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PRE-PRINT VERSION

**Culture and Formal Social Control:
The Effect of the Code of the Street on Police and Court Decisionmaking***

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ABSTRACT

Objectives. Drawing on several interrelated lines of scholarship, we argue that cultural beliefs at individual and neighborhood levels may affect police and court decisions. We hypothesize that individuals who more strongly adhere to the code of the street or reside in areas where the street code culture is more strongly embraced will be more likely to be arrested and convicted, and that neighborhood-level effects will amplify the effect of street code adherence. *Methods.* To test these hypotheses, data from the Family and Community Health Study are examined using multilevel modeling. *Results.* Blacks who more strongly adhered to street code beliefs were more likely to be arrested and convicted; this effect was greater among those who resided in areas where the code of the street belief system was more entrenched. *Conclusions.* The findings highlight the potential usefulness of a focus on culture for understanding the exercise of formal social control.

Key words: street code, police, court, social control, decisionmaking

INTRODUCTION

Racial disparities in the exercise of formal social control has constituted a longstanding focus of scholarship. Over the past thirty years, during the era of “mass incarceration,” concern about effects of the punitive turn in the criminal justice system on minorities has underscored the need for research on disparities (Travis 2005; Clear 2007; Rodriguez 2011; Sampson 2011; Garland 2013; Mears et al. 2016). Police incidents that have resulted in the deaths of blacks have garnered national media attention and further underscored the salience of understanding how the police and courts, as formal social control agents, make decisions that affect citizens.

Scholarship on police and court processing decisions has advanced considerably in recent decades. At the same time, reviews of this work point to the need to go beyond efforts to estimate “net” effects of race on processing and sentencing decisions (Brunson and Weitzer 2011; Kochel et al. 2011; Ulmer 2012; Baumer 2013; Spohn 2013; Fader et al. 2014) and to identify how such factors as community culture and conditions may influence police-citizen encounters and shape subsequent court decisions. In this paper, we argue that efforts to do so can benefit from insights drawn from prior theory and research, including minority threat and focal concerns theories (Liska 1992; Steffensmeier et al. 1998; Chiricos et al. 2004; Feldmeyer and Ulmer 2011; Pickett et al. 2012). In addition, they can benefit from a related line of inquiry that examines how cognitive biases may influence decisionmaking, especially in situations in which decisions must be made rapidly with incomplete information (Albonetti and Hepburn 1996; Bridges and Steen 1998; Kahneman 2011). Not least, they can benefit from drawing on scholarship on specific cultural schemas, or belief systems, and their potential relevance in shaping citizen-police and citizen-court interactions. Anderson’s (1999) description of how the “code of the street” can guide the actions of black youth provides an account of one such schema or system (Brezina et al. 2004; McNeeley and Wilcox 2015).

Against that backdrop, this study seeks to inform scholarship on the salience of community culture, including the cultural beliefs of individual citizens and the communities in which they

reside, on the exercise of formal social control. In particular, it seeks to examine how individual-level and neighborhood-level culture among residents may independently and in interaction with one another influence the likelihood of blacks being arrested and convicted. The paper begins first by discussing scholarship on formal social control and calls for greater understanding of extra-legal factors that may affect police and court decisionmaking. This discussion draws on minority threat scholarship and cognition heuristics to identify how such decisionmaking may be influenced not only by race but by within-race variation in certain characteristics, such as demeanor. Next, we turn to description of a prominent cultural schema, the code of the street (Anderson 1999), that may affect police and court decisionmaking. Hypotheses then are presented that link individual-level street code adherence and neighborhood street culture to anticipated effects on arrest and conviction outcomes. These hypotheses are examined using data from the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS). Multilevel logistic regression analyses demonstrate that, net of controls for potential confounding, blacks who more strongly adhere to the code of the street or reside in areas with a more strongly embraced street code culture are more likely to be arrested and convicted. In addition, neighborhood street culture amplifies the individual-level street code adherence effect. The study's findings suggest warrant for more carefully understanding how cultural views and contexts of residents may influence the extent to which they are subject to formal social control.

BACKGROUND

MINORITY THREAT AND THE EXERCISE OF FORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL

In recent years, racially charged police-citizen encounters that have resulted in the death of black suspects have given rise to renewed concerns about racial disparities in the administration of justice (Bosman and Fitzsimmons 2014; Goldstein and Schweber 2014). Concern about such disparities, however, has been long-standing (see, e.g., Blumstein 1982; Liska 1992; Sampson and Lauritsen 1997; Mitchell 2005; Kochel et al. 2011; Sampson 2014). Compared to whites,

blacks are considerably more likely to be arrested (Brame et al. 2014; Snyder and Mulako-Wangota 2014). They also are more likely to be detained, jailed, and imprisoned (Cohen and Reaves 2007; Reaves 2013; Carson 2014). The end result is that, relative to their presence in the U.S. population, blacks are substantially more likely to be subjected to formal social control and any attendant harms that accrue from exposure to the criminal justice system (Tonry 1995; Petersilia 2003; Travis 2005; Clear 2007; Sampson 2011).

Reviews of research on racial disparities find little evidence of “flagrant” racial discrimination (Spohn 2013:185). Instead, they typically find that racial disparities at any given criminal justice decisionmaking point are reduced or eliminated after controlling for legally relevant factors. One meta-analysis of such studies found, however, that in many studies, racial differences in processing and sanctioning persisted even after introducing controls for such factors (Mitchell 2005). In addition, subtle discrimination, such as enactment of laws that appear to be race-neutral but in practice are disproportionately applied to blacks, may exist or accumulate across multiple decisionmaking points into substantial disparities in incarceration (Sampson and Lauritsen 1997; Mears 1998; Zahn 2000; Baumer 2013; Spohn 2013). Not least, studies suggest that racial disparities may surface at arrest and are not fully explained by greater involvement in crime (see, e.g., Brunson and Weitzer 2009; Crutchfield et al. 2012).

Many theoretical accounts have emerged to explain why blacks may be more subject to formal social control, including arrest, conviction, and incarceration. Among the most prominent is minority threat theory, which argues in part that when a majority group, such as whites, feel threatened politically or economically by a minority group, such as blacks, it responds through intensified social control efforts (Blalock 1967; Liska 1992). The focal concerns perspective has built on this foundation and accounts of courtroom work communities (e.g., Eisenstein and Jacob 1977) to argue that formal social control efforts target specific groups, such as those viewed as “dangerous and crime prone” (Steffensmeier et al. 1998:768; see, generally, Ulmer 2012).

