

Specifying the Influence of Family and Peers on Violent Victimization

Extending Routine Activities and Lifestyles Theories

CHRISTOPHER J. SCHRECK

Rochester Institute of Technology

BONNIE S. FISHER

University of Cincinnati

The fact that crime and victimization share similar correlates suggests that family and peer contexts are potentially useful for explaining individual differences in violent victimization. In this research, we used routine activities and lifestyles frameworks to reveal how strong bonds of family attachment can promote more effective guardianship while simultaneously making children less attractive as targets and limiting their exposure to motivated offenders. Conversely, the routine activities perspective suggests that exposure to delinquent peers will enhance risk. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), we found that family and peer context variables do correspond with a higher risk of violent victimization among teenagers, net controls for unstructured and unsupervised activities and demographic characteristics. The role of family and peer group characteristics in predicting victimization risk suggests new theoretical directions for victimization research.

Keywords: *violent victimization; lifestyles; routine activities; family; peers*

Criminologists have long been interested in family conditions as an antecedent of youthful delinquent behavior (Farrington, 1987; Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Rebellon, 2002; Sampson & Laub, 1993). As important as family context is in the delinquency research, the family may have broader significance in

Authors' Note: A version of this article was presented as part of a presidential panel session at the 2002 annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology in Chicago. The authors are grateful for the beneficial comments of two anonymous referees. Address all correspondence to: Christopher J. Schreck, Department of Criminal Justice, Rochester Institute of Technology, 93 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623.

JOURNAL OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE, Vol. 19 No. 9, September 2004 1021-1041

DOI: 10.1177/0886260504268002

© 2004 Sage Publications

view of the finding that delinquents tend to experience high levels of violent victimization (Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991). This connection between involvement in crime and the experience of victimization has led some criminologists to propose that established correlates of crime—which might include family characteristics—are also relevant for understanding victimization (Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Schreck, 1999; Schreck, Wright, & Miller, 2002). In addition, it appears reasonable to think that families have an interest in preventing their children from being threatened, beaten up, or robbed. Consequently, family context may be particularly important among teenagers, who bear a disproportionately high level of victimization relative to every other age group (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003).

In contrast to the longstanding tradition of family and delinquency research, there have been few attempts by researchers to explore a connection between family context and the experience of general violent victimization. The few studies to consider the relationship between family context and general victimization found that level of emotional attachment between family members is perhaps the strongest family-relevant predictor of victimization¹ (Esbensen, Huizinga, & Menard, 1999; Lauritsen, Laub, & Sampson, 1992). Consistent with these studies, we argue that a strong family—one that possesses durable ties of emotional warmth and support—might reduce the chances that adolescents will experience violent victimization.

The primary competitor to the influence of the family is most likely the adolescent peer group, which criminologists and victimologists find to be a risk factor for criminal behavior as well as victimization (Akers, 1985; Lauritsen et al., 1992; Schreck et al., 2002; Warr, 2002). The peer group represents one of the primary social contexts in the lives of adolescents, aside from the family (Coleman, 1980; Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Thornberry, 1987; Warr, 1993, 2002). At the same time, the presence of criminal associates in a teenager's life is traditionally one of the strongest and most consistent correlates of individual delinquency (Akers, 1994; Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981; Warr & Stafford, 1991; c.f. Haynie, 2001). Membership in peer groups, however, also corresponds with a higher risk of victimization. Researchers have theorized that membership in a delinquent group can invite retaliation from the group's victims or else group norms might favor the use of violence as an accepted means of settling within-group disputes (Baron, Forde, & Kennedy, 2001; Baron, Kennedy, & Forde, 2001; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Singer, 1981). In addition, proximity to other participants in crime leads members of the peer group to use each other as convenient targets (Jensen & Brownfield, 1986; Lauritsen et al., 1991; Schreck et al., 2002). Even research looking exclusively at criminal youth gang members found that membership is a source of risk rather than

protection (Miller & Decker, 2001; Sanders, 1994). Taken together, attempts at understanding the sources of adolescent victimization cannot afford to ignore risk factors originating in the peer context. Nevertheless, the literature has not given much attention to the effectiveness of family context as a predictor of victimization after controlling for delinquent peer group characteristics (see Esbensen et al., 1999; Lauritsen et al., 1992).

In view of the importance of the family and peer group for delinquency causation, both appear to have significance beyond simply being precursors of juvenile delinquency. This article explores family and peer contexts and examines how these contexts link to routine activities/lifestyles theories of victimization.

Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), we then empirically tested whether the combined influence of family and delinquent peer-group associations significantly affects adolescents' level of violent victimization. One important methodological advantage of the Add Health is its national coverage of adolescents. The Add Health also offers a significant improvement over other major data sets (such as the National Youth Survey or the Monitoring the Future study) in that the staff collected data from not only the respondent and his or her parents (which would be relevant for measuring family attachment) but also from the respondent's peers. This data set thus provides a unique opportunity to measure the influence of peer context in conjunction with family characteristics.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our general framework for explaining how family and peer contexts might influence victimization draws from the routine activities/lifestyles theories (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garofalo, 1978). Together, these theories stress how situations or contexts carry their own level of risk for victimization. The routine activities theory maintains that the convergence in time and space of motivated offenders, attractive targets, and ineffective guardianship determines the risk of victimization. People who spend a lot of time in settings where they are exposed to offenders and cannot adequately protect themselves will tend to have a higher risk of victimization. Social structure and demographic characteristics generally affect daily routines and, thus, exposure and vulnerability to likely offenders (Hindelang et al., 1978; Miethe, Stafford, & Long, 1987; Sampson & Wooldredge, 1987). Family and peer contexts could also be important mechanisms for the meeting of motivated offenders and worthwhile, vulnerable targets; that is, social bonds with family and peers might structure or deter-

mine routine daily activities that have relevance for victimization risk (Felson, 1986; Horney, Osgood, & Marshall, 1995; Schreck et al., 2002).

Attachment to the Family and Violent Victimization

The bond of attachment attends to the degree of sensitivity and emotional closeness that people have for others (see Hirschi, 1969). Although the level of emotional closeness with others might directly influence risk, the connection between bonds, similar to attachment, and routine activity is better documented (Felson, 1986; Schreck et al., 2002); that is, attachment could serve to constrain the types of activities we routinely engage in and bring individuals into closer proximity to those with an interest or social obligation to act as protectors. The following discussion thus shows how attachment to the family has relevance for each of the three necessary elements for crime: effective guardianship, exposure to motivated offenders, and target attractiveness.

Family context and exposure to motivated offenders. Bonds to family members should remove would-be victims from the proximity of likely offenders. Strong attachment for parents should tend to keep children closer to home and away from the company of strangers. Felson (1998) noted that although some people have family members who are unquestionably dangerous to be with, it is typically much more dangerous to spend time around strangers and outside the home (see also, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003; Hindelang et al., 1978). In addition, strong feelings of attachment might compel parents to regulate their children's friendship groups (which includes getting to know the friends, including them in family activities, and getting to know their families). As noted earlier, the delinquent peer group may well represent a pool of unusually motivated offenders. In short, attachment keeps children closer to home, makes parents interested in the friends of their child, and thus keeps children away from motivated offenders.

Family context and guardianship. Strong bonds represent a catalyst for the meeting, in time and space, of potential victims with effective guardians. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) maintained that strong bonds of parental attachment to the child are a prerequisite for effective supervision and, presumably, protection; that is, one might expect that parental presence would make criminal activity against their offspring inconvenient. One may also assume that children who are attached to their parents will choose to spend more time with them enjoying their protection than children who dislike or distrust their parents. Attachment can also lead to improved guardianship in

ways other than direct supervision. Given the scattered nature of informal control in modern American society (see Felson, 1998), with parents who work and students who go to school and who may work themselves, parents can ensure guardianship by arranging for surrogate parents, such as child care providers or coaches. Thus, although strong attachment cannot guarantee that parents will always be able to immediately supervise their children, attachment appears more likely to facilitate the direct presence of alternative guardians.

Family context and target attractiveness. Bonds might create proximate so-called handlers, or people who are socially obligated to prevent likely victims from making themselves into attractive targets (for more on handlers, see Felson, 1986); that is, effective handlers will strive to prevent those they feel responsible for from behaving provocatively and risking retaliation, which could happen if the child is behaving belligerently or insolently to others or is victimizing them. Handlers may also be in a position to require precautions intended specifically to promote safety (e.g., "Come straight home after school" or "Make sure you take the bus; don't walk home by yourself").

Social bonds aside, we would expect that deviant parents will be less capable of protecting their children from crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggested that such parents are little inclined to exert themselves monitoring their children. Beyond the effort and time that effective supervision entails, parents who impair their judgment by consuming illegal drugs or drinking alcohol to excess will tend to be less effective as protectors. Deviant parents may also engage in illegal behavior against their own children and represent proximate likely offenders in their own right. The presence of two married adults in the household may also be important, as researchers have speculated that family disruption makes supervision more difficult as well as interferes with the maintenance of bonds with children (Hirschi, 1991; Rutter & Giller, 1983).

Peer Context and Violent Victimization

Although adolescent life typically revolves around the family, the peer group represents a second major context. We have already noted the fact that teenagers spend considerable amounts of time engaged in social activity with their friends. As is the case with the family, the routine activities/lifestyles approaches can offer insights about why contact with the peer group, most notably the delinquent peer group, also suggests exposure to motivated offenders, weakened guardianship, and increased attractiveness as a target.

