency friendship groups. At the same time, offending is often a group activity. Individual members of delinquent groups are likely to commit offences on each other as well as on others outside the circle, so that offenders tend to have an elevated rate of victimization also.

b) Interactions within intimate relationships

Some types of crime arise out of sequences of interaction between people in an intimate relationship, or thrown together within a workplace or neighbourhood. Power will seldom be evenly balanced in any of these relationships; normally one party will have the upper hand; sometimes the balance of power will shift, or even flip, from time to time. Over a long sequence of interactions, therefore, one person will normally be the offender and the other the victim, but the positions may be reversed from time to time, and in rare relationships, each person may play the part of victim and offender equally often. Whenever crime arises in the context of a continuing relationship, victimization and offending are likely to be closely linked.

2. Common origins of offending and victimization

a) Personal characteristics

The same personal characteristics may give rise both to offending and to victimization. For example, most offending carries the risk of serious adverse consequences (such as a spell in prison and long-term effects on life chances subsequently), so that risk-taking as a personality characteristic is associated with offending. At the same time, a failure to

take precautions makes many kinds of victimization more likely (for example, leaving a car or flat unlocked, walking alone in an alleyway late at night), so that risk-taking is also associated with victimization. Many other common underlying characteristics are possible. An interesting speculation, for example, is that low self-esteem leads to offending in teenagers (while offending raises their self-esteem); and at the same time, low self-esteem attracts bullying, so that teenage offenders also tend to be under attack from young people of their own age. Again aggressiveness underlies many kinds of offending, and may underlie victimization as well if a challenging demeanour sparks off attacks by other youths.

b) Social and environmental factors

The same social and environmental factors that give rise to offending may also give rise to victimization. To the extent that poverty or a lack of education and personal resources make it more likely that people will become involved in crime, these deficits may also make them more vulnerable targets. If the focus is on the individual's socio-economic status, this theory is rather weak, because the evidence for a direct relationship between individual socio-economic status and offending is mixed (Tittle et al 1978; Braithwaite 1981; Tittle and Meier 1990). However, other social or environmental factors might be more important. For example, there is good evidence that weak social bonds are associated with offending (Hirschi 1969). They might also be associated with victimization, because it is harder for those without relationships to protect themselves and their property than for those who are embedded in dense social networks.

3. Causal relationships between offending and victimization

a) Offending causes victimization

There is good evidence for a direct causal relationship running from offending to victimization. Young offenders in residential care often have their belongings stolen and their rooms trashed (Peelo and Stewart 1992). People in prison are vulnerable to physical and sexual assault. When they come out of prison, people often find that their clothes and other possessions have been taken or disposed of by landlords or family members. If they have a place to live, it will often have been ransacked (Peelo and Stewart, 1992). Offenders may also become vulnerable to retaliation by their specific victims, and to revenge attacks by local people on behalf of the community at large: for example retribution by vigilante groups against men convicted of sexual offences. Offenders and ex-offenders tend to have difficulty in mobilizing the criminal justice system to defend them against attacks and in mobilizing the benefits system to help, so the cycle of offending and victimization may continue: for example, on leaving prison, an ex-offender may steal to replace what has been stolen, because he has very few clothes and is otherwise obliged to look like a tramp (Peelo et al 1992).

b) Victimization causes offending

It is implicit in the foregoing discussion that the causal link may also run from victimization to offending, for example because a victim of crime decides to retaliate. Furthermore, it seems likely that a causal chain may run backwards and forwards between victimization and offending, with each giving rise to the other in a long sequence. A different possibility, which has been much discussed in the case of child abuse, is that victimization in childhood causes trauma, which then has an adverse effect on personal development over the long term, increasing the likelihood that the childhood victim will become an adult offender.

Two sequences of regression analyses have been carried out on the Edinburgh Study data to explore the evidence for several of these types of explanation. In regression analyses, a number of 'independent' variables are used in combination to explain or predict a single 'dependent' or outcome variable. In the first sequence of models, delinquency at sweep 4 was the outcome or dependent variable, while victimization at sweep 2 was one of the independent or explanatory variables. This kind of model is therefore longitudinal: it illustrates the effect of victimization at sweep 2 (age 13) on delinquency at sweep 4 (age 15). The first step was to specify a basic model including only victimization and sex as explanatory variables. This gave an estimate of the overall size of the longitudinal relationship between victimization and delinquency. In successive steps, variables from different domains of explanation were then added to the model. This showed how far the association between earlier victimization and later offending was reduced by taking account of variables within the relevant domain. A remaining association between victimization and offending at the final stage is likely to suggest a causal relationship, although it could alternatively be explained by factors not included in this analysis. In the second sequence of regression models, the positions of victimization and delinquency were reversed. These 'inverted' models therefore illustrate the effect of delinquency at sweep 2 (age 13) on victimization two years later.