A central question, however, in many accounts of racial differences in processing and sanctioning centers on what it is exactly about race that contributes to decisions to arrest, detain,

convict, and incarcerate (Crutchfield et al. 2012; Ulmer 2012; Baumer 2013; Spohn 2013). Perceived threat is one possibility (see, e.g., Chiricos et al. 2001; Pickett et al. 2012). However, that possibility leaves open the question of what factors affect why some members of a “threat” group, such as blacks, may be more likely than others to be subjected to formal social control. As a general matter, and per a focal concerns perspective, some blacks may be viewed as more dangerous, crime-prone, and blameworthy. The question that then arises is how the police or courts arrive at such an assessment. What cues, for example, might the individual or his or her social context provide that contributes to attributions of criminality and blameworthiness? As we discuss below, cognitive heuristics may lead criminal justice agents to rely on certain cues, including culture among citizens and the communities where they reside, to interpret citizen behavior and in turn to decide how to proceed.

COGNITIVE HEURISTICS AND FORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL

The importance of cues is not specific to police and court decisionmaking. In all aspects of life, individuals must make many decisions and do so with little time for contemplation and deliberation. Cognition research consistently has found that individuals rely on cognitive “heuristics,” what some scholars refer to as “mental shortcuts,” for quickly processing a large amount of information to arrive at an interpretation of a person, situation, or event, and a decision about how to act (Kahneman 2011; Hilbert 2012; Finke and Taylor 2013). Kahneman (2011:37) has likened the situation to that of a “juggler with several balls in the air” who cannot afford to slow down. When time permits and we have fewer decisions to make, a more deliberative approach to processing information can and may occur. However, when time or situational pressures exist to force a decision, individuals must rely on rapid-fire conceptual shorthands for assessing and interpreting and then for deciding what to do.

Studies of criminal justice system processing underscores the need for what Hawkins’ (1981:230) has referred to a “perceptual shorthand” in arriving at decisions. This work highlights the potential, due in part to intensive case processing demands on the police and

courts, for these conceptual shortcuts create for considerable error (Forst 2004; Warren et al. 2006; Mears and Bacon 2009). For example, probation officers might attribute crime among black youth as resulting from certain characteristics, such as individual traits that lead them to be more prone to and culpable for offending, and, conversely, crime among white youth as resulting from other characteristics, such as external conditions that might be seen as reducing culpability (Bridges and Steen 1998). The end result can be systematic bias in the processing and sanctioning of blacks as compared to whites (Albonetti 1991; Albonetti and Hepburn 1996; Forst 2004; Rodriguez 2011). In the criminal justice system, reliance on conceptual shorthands occurs by necessity because caseload demands limit the time that actors can spend processing information about individuals. A parallel exists in the medical system. For example, studies show that a physician “typically forms a notion of what is wrong with the patient within twenty seconds” (Groopman 2007:34). Similarly, in arriving at decisions, police and court personnel must process large volumes of cases with little time for careful deliberation. As a result, they rely on cognitive shortcuts that lead to selecting information that comports with a priori images of an individual, what has been termed “confirmation bias” (Kahneman 2011:80; see, generally, Petersilia 2003; Forst 2004; Mears and Bacon 2009; Bibas 2012; Sommers and Marotta 2014).

Social control agents may rely on many cues as the basis for how particular individuals and cases are viewed. For example, prior record is a well-established and robust predictor of formal processing and sanctioning (Ulmer 2012; Baumer 2013). Evidence of prior criminal activity may activate certain responses under various sentencing guidelines, but it also can be viewed as a marker of potential future criminality and thus result in police and court responses that assume such criminality. Similarly, evidence of residence in disadvantaged, predominantly minority, or high-crime areas may signal to the police and courts, or lead them to assume, that an individual is criminal (see, e.g., Chiricos et al. 2001; Pickett et al. 2012).

This possibility is reinforced by other theoretical work on social control. For example, Donald Black’s (1976, 1997) theory of law anticipates that the application of law depends in part on social distance. In particular, he has argued that “law . . . varies with culture, the symbolic

dimensions of social space: Homogeneity . . . retards the use of law, and unconventionality involves legal disabilities similar to those associated with poverty or lack of organization” (Black 1997:10-11). From this perspective, formal social control will be applied more intensively when cultural distance is perceived to be greater. For example, the police and courts may use the law more—they make more arrests or be more likely to convict—when perceived cultural distance between them, as representatives of the established social order, and citizens is greater.

Juxtaposed against these possibilities is the fact that citizens, too, rely on cognitive shortcuts to understand others’ actions, including that of criminal justice agents. Gambetta’s (2009) work, for example, has identified the different ways that criminals rely on cognitive schemas both to make sense of how others interpret their behavior and to signal to others who they are or how they should be perceived. For example, tattoos, threats, expressed willingness to fight, physical movements such as hand gestures, and the like all can be used to signal to others who one “really” is. Such signals may stem from cultural beliefs and, as we discuss in the next section, they may activate assumptions that others hold about an individual.

Research on such possibilities has greatly advanced knowledge of the factors that may contribute to police and court decisions. One area, however, that remains largely unexplored is how variation within a given dimension, such as race, may influence decisionmaking by the police and courts. Race, for example, has been largely viewed as a proxy for a variety of mechanisms that give rise to disparities in arrest, processing, and sanctioning (Baumer 2013). It is likely, though, that the police and courts do not view blacks as a monolithic group, but rather rely on cues or characteristics to guide their decisionmaking. Put differently, within-race differences may serve as cues that prompt formal social control responses. For example, those who act, or appear to be, defiant or hostile or who reside in areas perceived to be conducive to crime may be viewed as warranting active intervention by the police or the courts. Put differently, an individual’s culture or that of his or her community may influence their presentation of self and how he or she is viewed by formal social control agents.

CODE OF THE STREET

Scholars have called for greater understanding of how race may influence police and court decisions and, more generally, for identification of extra-legal factors that affect their decisions. One possibility is that cultural belief systems contribute to the exercise of formal social control. Here, we focus on the code of the street as one such possibility because of research that has identified its salience for some blacks and that identifies defiance and hostility as critical responses to perceived or actual challenges to self-respect.

The code of the street constitutes an informal set of beliefs that guide the actions of individuals, young blacks in particular (Anderson 1999). According to the code, establishing and maintaining respect is critical. A primary avenue for achieving respect entails having a tough identity, one that signals a willingness to act with force, violence if necessary, when disrespected. Such a response is *de rigueur*: It lets other people know that “you are ‘about serious business’ and not to be trifled with” (p. 130). Put differently, individuals who embrace the street code successfully must display a tough or violent exterior, or self, to convey that they are “serious business.” Doing so is, then, culturally mandated and serves to deter others from being disrespectful to, or attempting to harm, the individual (Baron et al. 2001; Jacobs 2004). Anderson (1999:92) has emphasized the central importance of conveying a tough appearance: “For those who are invested in the code, the clear object of their demeanor is to discourage strangers from even thinking about testing their manhood.” This demeanor extends to interactions with law enforcement. In discussing the street code’s call for maintaining a tough or violent persona, for example, Stewart et al. (2006:433) have noted that, from the perspective of the street code culture, “residents of disadvantaged and violent neighborhoods cannot depend on the authorities to offer protection, and those who do are treated with the contempt reserved for those who violate the code of the streets (i.e., reliance on others suggests cowardice).”