Delinquent Peer Association and Exposure to Motivated Offenders

Although routine activities theory does not attempt to explain why people are motivated to commit crime, research reveals that there are individual differences in how easy it is to tempt someone into crime (Felson, 1998; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). To illustrate, exposure to persons with a record of delinquency—particularly when one is vulnerable—would therefore be risky. The principle of homogamy in lifestyle theory (Hindelang et al., 1978, pp. 256-257) addresses this issue, positing that individuals who share daily living conditions and social activities with high-risk offenders (because they possess similar demographic backgrounds) will have a disproportionately high risk of victimization (see also, Miethe & Meier, 1994). Ties of friendship to a delinquent would therefore make it more likely that someone will routinely be in proximity to a motivated offender and vulnerable. If most crimes do not require significant departures from the normal routines of the offender, the closeness of a delinquent's friends would make them accessible targets (see Felson, 1998).

Delinquent peer association and guardianship. In light of the amount of time teens spend with their peer group, other members of that group are potentially well situated to act as guardians and protect their peers. This role for the peer group presupposes that one's associates are interested in serving as guardians. Guardianship, however, potentially necessitates time, effort, and risk. Felson (1986, 1998) suggested that strong social bonds create a stake in protecting others. These bonds influence the amount of time people spend in risky activity away from those who can protect them from the criminal inclinations of others; that is, caring about others may make one spend more time with them, which promotes personal enjoyment and safety from victimization.

The delinquent peer group, on the other hand, undermines guardianship in multiple ways. First, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) characterized delinquents as lacking diligence and being impulsive and selfish, thus suggesting that they are unlikely to exert themselves to protect their closest associates when their associates are vulnerable. Second, as Sparks (1982) indicated, someone in a delinquent group would be unlikely to report victimization to the police and can therefore count on having less police protection. Part of this may reflect the delinquent's understandable lack of comfort in dealing with legal authorities. For instance, delinquents might assume that the police

will be quick to dismiss their claims because of their connection to other troublemakers, or else they might run a higher risk of implicating themselves merely by talking to the police.

Delinquent peer association and target attractiveness. As noted in criminological research, children who participate in youth gangs and who claim the friendship of other delinquent youth are much more likely to participate in crime themselves. In fact, juvenile delinquency frequently occurs as a group activity (Erickson & Jensen, 1977; Warr, 1996). A number of researchers have suggested that participation in crime—or even of merely identifying with a delinquent group—can make a youth a worthwhile target for others. Singer (1981) proposed that retaliation is part of the normative characteristics of a violent subculture (see also, Baron, Forde, et al., 2001). Someone thus committing crime or who is a member of a group responsible for committing a crime might thus alternate from offender to victim when the former victim attempts to retaliate. Youth groups that encourage aggressive behavior may likewise make themselves attractive targets by precipitating violence through their confrontational behavior.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There is good reason to think that families with conventional parents and where strong bonds are present between family members will be more effective at promoting the safety of offspring. At the same time, the prominence of the peer group in the lives of adolescents represents a plausible source of risk. More specifically, do stronger bonds of attachment between family members—especially between parents and children—promote greater safety from violent victimization? Does spending time with friends, and having delinquent friends, increase risk?

Most existing data sources only survey the victimization experiences and traits of only the adolescent respondents, and not their parents or members of their peer network. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), however, integrated information from each of these three sources—the adolescent, parents, and friends—which provides more valid measures than would be the case if one relied on data from only the teenagers. This analysis below, which uses these data, considers the relative influences of family context and peer group factors on the level of violent victimization.

DATA AND METHODS

The current research used the first wave of the public-use version of the Add Health study, which was conducted between September 1994 and December 1995. This wave consisted of in-school and in-home administrations.² The goal of the Add Health study was to create a sample that is nationally representative of students attending U.S. schools in Grades 7 through 12. Our analyses excluded cases with any missing data, leaving slightly more than 3,500 respondents who provided sufficient data for analysis. We report descriptive statistics for all of the variables used in the analysis in Table 1. The Add Health oversampled Blacks, which is reflected in Table 1; however, our multivariate analyses employed Add Health-computed weights to correct for the oversampling.

The goal of the Add Health study was to learn more about the influence of social environment on adolescent health. Consistent with this goal, the data set contains a rich variety of social context variables, health-related measures (e.g., exercise, disease, accidents), as well as indicators of violent victimization. A particular strength of the data is that the respondent record also includes information from parents and other children nominated by the respondent as being friends (or who nominate the respondent). Consequently, relevant data are more valid than indicators requiring respondents to report on peer and parent conduct. We therefore can have greater confidence, for instance, that peer delinquency actually measures that phenomenon and not, as some researchers have argued, the respondent's own behavior (see Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1986; Jussim & Osgood, 1989).

Dependent Variable—Violent Victimization

To measure the occurrences of violent victimization for each individual, we created an additive index. Respondents were asked about having been the victim of four types of serious violence. These items each measure serious forms of violence: (a) threat with a knife or gun, (b) shooting, (c) stabbing, and (d) being "jumped."³ The reference period was the 12 months preceding the survey. The Add Health survey recorded responses using ordinal categories (*never* = 0, *once* = 1, *more than once* = 2). As expected, the distribution of violent victimization is skewed; nearly 80% of the respondents were not victims of any of the violent crimes noted above during the reference period, approximately 10% reported one instance of victimization, and the remainder accounting for two or more incidences of victimization.