The detailed procedures and results of this analysis will be reported elsewhere. The basic model (step 1) confirmed that victimization and adult harassment both strongly predicted delinquency two years later, and the effects of these two variables were about the same. The inverted basic model confirmed that delinquency and bullying others both predicted victimization two years later, but the effect of delinquency on later victimization was much stronger than the effect of bullying. At step 2, the addition of personality and social class variables reduced the link between victimization and delinquency by a fairly small amount. The most important personality variable in this context was risk taking, which was associated with both delinquency and victimization, although more strongly with delinquency. Social class was unimportant in explaining the victim/offender link, because although related (albeit fairly weakly) to delinquency, it was not significantly related to victimization, except rather remotely in the way it interacted with other variables.

The most important factors explaining the link between victimization and offending were getting involved in risky activities and situations, and having a delinquent circle of friends (variables added at step 3). The effect of victimization on later offending was greatly reduced with the addition of these variables, and so was the effect of delinquency on later victimization in the inverted model. The composite measure of risky activities with other young people covered the following items: evenings out at clubs; evenings out with friends; frequency of hanging about; going to cinemas, amusement arcades, and discos; range of activities with friends. Cohort members were also asked whether their friends had engaged in each of the types of delinquency used for the self-report questions, and the results were used to compute a 'friends' delinquency' score. Both friends' delinquency and risky activities had large effects in the models once introduced at step 3, although the effect of friends' delinquency was the larger.

When two measures of parental bonds² were added at step 4, these did not help to explain the link between victimization and later offending at all. In the inverted model, the effect of delinquency on later victimization *increased* after taking account of parental bonds. Finally, when neighbourhood deprivation³ was added to the model (step 5), this again did nothing to explain the link in either direction between victimization and offending: in fact, at this step both the effect of victimization on later delinquency, and the effect of delinquency on later victimization, actually *increased*. Thus, allowing for the effects of neighbourhood deprivation and parental bonds reveals that the link between victimization and offending is closer than it would otherwise appear to be.

At step 5, after including explanatory variables from all of these domains, there remained a substantial effect of victimization on later delinquency, and a similar effect of delinquency on later victimization. Furthermore, these effects were no longer diminishing as further variables were added to the models; in fact, particularly in the inverted models with victimization as the outcome, they were increasing again. These findings suggest a genuine causal influence running in both directions.

Returning to the six possible explanations mentioned earlier, there is very strong support for the idea that victimization and offending are linked through interactions between people in the same social circles (1a). These linkages are supported by patterns of activity that create both opportunities for offending and risks of victimization and which tend to involve the same circles of acquaintance. The linking of offending and victimization through intimate relationships (1b) has not been investigated here, but receives general support from the findings on the influence of circles of friends. There is support for the theory that common personal characteristics underlie both offending and victimization (2a), and risk taking is the most important factor identified here. Other characteristics that have not been tested, such as aggressiveness, may also be important. However, it seems unlikely that this can account for more than a small part of the association between victimization and offending. There is little support for the theory that common features of the social or physical environment which give rise both to offending and to victimization explain the link between them (2b). Social class was related to delinquency, but more weakly to victimization, and therefore did little to explain the victim/offender link. Neighbourhood deprivation did not help to explain it at all.

The findings also support the theory that causal influences run from delinquency to victimization (3a) and back from victimization to delinquency (3b). These causal chains are not entirely distinct from the mechanisms discussed above. For example, delinquents tend to choose and to be chosen by delinquent friends, and tend to be shunned by conventional peers. At the same time, they influence and are influenced by their delinquent associates, and get into risky situations with them. All of these influences and processes jointly lead both to offending and to victimization.

² These covered parental monitoring and conflict with parents.

³ Edinburgh was divided into 91 neighbourhoods. A composite measure of the deprivation of each neighbourhood was derived from six variables in the 1991 census. Cohort members were allocated to neighbourhoods from the postcodes of their home addresses.

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis has limitations, because it is confined to a short span of two years between the ages of 13 and 15. This means, for example, that it cannot test the idea that the punishment of offenders makes them vulnerable to victimization; or the possibility that the trauma of victimization can increase the likelihood of offending many years later. As the study continues, we plan to extend analysis of this topic over a longer span and with older subjects.

In spite of these limitations, the findings show that victimization and offending are linked in many different ways. To a large extent they are twin aspects of the same social settings, social interactions, behaviour patterns, and personal characteristics. There are probably causal chains running from one to the other in both directions.

These findings support the emphasis placed by the Scottish system on making decisions in the best interests of the young person in trouble. They show that young offenders are often also victims of crime and in need of help for that reason, among others. They also show that offending can make young people vulnerable, for example to harassment by adults. All of this reinforces the Kilbrandon philosophy which insists on the need to take a holistic approach in dealing with young people.

There is a need to develop the more detailed policy implications. Victim support policy has to deal with the reality of victims who are often themselves offenders, and whose offending may be closely connected with their misfortunes. Restorative justice programmes often have to mediate between people who might change places in the victim and offender seats on another occasion. The practitioners who run these programmes have to deal with the ambiguity and complexity of real life, which is not accurately modelled by the drama of the courtroom, with its absolute categories of victim and offender.

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