Studies to date have found support for the existence of the street code belief system and its role in establishing or protecting a self-identity premised on respect and toughness (see, e.g.,

Baron et al. 2001; Brezina et al. 2004; Jacobs 2004; Kubrin 2005; Brookman et al. 2011).

Notably, however, some research suggests that the street code ethic may increase rather than decrease victimization risk. Stewart et al. (2006) found, for example, that adherence to the code was associated with a greater likelihood of victimization. The authors found as well that community context conditioned this effect. Specifically, “living in a violent context has a more deleterious impact for adolescents who are more supportive of the street code” (p. 447; see also McNeeley and Wilcox 2015). Research to date, then, suggests that a street code culture exists and that it can influence how individuals who adopt it interact with others.

This work highlights the possibility that street code adherence may engender hostile or defiant behaviors toward the police or other formal social control actors (e.g., prosecutors or judges) and that these groups may respond in kind. For example, to the extent that the police or courts confront individuals who overtly display hostility or defiance—or who, from Black’s (1976, 1997) theoretical perspective, represent culture that lies far from what these groups view as the conventional norm—it can be anticipated that they themselves will respond not with informal justice, such as a warning or caution, but rather with formal justice, such as an arrest or, given an arrest, conviction or more punitive sanctioning. A long line of research on demeanor and police responses indicates that when citizens act disrespectfully or in a hostile or uncooperative manner, an arrest and formal processing is more likely (Piliavin and Briar 1964; Black and Reiss 1970; Smith and Visher 1981; Morash 1984; Worden and Shephard 1996; Engel et al. 2000). Similarly, if a defendant is, or is perceived to be, hostile or challenging during court processing, he or she may be more likely to be formally processed and sanctioned (see, e.g., Cicourel 1968; Beaver et al. 2009; Ulmer 2012; Rodriguez 2013; Kutateladze et al. 2014). Accordingly, cultural beliefs, such as the code of the street, that affect an individual’s demeanor in interactions with the police or court officials may contribute to tougher legal responses.

They may respond even more so in this manner if other cues, such as the social context in which an individual resides, is viewed as conducive to violence and crime. Some research intimates that just such a relationship may exist. For example, Brunson and Weitzer (2011:428)

have argued that “youths adhering to the tenets of the street code (i.e., displaying toughness, commanding respect) may find it difficult to show police officers deference, especially in the presence of peers, and may thus feel the need to disarm the constraints of the conduct norms taught to them by adults” (see also Gambetta 2009). In some communities, the very existence of a street code culture itself signals that interactions with the police require displays of a tough demeanor, even though residents may be aware that such displays risk escalating situations to the point of an arrest and further legal action (Anderson 1999; Weitzer and Brunson 2009).

The potential for street code culture at the neighborhood level to influence both arrest and court processing decisions can be found in Anderson’s account the street code and in studies of communities and police relations. As Anderson (1998:81) has argued, “the code of the street is actually a cultural adaptation to a profound lack of faith in the police and the judicial system. . . . The police, for instance, are most often viewed as representing the dominant white society and as not caring enough to protect inner-city residents.” In a direct test of this idea, Intravia et al. (2014) found that individuals who experienced discrimination from the police in fact were more likely to adopt the street code. Anderson’s (1999) work is paralleled by research on minority communities and their views about criminal justice. Sampson and Bartusch (1998:784), for example, have argued that in low-income or minority communities, residents “are most likely to perceive injustice in the application of legal norms and to express cynicism about the legitimacy of laws” (see, generally, Unnever and Gabbidon 2011; Sampson 2014).

Such views may affect whether residents call the police or respond to them or other legal system representatives. As Tyler (2003:284) has emphasized, “people’s willingness to accept the constraints of the law and legal authorities is strongly linked to their evaluations of the procedural justice of the police and the courts.” To illustrate, according to Tyler (2003:305), a prevailing model of justice in the literature anticipates that “people will cooperate with the police and courts when they see those authorities as being able to manage problems in their community. In the case of the police and courts, the problem being managed is social disorder.” If individuals view the police and courts as lacking legitimacy, they will cooperate less. The

response may be understandable. For example, “research consistently shows that police officers exercise a higher level of coercive authority in poverty-stricken, socially distressed residential settings” (Reisig 2010:31). More generally, the police and courts may consciously or unconsciously view and treat more punitively individuals from neighborhoods that are viewed as more crime-ridden, dangerous, disadvantaged, or in some way conducive to crime (see, e.g., Cicourel 1968; Mears 1998; Clear 2007; Sampson 1986, 2014; Rodriguez 2013).

In short, the police and courts may respond to defiance or a lack of cooperation through displays of power, including arrests and legal responses, such as formal processing, detention, aggressive plea bargaining, and tougher sentencing. When so doing, the responses may flow not only from the actions, displays, or attitudes of particular individuals, but also from views about the neighborhoods from which these individuals come. Rodriguez (2013:200), for example, found that court officials use attributions of high-risk neighborhoods to guide their decisions about how to process and sanction individual youth. These officials may view such areas as lacking sufficient informal social controls and so respond through formal processing and sanctions. Other work reinforces this idea. For example, focal concerns studies have identified not only race but also neighborhood context as potential signals to court actors about the blameworthiness and dangerousness of defendants (Ulmer 2012; Kutateladze et al. 2014).

HYPOTHESES

These interrelated strands of scholarship—theory and research on the salience of race and other extra-legal factors that may affect police and court decisions, research on the importance of heuristics for decisionmaking in intensive case processing social contexts, and street code studies—point to independent and mutually reinforcing arguments about race, individual attitudes and beliefs, neighborhood culture, and the exercise of formal social control. A focus on culture among community residents, including variation in cultural beliefs at the individual level and at the community level, constitutes an especially promising avenue along which to shed light on how extra-legal factors may influence criminal justice and court processing decisions.