TABLE 1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Primary Variable Statistics</i>		<i>Item Factor Loading</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Male	.47	.50	—
Black	.25	.43	—
Age	14.84	1.70	—
Lifestyles			
Driving around	.75	.43	—
Sneaks out	.11	.31	—
Exercises	1.66	1.04	—
Welfare receipt	.07	.25	—
Parents' drinking more than 5 drinks	1.25	.80	—
Parental feelings toward child	.17	2.57	—
Child has bad temper ^a	—	—	.61
Includes teen in decisions affecting teen ^a	—	—	.67
Does not understand teen	—	—	.62
Trusts teen ^a	—	—	.74
Attachment to mother	4.55	1.03	—
Close to mom	—	—	.96
How much does mom care	—	—	.96
Attachment to father	3.32	2.10	—
Close to dad	—	—	.99
How much does dad care	—	—	.99
Peer delinquency	4.29	3.33	—
Smoke cigarettes	—	—	.83
Drink beer/wine	—	—	.90
Get drunk	—	—	.90
Took risk on a dare	—	—	.50
Skipped school	—	—	.68
Friends care	4.29	.76	—
Activities w/friends	1.97	.99	—
Family climate	4.02	.68	—
Family understands me	—	—	.81
I want to leave home ^a	—	—	.62
Family has fun	—	—	.82
Family pays attention	—	—	.83
Violent victimization			
(How often in past year has someone . . .)	.30	.81	—
Pulled a knife or gun	—	—	.79
Stabbed you	—	—	.51
Jumped you	—	—	.73
Shot at you	—	—	.66

a. Denotes reverse-coded item.

Independent Measures

Family context. There were six family-related measures included in the analysis (descriptive information and component items for indexes are presented in Table 1). The first measure, welfare receipt (coded 1 = yes, 0 = no), measures the economic condition of the family. Less than 10% of the sample reported receiving any public assistance. The second measure, parental drinking, measures how often parents consumed five or more drinks in the previous month (coded 1 = *never* through 6 = *five or more times*). We used this variable as a proxy for deviant parents. The median parent reported never consuming five or more drinks. The third item, positive parental feelings toward child, is a composite index of four items measuring the parent's opinions about the child, with a higher positive score indicating warmer feelings toward the child. Because the component items in this index had different metrics, we converted the raw item scores into *z* scores and then summed the items to create the scale. A higher score indicates more positive feelings toward the child. The fourth measure is a two-item index tapping the child's attachment toward the mother, with a higher score indicating stronger attachment (coded 1 = *not at all* through 5 = *very much*). The median score was 5, indicating that the typical child is strongly attached to his or her mother. The fifth item is also a two-item index made up of similar questions but measuring the child's attachment toward the father (median = 4.5). We elected to not create a four-item attachment index, as confirmatory factor analysis indicated that these items did not load together well. The final item, family climate, is a four-item index measuring the general feelings of the respondent for the family (as opposed to the parents specifically). Descriptive statistics indicate that the average respondent lived in a family characterized by closeness between the members (median = 4).

Peer delinquency. The friends located in the respondent's peer network reported participation in five minor types of delinquency: (a) cigarette smoking, (b) drinking alcohol, (c) getting drunk, (d) skipping school, and (e) doing risky things on a dare. All items had the following response categories: 0 = *not at all*, 1 = *once or twice*, 2 = *3 or 4 times*, and 3 = *5 or more times*. The Add Health survey designers then computed the average level of delinquency among those peers nominated by the respondent, or who nominated the respondent, and recorded them on the respondent's record. We summed the averages for the five items to create a peer delinquency index. The average respondent had a peer network that engaged in these delinquent or risky activities approximately 4 times during the reference period. Most members of the sample had friends who reported relatively low levels of delinquency,

averaging four different acts of delinquency committed once or twice in the previous 12 months.

Peer context. Two variables measure additional dimensions of peer context. The first variable, friends care, measures the feeling that friends care about the respondent. Scores range from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). The second variable, activities with friends, reflects the amount of time the respondent spends simply hanging out with friends (coding ranges from 0 = *not at all*, to 3 = *5 or more times per week*). The average respondent felt that friends generally cared (mean = 4.29) and reported going out with friends 3 or 4 times per week.

Lifestyles. We also employed several activities that bivariate analysis indicated as being correlated with victimization: sneaking out of the house at night, driving a car, and exercising. Each of these items represents activity outside the home, which should elevate victimization risk. One might reasonably interpret each of these activities as events that are likely to occur away from parental guardians and home, and therefore likely to incur additional risk.

Controls. The multivariate data analyses include several demographic control variables. Gender represents the effect of being a male respondent (with female respondents being the reference category). Males constituted 47% of the sample. Racial identity is divided between Black and non-Black (reference), with 25% of the sample being Black. The variable for respondent age measures age in discrete years, ranging from 11 to 20. Each of these variables is a correlate of violent victimization (see, e.g., Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003; Cohen, Kluegel, & Land, 1981; Hindelang et al., 1978).