A strategy for investigating the salience of culture, and simultaneously to understand decisionmaking involving “threat” groups, is to focus on a particular belief system associated with a specific group and how it may influence police and court decisions. Here, we focus on the code of the street among a sample of blacks and how these beliefs may influence the exercise of formal social control. The code of the street constitutes a cultural marker of special relevance. It is not uniformly distributed among blacks. In addition, it constitutes a belief system that calls for confrontational or defiant responses, such as verbal displays or modes of dress or appearance, to perceived challenges (Kubrin 2005; Stewart et al. 2006; Brunson and Weitzer 2009; Weitzer and Brunson 2009; Stewart and Simons 2010; Matsuda et al. 2013; see also Gambetta 2009). For example, in interactions with the police or court officials, individuals who adhere strongly to the street code may be more likely to be verbally uncooperative or defiant, to convey themselves physically in a hostile manner, or to wear clothes, jewelry, shoes, or the like that signify a street code culture and that the police or courts may view unfavorably as challenging.

It is precisely such responses or displays by a street code “adherent” that may be most likely to activate cognitive shortcuts among police officers and court personnel and shape their decisions about how to respond to an individual in a particular context. The possibility of such a relationship stems in part from empirical studies of the code of the street and victimization. Although adherence to the street code is supposed to insulate individuals from victimization, research suggests that it may increase victimization, in part because street code adherence entails physical or verbal displays or acts that can appear to be hostile or disrespectful (Stewart et al. 2006; Berg et al. 2012; cf. McNeeley and Wilcox 2015). Similarly, the street code may engender hostile or disrespectful attitudes or behaviors when individuals interact with the police or court personnel, thus increasing the likelihood of an arrest or a formal legal response.

Drawing on these different lines of scholarship, we develop a series of hypotheses about how street code beliefs and community culture may affect minority-police and minority-court interactions and, in turn, the exercise of formal social control. In so doing, we focus both on individual-level adherence to street code beliefs and community-level street code culture.

H1: Individuals who more strongly adhere to the street code will be more likely to be subjected to formal social control, including a greater likelihood of arrest (H1a) and conviction (H1b). The central argument is that the code of the street among residents may lead to hostile, defiant, disrespectful, or uncooperative behavior or displays that in turn lead the police or courts to react in a more punitive manner.

H2: Individuals who reside in areas where street code adherence is greater will be more likely to be subjected to formal social control, including a greater likelihood of arrest (H2a) and conviction (H2b). The police and courts may cue off of perceived or objective characteristics of the neighborhoods where residents reside to inform their assessment of the threat or level of cooperation that they can anticipate during interactions with residents (Wooldredge 2007). Areas viewed as more embracing of a culture that may appear to be hostile to formal social control efforts may signal a perceived need to respond through punitive, formal legal responses.

H3: Street code adherence will have a stronger effect among individuals in areas where the street code culture is more entrenched, and so face a greater likelihood of arrest (H3a) and conviction (H3b). In particular, individuals who adhere more strongly to the street code will be more likely to be subjected to formal social control if they reside in neighborhoods where the code of the street culture is stronger. For example, those who more strongly abide by the street code may feel more emboldened to react in an ambivalent or hostile manner to police in areas where street code beliefs prevail, or the police in such areas may respond more aggressively to individuals who act in ways that appear consistent with street code attitudes and beliefs.

The reason for examining arrest and conviction decisions separately stems from several considerations. First, prior work has called for examining ways in which legal and extra-legal factors influence multiple decisionmaking points (Tonry 1988; Mears 1998; Baumer 2013; Spohn 2013). For example, interactions that occur “on the ground” during police-citizen encounters may differ from those that occur during court processing (Kochel et al. 2011; Sommers and Marotta 2014). From this perspective, although citizen street code adherence may affect police arrest decisions, it may not affect court decisions.

Second, scholarship suggests that, after an arrest, legal factors may explain some apparent effects of extra-legal factors but race still may exert an effect on decisionmaking (see, e.g., Mitchell 2005; Spohn 2013). Variation in adherence to the street code may constitute one factor that contributes to the court processing of blacks.

Third, research has highlighted diverse ways in which “background” information about subjects may become part of the court record. This information can frame how a case is presented and thus viewed, and in turn it can influence court actor decisions (Bridges and Steen 1998; Fader et al. 2014). Indeed, courtroom communities, because of case processing pressures, may require informal or implicit understandings about how certain cases should be handled. Accordingly, they rely on conceptual “shortcuts,” such as how individuals are characterized in police reports and case file descriptions (Eisenstein and Jacob 1977; Bridges and Steen 1998; Mears and Bacon 2009; Ulmer 2012). These understandings may partly depend not only on police and case file accounts but also on courtworker views of defendants’ attitudes, behaviors, and the social and community contexts from which the defendants come. Residents from areas viewed as lacking in informal social control or as reinforcing criminal behavior may be viewed as requiring a formal response from the court (Rodriguez 2013; Kutateladze et al. 2014). This “framing” of cases in turn may affect how court personnel view and process defendants.

Fourth, and not least, given that negative citizen demeanor in interactions with court personnel may increase the severity of court responses (see, e.g., Hagan 1975; Bell and Lang 1985; Kupchik 2006; Miller et al. 2007; Beaver et al. 2009), it is possible that street code adherence—to the extent that it leads individuals to act or present themselves defiantly when interacting with court personnel (e.g., prosecutors or judges)—may increase the likelihood of a formal legal response from the court. Support for that argument stems directly from Anderson’s (1999) account. It views the street code belief system as requiring hostile, ambivalent, or oppositional verbal or physical actions when challenged, even when doing so may result in harm or injury to oneself. Individuals who strongly adhere to the street code and who come from areas where residents strongly adhere to the code thus may be especially likely to dress, present, or act

defiantly and, in turn, elicit formal legal responses.

DATA AND METHODS

DATA

This study uses data from the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS). The data are uniquely suited to address the study questions because they include information on adherence to the code of the street and on police and court decisionmaking. At the same time, they allow for creation of cultural belief system measures at the neighborhood level and for inclusion of controls, such as self-reported offending, to address potential confounding in the estimation of street code effects on the exercise of formal social control. Many accounts of racial disparities in sentencing focus on estimating race effects “net” of other factors, and, in so doing, leave unexamined the variation that may exist among blacks in arrest, conviction, and other criminal justice decisions (Baumer 2013). The FACHS data are unique in providing a large sample of black subjects and, in turn, an opportunity to identify how extra-legal factors may contribute to the exercise of formal social control with some blacks and not others.

Designed to examine individual, family, and neighborhood processes that affect behavior and development among black children, the FACHS data have been used and described in many studies (e.g., Murry et al. 2008; Simons et al. 2002; Stewart et al. 2009; Su et al. 2011; Mears et al. 2014). A complete description is available through the Institute for Social and Behavioral Research (www.isbr.iastate.edu/FACHS). Briefly, families in two states, Georgia and Iowa, were recruited from areas that had high concentrations of blacks (10 percent or more of the resident population) and poverty (10 percent or more of families living below the poverty line). Using this approach, the original data collection resulted in 259 block group areas (115 in Georgia and 144 in Iowa) and families with a child in 5th grade, in 1998, were recruited from within these areas. The interviews were conducted with the child and his or her primary and secondary caregiver. Wave 1 data collection occurred in 1998, wave 2 occurred in 2001, wave 3 in 2004, wave 4 in 2007, wave 5 in 2009, and wave 6 in 2011. In total, at wave 1, there were

867 black children (400 boys, 467 girls; 405 in Georgia and 462 in Iowa); at wave 6, 661 youth were interviewed. Analyses undertaken by Simons et al. (2011) indicated that the attrition was not patterned with respect to youth, family, or neighborhood characteristics.

Because block groups do not necessarily reflect meaningful boundaries for residents (Sampson et al. 1997), we followed prior research in defining neighborhood context based on combining the 259 geographically proximal block groups in Iowa and Georgia. Census data on levels of racial composition, socioeconomic status, poverty, family organization, housing density, and employment status were used. In forming the clusters, priority was given to creating ecologically meaningful areas composed of proximal and internally homogeneous areas with regard to these indicators. Specifically, and following the lead of Sampson and colleagues (1997), we conducted cluster analyses of the census data to place the block groups into homogeneous neighborhood clusters within each geographic region (see also Simons et al. 2002). This process generated thirty-nine neighborhood clusters, twenty in Georgia and nineteen in Iowa. The number of study families in a neighborhood cluster ranged from nine to thirty-six families with most (26) clusters including fifteen to twenty-seven families.

We examine the relationship between wave 4 street code adherence and neighborhood street culture on later arrest and conviction (waves 5 and 6). The sample size was 654, which resulted from excluding several individuals who were incarcerated. Controls include a range of measures from across waves 1-4. The longitudinal data allow for a stronger assessment of whether street code adherence and neighborhood street culture contribute to formal social control. That is, they allow for estimation of whether street code adherence and culture at one time period contribute to the likelihood of arrest or conviction at a later time period.

This conservative approach to estimating the effect of the code of the street constitutes a central strength of the study. Even so, it still may be possible that prior criminal justice contacts contribute to individual-level street code adherence observed at wave 4. The analyses, however, control for these prior contacts. In addition, separate analyses using a wave 1 measure of street code adherence provided results that were largely the same, both substantively and statistically,

to those presented here. In a related vein, Matsueda et al. (2006) have provided a detailed description of the process through which individuals acquire a street code ethic; their account does not suggest that prior criminal justice contact leads to street code adherence.

The data for this study consist of information about individuals residing in areas where more blacks reside and social and economic disadvantage is greater. Accordingly, the analyses may not generalize to other groups. Prior scholarship does not suggest that an observed relationship between social control and the street code would substantially differ for other groups and places. Regardless, this limitation suggests the need for caution in generalizing the results. Below, we describe the measures used in the study; table 1 provides descriptive statistics for each measure.

Insert table 1 about here

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Two dependent variables are used in the study. The first is any arrest that occurred after wave 4 data collection and reported either at wave 5 or wave 6. The second is any felony conviction that occurred during this same time period. For the conviction models, we are unable to determine when a given arrest led to a given conviction. For example, when predicting a conviction reported at waves 5 or 6, we cannot be sure that an arrest reported at wave 4 served as the basis for that conviction; similarly, the data do not permit linking an arrest reported at wave 5 or 6 to a specific conviction. A unique aspect of the FACHS data is that they permit inclusion of the conviction measure to explore whether identified street code effects may hold at other decisionmaking points in criminal justice. At the same time, the smaller sample size for these analyses means that the results should be interpreted with caution. (We do not examine incarceration because too few individuals experienced incarceration to support analyses.)

A direct link between arrest and conviction events would be ideal. However, the ability to model whether street code adherence and culture is associated with court decisionmaking provides an opportunity to assess whether code-of-the-street effects occur primarily in policing

contexts, where rapid decisionmaking must occur and where therefore a reliance on social cues may be more pressing, or in court contexts, where more time on average may exist to consider the facts of a case. Even in the latter instance, however, prior framing of a case, including description of the individual, may influence how court officials perceive and act on a case (Mears and Bacon 2009; Sommers and Marotta 2014). It bears emphasizing that arrest and conviction are not directly linked in these data. That means that any identified effects are for arrest events or conviction events in general; they do not demonstrate that, for a given individual, a code-of-the-street effect influenced their likelihood of both arrest and conviction.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The main independent variables are *individual-level adherence to the code of the street* and *neighborhood-level street culture*, both measured at wave 4. (As discussed further below, few respondents moved from one neighborhood to another.) Individual-level responses within neighborhoods were aggregated to create the neighborhood-level measure. The street code scale used here accords with the one used in prior work (e.g., Stewart et al. 2006; Stewart and Simons 2010; Mears et al. 2013) and with Anderson's (1999) description of the code of the street. Seven questions from wave 4 were used, with response options that ranged from "1=strongly disagree" to "4=strongly agree": (1) When someone disrespects you, it is important that you use physical force or aggression to teach him or her not to disrespect you; (2) If someone uses violence against you, it is important that you use violence against him or her to get even; (3) It is important not to back down from a fight or challenge because people will not respect you; (4) People do not respect a person who is afraid to fight physically for his or her rights. (5) Being viewed as tough and aggressive is important for gaining respect; (6) It is important to show courage and heart and not be a coward in a fight or challenge in order to gain or maintain respect; and (7) People tend to respect a person who is tough and aggressive.

Responses across the items were summed. The alpha coefficient was .89 for the individual level street code scale and .81 for the neighborhood street culture scale, indicating high levels of

reliability among the items selected to capture the two measures. Higher values for the scale indicate greater adherence to the code of the street. Analyses using a wave 1 street code scale produced similar results to those discussed further below, suggesting that street code adherence precedes criminal justice contact. We rely on the wave 4 street code scale to ensure greater temporal proximity in the timing of beliefs and subsequent experiences with arrest or conviction.

In many prior studies, race has been implicated as a proxy for culture and, in particular, endorsement or acceptance of violence. The ability to model variation in adherence to the code of the street within a sample of blacks provides an opportunity to avoid this simplifying assumption and, simultaneously to examine directly the potential salience of culture on the exercise of formal social control. It bears emphasizing that although the street code measure adopted here accords with that employed in other research, it does not capture fully all aspects of what Anderson (1999) has detailed in his account of the code of the street (see, e.g., Kubrin 2005). Nonetheless, it captures critical dimensions of the street code, such as the importance of using physical force or aggression in response to those who are disrespectful.