RESULTS

We were interested in learning whether family and peer-related variables predict violent victimization and significantly improve prediction beyond baseline demographic variables. In view of the highly skewed distribution of the dependent variable, we use an overdispersed Poisson regression model to estimate the effect coefficients of the independent variables. The first column of coefficients in Table 2 (i.e., Model 1) represents the baseline model.⁴ As expected, minorities tend to have significantly higher levels of victimization, as do male and younger members of the sample. Model 1 also includes the three indicators of unsupervised and unstructured activities. Consistent with

TABLE 2: Poisson Regression Estimates for Violent Victimization

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>	
	b	β	b	β	b	β
Intercept	-1.72		-.47		-.40	
Demographic						
Male	.90***	.25	.98***	.27	.95***	.26
Black	.42***	.10	.35***	.08	.41***	.10
Age	-.05	-.41	-.06*	-.49	-.08*	-.65
Lifestyles						
Driving around	.35*	.08	.32*	.08	.30*	.07
Sneaks out	1.03***	.18	.78***	.13	.74***	.13
Exercises	.15***	.09	.15***	.09	.15***	.09
Family context						
Welfare receipt	—	—	.32	.05	.31	.04
Climate	—	—	-.26**	-.10	-.25**	-.09
Parent drinks	—	—	.04	.02	.03	.01
Parents' feelings for child	—	—	-.06**	-.09	-.05*	-.07
Attached to mother	—	—	-.02	-.01	-.02	-.01
Attached to father	—	—	-.03	-.03	-.02	-.02
Peers						
Peer delinquency	—	—	—	—	.03**	.06
Friends care	—	—	—	—	-.04	-.02
Activities w/friends	—	—	—	—	.10*	.05
-2 Log Likelihood	2097.76		2091.52		2083.46	
Generalized R^2	.08		.10		.11	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

the finding of Schreck and colleagues (2002), the data show that teenagers who engage in leisure activities away from home (and, in many cases, away from supervision) also tend to have higher levels of violent victimization.

Model 2 incorporates the family-related variables into the analysis. The strongest family-related predictors of violent victimization are family climate and parental feelings for their children. Adolescents living in households where there is a warmer, more accepting, climate experience less violence, while those living in families where parents dislike them have a greater risk for becoming victims. This supports our explanation that close, strong families are better situated to provide direct protection for children as well as reduce exposure to motivated offenders. Some types of family closeness do not appear to matter, however. The attachment of a child to mother or father did not significantly affect victimization risk. Because attachment from the parent to the child is significant, this finding suggests that parents have the more central role when it comes to protecting teenagers from violence. More interesting, drinking activity by parents failed to significantly influence vic-

timization risk. In addition, incorporating the family-relevant variables did not substantially alter the baseline variable coefficients, thus indicating that demographic and lifestyle effects are independent of the family context variables used in the analysis.

Model 3 adds the peer context variables. Peer delinquency and activities with friends were the significant peer-context predictors. Teenagers whose friends engaged in higher levels of delinquency and risky activity tended to experience more victimization. Readers should be aware, however, that the peer delinquency measures tap minor forms of delinquency, and that a measure for more serious forms could yield a larger influence. This finding supports our explanation that those who associate with delinquent peers risk enhanced exposure to motivated offenders, ineffective guardianship, and suitability as a target for violence. In addition, spending time with friends—whether or not they are delinquent—also increases the risk of experiencing violence. Having friends who care about the respondent, on the other hand, did not significantly influence level of violent victimization. Peer context, however, predicted victimization independently of demographic, lifestyle, or family context variables—the effect coefficients of these variables, in fact, did not seem much affected by the inclusion of the peer context variables. That is, the effects of peer context do not seem to detract from the influence of family variables; each appears to predict violent victimization independently. In addition, the continued strength of demographic predictors even in the full model indicates that researchers looking to explain demographic variation in violent victimization would have to look at risk factors other than the ones considered in the analysis.

CONCLUSION

What relevance do family and peer variables have for general victimization risk among adolescents? Building from the similarities between the correlates of crime and victimization, the importance of the family and peer contexts in the etiology of delinquency indicates that victimization research might benefit from exploring these contexts further. Moreover, the centrality of family and peers in the lives of teenagers and the likely influence these contexts have on the convergence of motivated offenders, attractive targets, and guardianship further recommends research on family and peer environments.

In the current study, we linked family and peer contexts to routine activity/lifestyles theories. In the case of the family, we hypothesized that strong bonds of attachment decrease the likelihood that meeting between motivated

offenders and attractive and vulnerable targets will occur. To test, we measured attachment in several ways. Attachment included (a) general feelings of closeness with the family, (b) feelings of warmth toward parents, and (c) parental feelings toward the child. Our results indicated that teenagers in households where the family context is characterized by closeness and understanding tend to be safer from violent crime. Likewise, children whose parents are emotionally alienated from them tend to experience a higher risk of victimization. Given the preliminary nature of research linking family and peer contexts to victimization, readers should be aware that although the results are consistent with the expectations of routine activity/lifestyles theories (that family climate and positive parental feelings for offspring appear to promote better guardianship, increase distance from motivated offenders, and prevent children from becoming attractive targets), the interpretation we offer might not be the only one. For instance, strong bonds of attachment might also create unwillingness to take risks that might lead to victimization (e.g., by behaving belligerently or insultingly toward others) because victimization jeopardizes the happiness of loved ones; that is, attachment might also increase how much more one has to lose through victimization and thus deter provocative behavior. Further research about the nature of the attachment-victimization link might clarify this issue.