CONTROL VARIABLES

A wide range of factors have been implicated in arrest and conviction decisions. Here, we include commonly used controls in studies of formal criminal justice processing (see, e.g., Sampson and Lauritsen 1997; Mears 1998; Mitchell 2005; Baumer 2013; Spohn 2013) to reduce potential bias in the estimated effects of the street code on criminal justice processing.

Criminal Justice Controls. One set of control variables focuses on prior criminal justice contact. Three measures are employed. The first, *prior arrest*, is a dichotomous measure of whether any arrest occurred during the first four waves of data collection (1=reported arrest, 0=no reported arrest). The second, *prior incarceration*, is also a dichotomous measure but indicates whether any incarceration events occurred prior to waves 5 and 6 (1=prior incarceration, 0=no prior incarceration). Finally, a measure of *prior parental incarceration* is included (1=parent incarcerated any time during waves 1-4, 0=no parental incarceration).

Background Controls. The second set of control variables includes measures of individual characteristics and offending as well as neighborhood and geographic context. *Family socioeconomic status (SES)* at wave 1 is based on the primary caregiver's education level and reported family income. Both items were standardized and summed to form a single item. *Male* is a binary measure (1=male, 0=female). *Self-reported offending* indicates the number of criminal acts (e.g., physical assault, threatening others, bullying others, using a weapon, robbing others, and theft in the prior year) reported at wave 1 through wave 4. *Criminal friends* consist of five items, which asks respondents how many of their close friends had engaged in crime (1=none of them to 3=all of them) during the previous year. The questions asked respondents, "In the past year, how many of your close friends have: Stolen something worth less than \$50?; Stolen something worth \$50 or more?; Gotten into fights where someone got hurt?; Attacked someone with a weapon or with the idea of hurting them?; and Used a weapon, force, or strong-arm methods to get money or other things from people?" We summed the responses to obtain a total score regarding the extent to which the respondents' friends engaged in criminal behavior at wave 4. The alpha coefficient was .76. *Impulsivity* is measured by seven items and captures whether individuals have a propensity for impulsive and risky behaviors. Respondents answered the following questions, which were coded from 1 (not at all true) to 3 (very true): "You have to have everything right away? You like to switch from one thing to another? If you find that something is really difficult, you get frustrated and quit? You could do something most people would consider dangerous? You would prefer doing something dangerous rather than sitting quietly? You enjoy taking risks? You would enjoy fast driving?" We summed the responses to obtain a total score that captures the extent to which respondents indicated being impulsive at wave 4. The alpha coefficient was .70. *Urban* captures whether an individual resided in an urban area at wave 4 (1=urban, 0=non-urban). *South* indicates respondents who, at wave 4, lived in the southern United States (1), with Midwestern (0) as the reference group.

Finally, *neighborhood disadvantage* is measured at wave 1. Few individuals in the study moved from one neighborhood to another, and transitions were to areas that did not differ

appreciably from areas from which the subjects moved (Simons et al. 2011). Accordingly, the neighborhood measure likely serves as a useful proxy for neighborhood conditions to which the subjects were exposed at wave 1 and in later waves. The measure was created using the following census items: the 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 black. Previous studies have used combinations of these variables to assess neighborhood socioeconomic status (SES) (Sampson et al. 1997). The items were standardized and combined to form a measure of disadvantage. A constant of 10 was added to eliminate negative values. The alpha coefficient was .89.

ANALYSES

We begin by testing hypotheses 1a, 2a, and 3a, which examine the association between the code of the street and arrest. We then test hypotheses 1b, 2b, and 3b, which examine the association between the code of the street and conviction. Given the nested nature of the data, with individuals clustered within neighborhoods, standard regression approaches are not appropriate because they assume that error terms across individuals are uncorrelated. Accordingly, we use multilevel logistic regression analyses that adjust for correlated errors and allow for estimation of the effects of individual-level street code adherence and neighborhood-level street code culture on the probability of arrest. For the conviction analyses, the reduced sample size precluded use of multilevel models. Thus, we used regression-based techniques with robust standard error estimates available in STATA. The STATA program uses the Huber-White correction for standard errors, which adjusts for correlated errors within nested data and yields unbiased estimates of the coefficients and standard errors (StataCorp 2013). We also model cross-level interactions between street code adherence and street code culture to test whether the effects of adherence are more pronounced among individuals who reside in areas where the code of the street is more strongly embraced. In the current study, multicollinearity does not appear to be a problem; for example, none of the variance inflation factors (VIFs) was

greater than 2.4, suggesting that the variables are empirically distinct constructs.

FINDINGS

Before estimating multivariate models, we assessed the degree to which arrest varied across neighborhoods. To do so, we estimated an unconditional model (i.e., a model with no predictors or control variables). The model included a variance component that describes whether significant variation exists in arrest across neighborhoods. Results of this model (not shown here) revealed that the mean level of arrest varied significantly across neighborhoods and resulted in a true score reliability of .73. In addition, the unconditional model revealed a significant random effects variance component (chi square = 207, $p < .05$), which indicates that the reported prevalence of arrest varies significantly across neighborhoods and can be modeled.

We turn now to the first hypothesis, which anticipates that street code adherence will be positively associated with the likelihood of arrest (H1a). As can be seen in table 2, model 1, a statistically significant, positive effect of street code beliefs holds after controlling for gender, prior criminal record, prior offending, and family and neighborhood context. Specifically, individuals who more strongly adhere to the code of the street are more likely to be arrested, net of the controls. The regression coefficient ($b=.19$) translates into an odds ratio of 1.21. Accordingly, for each unit increase in the street code index, the odds of arrest increase by 21 percent. That association reflects a unit increase for an index that, per table 1, ranges from 7 to 28 and has a mean value of 18. In short, individuals who strongly adhere to the street code are substantially more likely to be arrested than are those with less strongly held street code beliefs.

Insert table 2 about here

Model 1 also provides a test of the second hypothesis, which predicts that the likelihood of arrest will be greater among individuals who reside in neighborhoods where the code of the street culture is stronger (H2a). The neighborhood street code effect in fact surfaces as statistical

significant and positive ($b=.16$), thus indicating support for the hypothesis. Expressed as an odds ratio (1.17), the effect translates into a 17 percent increase in the odds of arrest for each unit increase in neighborhood street culture.

With model 2, we test the hypothesis that individual street code adherence interacts with neighborhood street code cultural beliefs (H3a). The statistically significant interaction ($b=.33$) suggests support for the hypothesis—the intensity of neighborhood street code culture amplifies the effect of individual-level street code adherence. For ease of presentation, figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities of varying levels of individual-level street code adherence for two community conditions: neighborhoods where the level of adherence to the street code belief system is one standard deviation above the mean and neighborhoods where it is one standard deviation below the mean. All predicted probabilities are based on table 2, model 2 coefficients, with all non-street code variables set to their mean values.