The presence of delinquent peers appears to be a risk factor, in addition to family-related correlates. The results support the interpretation that spending time around delinquent peers is a risky venture. First, group delinquency, or identification with delinquents, can invite retaliation (Baron, Forde, et al., 2001; Singer, 1981). Affiliation with delinquent peers also suggests exposure to motivated offenders (Lauritsen et al., 1991; Schreck et al., 2002). Second, delinquents may exacerbate risk because they are not the most effective of guardians for their friends. We should note that the magnitude coefficients in our estimated model appear somewhat weaker than those coefficients reported in Lauritsen et al. (1992). This may be a reflection of the fact that the National Youth Survey asked respondents to report on the behavior of their peers, whereas the Add Health asked the peers themselves. Haynie (2001) found a similar reduction in effect magnitude, although in the case of delinquent behavior. As is the case with the family, the relation between peer group affiliation and general risk of victimization deserves further investigation.

The findings also revealed that demographic variables remain important predictors net of the routine activities/lifestyles, family, and peer variables. Lifestyles theory was originally developed to make sense of demographic differences in the risk of victimization; however, measures of lifestyles have had very limited success mediating the effects of demographic variables. Our

research shows further that demographic differences appear to come from sources other than family and peer factors as well. Clearly, there is further room for improvement in our attempts to explain gender and racial differences in violent victimization.

The research on family and peer correlates of delinquency is too numerous to easily cite here, yet parallel research linking family and peer characteristics to general violent victimization has been comparatively scant. Our research indicates that these two contexts of adolescent life might be useful for understanding variation in risk of violent victimization. This importance suggests several new areas of inquiry for theory and research. The first new direction follows from the findings about family attachment. If the family determines vulnerability, then could family characteristics socialize children to be either victims or nonvictims in the long term? The recent extension of self-control theory to victimization suggests that this might be the case; however, because Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) posited that differences in self-control stabilize in late childhood, the Add Health sample is not young enough to address this question about the long-term effects of family characteristics. Thus, the failure of the parental drinking measure to significantly influence risk might not say anything about the empirical status of self-control theory. Nevertheless, the possibility that vulnerability to crime is a time-stable personal trait clearly casts into question policies intended to reduce victimization by educating potential victims about what they can do to protect themselves from crime. This possibility also makes sense of the fact that crime prevention educational programs have been ineffective at making students safer from victimization (Finkelhor, Asdigian, & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1995). The family may therefore have broader relevance than the immediate-situation importance that we suggest here.

The second new direction relates to our results regarding the peer effect finding. Some of the major criminological theories have built themselves around explaining how peer associations cause crime (Akers, 1985). We explicitly adopted a situational interpretation for the peer effect on victimization; however, the extension of criminological theories that stress the socializing role of peer associations might offer new insights about how peer group membership matters when it comes to victimization. Although we do not necessarily endorse this approach, further extensions of criminological theory to victimization can add richness to an area that has long suffered from a lack of theoretical innovation and diversity. The vast literature on peers and delinquency, and the substantive debates about the meaning of the peer effects, may well apply to victimization. Even though our analyses did not exhaust the full range of risk factors for violent victimization, the results suggest avenues for further enriching theories of victimization.

APPENDIX
Bivariate Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Violent victimization (1)	1.00							
Male (2)	.18**	1.00						
Black (3)	.09**	-.03*	1.00					
Age (4)	.03	.05*	.01	1.00				
Driving around (5)	.07**	.11**	.03	.42**	1.00			
Sneaks out (6)	.21**	.07**	.00	.16**	.11**	1.00		
Exercises (7)	.04*	-.04*	.05*	-.05**	.00	-.01	1.00	
Activities with friends (8)	.08**	-.04*	-.04*	.05*	.07**	.13**	.08**	1.00
Welfare receipt (9)	.07**	.01	.12**	-.03*	-.04*	.05*	.02	-.01
Attachment to mother (10)	-.06**	.07**	.04*	-.06**	-.03	-.13**	-.01	-.02
Attachment to father (11)	-.08**	.03	-.24**	-.04*	-.02	-.09**	-.01	-.01
Family climate (12)	-.14**	.01	.00	-.21**	-.12**	-.21**	.03	-.03
Parental drinkings (13)	.04*	.00	.01	-.03	.01	.06**	-.01	.06**
Parental feelings for child (14)	-.13**	-.00	-.02	-.02	-.03	-.18**	.02	-.09**
Peer delinquency (15)	.07**	.04*	-.17**	.30**	.19**	.17**	-.04*	.12**
Friends care (16)	-.08	-.18**	-.10**	-.04*	-.00	-.03*	.03*	.11**