Insert figure 1 about here

Several notable patterns emerge in figure 1. First, regardless of whether they reside in neighborhoods with strong street code cultures or weak street code cultures, individuals who more strongly adhere to the street code are more likely to be arrested.

Second, the influence of street code beliefs can accumulate into relatively large effects. For example, and focusing here on individuals residing in what we have termed “low neighborhood street culture” communities, the probability of arrest among individuals at the 25th percentile of street code adherence is 27 percent. By contrast, among those at the 75th percentile it is 40 percent. In absolute percentage terms, these individuals have a 13 percent greater probability of arrest. This general pattern holds regardless of the extent of neighborhood street code culture, although, as we discuss below, it varies in intensity depending on neighborhood cultural beliefs.

Third, residing in areas with more pervasive street code beliefs results in a greater probability of arrest. For example, comparison of two sets of areas—those one standard deviation below the mean of street code adherence and those one standard deviation above it, respectively—

highlights that the probability of arrest is at least 10 percentage points higher for individuals in neighborhoods where a stronger street code culture exists. This general pattern holds regardless of the extent of individual-level adherence to the street code.

Fourth, neighborhood context amplifies the individual belief effects. Specifically, the individual-level belief effect is greater in areas where street code cultural beliefs are more widely held. The percentile rankings discussed above illustrate the pattern. In “low neighborhood street culture” communities, individuals at the 75th percentile of street code adherence have a 13 percentage point greater probability of arrest as compared to individuals at the 25th percentile (40 percent vs. 27 percent). By contrast, in “high neighborhood street culture” areas, such individuals have a 27 percentage point greater probability of arrest (72 percent vs. 45 percent). In short, neighborhood culture greatly amplifies individual-level street code effects.

The evidence to this point suggests that individual-level street code adherence and neighborhood-level street code culture increase the likelihood of arrest. One critical question, however, is whether street code effects persist into later criminal justice processing decisions. The analyses in table 2, models 3 and 4, explore this question through a focus on criminal convictions. This focus is of interest in part because it allows for investigation of decisionmaking far removed from street-level, potentially spur-of-the-moment, decisionmaking.

Results from these analyses parallel those from the arrest analyses. Inspection of model 3 reveals direct and positive effects of individual-level street code adherence on the likelihood of conviction ($b=.20$), providing support for the first hypothesis (H1b). In this same model, we see similar effects of neighborhood street code culture on the likelihood of conviction ($b=.16$), providing support for the second hypothesis (H2b). Finally, in model 4, evidence of a statistically significant interaction surfaces ($b=.33$), lending support to hypothesis 3 (H3b).

The results from the interaction model are presented graphically in figure 2. As with the arrest analyses, four patterns emerge: (1) greater levels of individual street code adherence result in higher probabilities of conviction; (2) the influence of individual-level beliefs accumulate into relatively substantial effects when we compare individuals who lie farther apart from one another

in their adherence to the street code; (3) individuals from neighborhoods where the code of the street belief system is more intense are more likely to be convicted; and (4) more pronounced individual-level belief effects emerge among those who reside in neighborhoods with stronger street code cultural beliefs.

Insert figure 2 about here

Here, again, the percentile thresholds help to illustrate the pattern. We focus first on individuals from “low neighborhood street culture” communities. Those at the 25th percentile of street code adherence have a 15 percent probability of conviction while those at the 75th percentile have a 23 percent probability of conviction, an increase of 8 percentage points in the probability of conviction. Next, we focus on individuals from “high neighborhood street culture” communities. Those at the 25th percentile of street code adherence have a 21 percent probability of conviction while those at the 75th percentile have a 34 percent probability of conviction; here, the probability of conviction increases by 13 percent. In short, as with arrest, neighborhood cultural beliefs appear to amplify the effects of individual-level street code beliefs in the probability of experiencing formal social control.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study can be summarized briefly. Blacks who more strongly adhered to street code beliefs were more likely to be arrested and convicted, net of controls that included prior criminal justice contact and self-reported offending. These effects translated into markedly higher probabilities of arrest and conviction among those most likely to adhere to the street code. In addition, blacks who resided in areas where the code of the street belief system was more entrenched or prevalent were more likely to be arrested and convicted. As anticipated, these two effects amplified one another. Specifically, individual-level code-of-the-street beliefs exerted a stronger influence on the probability of arrest and conviction among those who resided in neighborhoods with a more entrenched or prevalent street code culture. A large literature on

police and court decisionmaking exists that implicates citizen demeanor (e.g., Piliavin and Briar 1964; Cicourel 1968; Black and Reiss 1970; Smith and Visher 1981; Weitzer and Brunson 2009) and community characteristics (e.g., Reisig 2010; Rodriguez 2013) in arrest and sentencing decisions. The central contribution of this study is to build on this and related work (e.g., Anderson 1999; Black 1977; Sampson and Bartusch 1998; Gambetta 2009) to identify that citizen culture, at the individual level and neighborhood level, also may influence such decisions.

Implications of these findings extend along several directions. The first is the need for additional studies that identify how the street code belief system among residents affects how criminal justice system and court actors perceive and respond to them. This study relied on unique data that included information about the street code and criminal justice processing and that included measures of potential sources of confounding. Even so, it will be important for more studies to investigate the potential salience of the street code on criminal justice decisionmaking. The studies will want to investigate individual-level street code adherence, neighborhood-level street code effects, and how they may interact. An interesting avenue of investigation would be to examine as well family-level street code adherence (Stewart and Simons 2006) and how it may affect police and court processing decisions.

Such studies ideally will include measures that directly tap into overt expressions or acts—such as wearing the latest clothing fashions, sneakers, or gold or flashy jewelry, driving nice cars, or “acting crazy”—consistent with achieving a street code “look” that in turn may provide the basis for how the police or courts view and respond to individuals (Anderson 1999:73, 234; see also Kubrin 2005; Stewart et al. 2006). The studies ideally, too, will include additional potential confounders, such as prior involvement in different types of offending (e.g., violent, property, drug), gang membership and routine activities measures, which may affect street code membership and law enforcement and court decisionmaking. Similarly, policing approaches and court processing factors, such as caseloads and prosecutorial priorities, also may influence arrest and court activities and potentially warrant inclusion in models aimed at estimating street code effects. Not least, future research ideally will examine a diverse array of ways in which street

code adherence may be expressed. Extant data sets do not permit such an assessment at this point, but new data collection efforts could rectify that situation.