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Violent victimization (1)								
Male (2)								
Black (3)								
Age (4)								
Driving around (5)								
Sneaks out (6)								
Exercises (7)								
Activities with friends (8)	1.00							
Welfare receipt (9)	.00	1.00						
Attachment to mother (10)	-.21**	.00	1.00					
Attachment to father (11)	-.02	.33**	.18**	1.00				
Family climate (12)	.05*	-.07**	-.09**	-.04	1.00			
Parental drinking (13)	-.09**	.20**	.10**	.31**	-.08**	1.00		
Parental feelings for child (14)	.01	-.07**	-.07**	-.15**	.08**	-.14**	1.00	
Peer delinquency (15)	-.06**	.09**	.08**	.24**	.02	.10**	-.03	1.00
Friends care (16)								

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

NOTES

1. The literature has, however, focused a great deal of attention on the characteristics, parameters, perpetrators, and consequences of intrafamily violence (e.g., Loseke, 1989; Karmen, 2001; Pagelow, 1989; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Widom, 1989).

2. Detailed information about the Add Health study—including how to purchase the data set—can be found at <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/>.

3. The available measures do not allow us to discern who the offender is, whether parent, peer, or person unknown to the respondent. Criminal Victimization in the United States statistics, however, indicate that rates of violence committed by relatives is low in comparison to rates by those who are “well known,” “casual acquaintances,” or “strangers” (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003). More than two-thirds of violent crime against females was committed by people who were not intimates and close relatives, and the proportion is substantially less for males. That is, it is reasonable to suppose that the majority of violent victimization reported in the Add Health study is not intrafamilial.

4. Poisson regression, to our knowledge, does not report any model fit statistics analogous to the R^2 one would find in a linear regression. Our tables thus report generalized R^2 s, which is one means of computing the variance explained by the independent variables in a logistic regression analysis (see Allison, 1991). This technique computes an R^2 very similar in magnitude to what one would find if one was working with nonskewed interval data. The limitations of our approach are twofold: first, the generalized R^2 is computed using logistic regression and not Poisson regression; second, our statistical software (SAS) cannot incorporate sampling weights when using PROC LOGISTIC. Thus, our analysis provides a somewhat crude means of comparing the overall effects of the different models.

REFERENCES

- Akers, R. L. (1985). *Deviant behavior: A social learning approach*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Akers, R. L. (1994). *Criminological theories: Introduction and evaluation*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Allison, P. D. (1991). *Logistic regression using the SAS system: Theory and application*. Cary, NC: SAS Institute.
- Baron, S. W., Forde, D. R., & Kennedy, L. W. (2001). Rough justice: Street youth and violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 16*, 662-678.
- Baron, S. W., Kennedy, L. W., & Forde, D. R. (2001). Male street youths' conflict: The role of background, subcultural, and situational factors. *Justice Quarterly, 18*, 759-790.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2003). *Criminal victimization in the United States: 2001 statistical tables*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review, 52*, 170-183.
- Cohen, L. E., Kluegel, J. R., & Land, K. (1981). Social inequality and predatory criminal victimization: An exposition and test of a formal theory. *American Sociological Review, 46*, 505-524.
- Coleman, J. S. (1980). Friendship and the peer group in adolescence. In J. Adelson (Ed.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (pp. 408-431). New York: John Wiley.
- Cosaro, W., & Elder, D. (1990). Children's peer cultures. *Annual Review of Sociology, 16*, 197-220.

- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Larson, R. (1984). *Being adolescent: Conflict and growth in the teenage years*. New York: Basic Books.
- Decker, S. H., & Van Winkle, B. (1996). *Life in the gang*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Erickson, M. L., & Jensen, G. F. (1977). Delinquency is still group behavior!: Toward revitalizing the group premise in the sociology of deviance. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 68, 262-273.
- Esbensen, F., Huizinga, D., & Menard, S. (1999). Family context and criminal victimization in adolescence. *Youth & Society*, 31, 168-198.
- Farrington, D. P. (1987). Early precursors of frequent offending. In J. Q. Wilson & G. C. Lounsbury (Eds.), *From children to citizens, Volume III: Families, schools, and delinquency prevention* (pp. 27-50). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Felson, M. (1986). Linking criminal choices, routine activities, informal control, and criminal outcomes. In D. B. Cornish & R. V. Clarke (Eds.), *The reasoning criminal: Rational choice perspectives on offending* (pp. 119-128). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Felson, M. (1998). *Crime and everyday life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Finkelhor, D., Asdigian, N., & Dziuba-Leatherman, J. (1995). The effectiveness of victimization prevention instruction: An evaluation of children's responses to actual threats and assaults. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 19, 141-153.
- Glueck, S., & Glueck, E. (1950). *Unraveling juvenile delinquency*. New York: Commonwealth Fund.
- Gottfredson, M. R., & Hirschi, T. (1990). *A general theory of crime*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Haynie, D. L. (2001). Delinquent peers revisited: Does network structure matter? *American Journal of Sociology*, 106, 1013-1057.
- Hindelang, M. J., Gottfredson, M. R., & Garofalo, J. (1978). *Victims of personal crime*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Hindelang, M. J., Hirschi, T., & Weis, J. G. (1981). *Measuring delinquency*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hirschi, T. (1991). Family structure and crime. In B. J. Christensen (Ed.), *When families fail . . . the social costs* (pp. 43-65). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Horney, J., Osgood, D. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1995). Criminal careers in the short-term: Intra-individual variability in crime and its relation to local life circumstances. *American Sociological Review*, 60, 655-673.
- Jensen, G. F., & Brownfield, D. (1986). Gender, lifestyles, and victimization: Beyond routine activity theory. *Violence and Victims*, 1, 85-99.
- Jussim, L., & Osgood, D. W. (1989). Influence and similarity among friends: An integrated model applied to incarcerated adolescents. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 84, 98-112.
- Karmen, A. (2001). *Crime victims: An introduction to victimology*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Lauritsen, J. L., Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (1992). Conventional and delinquent activities: Implications for the prevention of victimization among adolescents. *Violence and Victims*, 7, 91-108.
- Lauritsen, J. L., Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1991). Addressing the link between offending and victimization among adolescents. *Criminology*, 29, 265-291.
- Loeber, R., & Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (1986). Family factors as correlates and predictors of juvenile conduct problems and delinquency. In M. Tonry & N. Morris (Eds.), *Crime and justice: A review of research* (Vol. 7, pp. 29-149). Chicago: University of Chicago.

- Loseke, D. (1989). Violence is "violence" . . . or is it? The social construction of "wife abuse" and public policy. In J. Best (Ed.) *Images of issues: Typifying contemporary social problems* (pp. 191-206). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Miethe, T. D., & Meier, R. F. (1994). *Crime and its social context: Toward an integrated theory of offenders, victims, and situations*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Miethe, T. D., Stafford, M. C., & Long, J. S. (1987). Social differentiation in criminal victimization: A test of routine activities/lifestyles theories. *American Sociological Review*, 52, 184-194.
- Miller, J., & Decker, S. H. (2001). Young women and gang violence: Gender, street offending, and violent victimization in gangs. *Justice Quarterly*, 18, 115-140.
- Pagelow, M. (1989). The incidence and prevalence of criminal abuse of other family members. In L. Ohlin & M. Tonry (Eds.), *Crime and justice: A review of research* (Vol. 11, pp. 263-313). Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Piquero, A. R., & Hickman, M. (2003). Extending Tittle's control balance theory to account for victimization. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 30, 282-301.
- Rebellon, C. J. (2002). Reconsidering the broken homes/delinquency relationship and exploring its mediating mechanisms. *Criminology*, 40, 103-135.
- Rutter, M., & Giller, H. (1983). *Juvenile delinquency: Trends and perspectives*. New York: Guilford.
- Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sampson, R. J., & Wooldredge, J. (1987). Linking the micro- and macro-dimensions of lifestyle-routine activity and opportunity models of predatory victimization. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 3, 371-393.
- Sanders, W. (1994). *Gangbans and drive-bys: Grounded culture and juvenile gang violence*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Schreck, C. J. (1999). Criminal victimization and low self-control: An extension and test of a general theory of crime. *Justice Quarterly*, 16, 633-654.
- Schreck, C. J., Wright, R. A., & Miller, J. M. (2002). A study of individual and situational antecedents of violent victimization. *Justice Quarterly*, 19, 159-180.
- Singer, S. I. (1981). Homogeneous victim-offender populations: A review and some research implications. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 72, 779-788.
- Sparks, R. F. (1982). *Research on victims of crime*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Straus, M., & Gelles, R. (1990). *Physical violence in American families*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Thornberry, T. P. (1987). Towards an interactional theory of delinquency. *Criminology*, 25, 863-891.
- Warr, M. (1993). Age, peers, and delinquency. *Criminology*, 31, 17-40.
- Warr, M. (1996). Organization and instigation in delinquent groups. *Criminology*, 31, 17-40.
- Warr, M. (2002). *Companions in crime: The social aspects of criminal conduct*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Warr, M., & Stafford, M. C. (1991). The influence of delinquent peers: What they think and what they do? *Criminology*, 29, 851-866.
- Widom, C. (1989). Child abuse, neglect, and violent criminal behavior. *Criminology*, 27, 251-270.

Christopher J. Schreck is an assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Rochester Institute of Technology. His work primarily focuses on linking victimization with the same processes believed to be responsible for causing delinquent behavior. He is the editor of the Journal of Crime and Justice.

Bonnie S. Fisher is a professor in the Division of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati. Her work focuses on the measurement of the sexual victimization of women, college student and adolescent victimization, fear of crime, and crime prevention behavior. She recently completed a study of university student victimization in England with Rosemary Barberet.