Second, the results highlight the need for research that can identify the ways in which culture influences and interacts with social control responses. This study examined culture among a sample of black residents and the culture of the community from which they come. However, culture may exist within police departments and the courts and play a prominent role in police and court decisionmaking (Klinger 1994, 1996; Mears 1998; Johnson 2005, 2006; Spohn 2013; Fader 2014). These cultural dimensions—that of residents and that of the police or courts—may interact with one another and so warrant attention. For example, cultural beliefs among residents may influence how they interpret and respond to the police or to court officials (Gambetta 2009). Law enforcement department culture may influence how the police view and respond to certain groups, such as blacks. When both groups—minorities and the police—are led to view each other through particular cultural prisms, the risk of misunderstanding and mistrust may increase (Anderson 1999; Brunson and Weitzer 2009; Gambetta 2009; Stewart et al. 2009).

Third, and in a related vein, future research should investigate how micro-level decisionmaking processes unfold and contribute to arrest, conviction, and sanctioning decisions. Many reviews of processing and sanctioning research call for a greater understanding of how extra-legal factors such as decisionmaking processes affect the exercise of formal social control (Klinger 1994; Bridges and Steen 1998; Mears and Bacon 2009; Crutchfield 2012; Baumer 2013). Investigations of sequences of interactions and decisions presents significant methodological challenges (Klinger 1994; Brunson and Weitzer 2011; Crutchfield et al. 2012), yet also would provide insight about how criminal justice interactions—not only the characteristics of offenders—may affect the processing and sanctioning of citizens. For example, to what extent do the police provoke black males or other groups (Weitzer and Brunson 2009)? To what extent do black males or any group act in ways that may cue officers to feel threatened (Gambetta 2009)? To what extent do officers misinterpret the words and actions of black males or other groups? To what extent do misinterpretations lead to a cycle of negative

interactions that ultimately result in arrest, conviction, or incarceration?

There is a need in particular for greater attention to how framing effects may influence police and court responses to individuals. Studies of “framing effects” highlight the central role that stereotypes or initial perceptions of individuals or groups can have for how a given person interprets these individuals’ or groups’ actions (Mears and Bacon 2009; Kahneman 2011). For example, the police may assume that an individual’s race, clothing, car, or some aspect of their demeanor indicates that he or she will respond aggressively in an interaction. In turn, the police may be more likely to perceive responses from the individual as ambivalent. That in turn reinforces the perception of the individual as hostile, resulting in a form of confirmation bias (Kahneman 2011). Such views may become amplified through subsequent written or verbal reports about the individual that “frame” how an individual, and his or her case, is viewed by the courts (Bridges and Steen 1998; Beaver et al. 2009). Analysis of such possibilities and how they may unfold in interactions with the police and court personnel would contribute to a deeper understanding of how formal social control is activated and directed (Ulmer 2012; Baumer 2013). It also might establish a foundation on which to identify how police and court officer training might be designed to aid in more accurately interpreting citizen behavior, including purposive displays of defiance (Gambetta 2009), and responding in ways that defuse potential conflict or avoid the need for a formal legal response (Mastrofski et al. 2002; Skogan and Frydl 2004; Mears and Bacon 2009; Weitzer and Brunson 2009; Unnever and Gabbidon 2011).

Finally, the study points to the need for theoretical accounts of the growth in mass incarceration and punitive justice that examine individual-level, community-level, and cultural dimensions that influence formal social control (Black 1976, 1997; Hagan 1989; Bernard and Engel 2001). One promising line of work may be the integration of systems theoretical perspectives with accounts of court processing communities and interactional analyses. Racial disparities in the criminal justice system appear to result from the accumulation of a series of micro-level decisions (Sampson and Lauritsen 1997; Mitchell 2005; Baumer 2013). Systems theory (Bernard et al. 2005) provides an important platform for identifying how decisions at

certain points may amplify disparities at later stages of processing. At the same time, theories about law enforcement culture and courtroom work communities underscore the importance of examining these parts of the criminal justice system as distinct parts of a broader whole (Ulmer 2012). Not least, accounts about how individuals interact with agents of formal social control also seem essential for understanding the micro-level decisionmaking processes that ultimately contribute to criminal justice system processing.

Formal social control does not occur in a vacuum. The enactment of laws and the groups to which they are directed sets the stage for interactions between citizens and the police and courts. These interactions occur in particular social and cultural contexts. Within these contexts, citizens vary in their demographic and social characteristics and in their adherence to particular values and beliefs. The police and courts, too, vary along structural dimensions, such as their organization, demographic composition, and caseloads, and cultural dimensions, such as their views about when and how to respond to certain types of crimes. No one theory or study can explain or account for these many contexts. However, as Black (1976, 1997) has emphasized, efforts to understand social control likely will benefit from seeking to identify how the social characteristics and the culture of individuals, their communities, and legal establishments collectively contribute to the application of law.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

	Mean	S.D.	Range	
<u>Dependent Variables</u>				
Arrested _{W5-W6}	.20	.39	0.00	1.00
Conviction _{W5-W6}	.18	.43	0.00	1.00
<u>Individual Street Code</u>				
Street Code Beliefs _{W4}	17.56	3.89	7.00	28.00
<u>Neighborhood Culture</u>				
Neighborhood Street Culture _{W4}	13.64	4.33	7.00	28.00
<u>Criminal Justice Controls</u>				
Prior Arrest _{W1-W4}	.14	.31	0.00	1.00
Prior Incarceration _{W1-W4}	.13	.41	0.00	1.00
Parent Arrested _{W1-W4}	.16	.39	0.00	1.00
<u>Background Controls</u>				
Family SES _{W4}	13.41	4.14	.08	24.05
Male _{W4}	.46	.50	0.00	1.00
Self-reported Offending _{W1-W4}	2.65	3.94	0.00	21.00
Criminal Friends _{W4}	5.94	1.59	5.00	15.00
Impulsivity _{W4}	10.26	2.78	7.00	21.00
Urban _{W4}	.52	.48	0.00	1.00
South _{W4}	.49	.46	0.00	1.00
Neighborhood Disadvantage _{W1}	10.42	3.65	1.01	25.62

N = 654

TABLE 2. Models of Arrest_{W5-W6} and Conviction_{W5-W6} Regressed on Street Code and Neighborhood Street Culture

	<u>Arrest^a</u>				<u>Conviction^b</u>			
	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>		<u>Model 4</u>	
	<u>b</u>	<u>Exp(b)</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>Exp(b)</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>Exp(b)</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>Exp(b)</u>
<u>Individual Street Code</u>								
Street Code Beliefs _{W4}	.19*	1.21	.21*	1.23	.20*	1.22	.17*	1.19
<u>Neighborhood Culture</u>								
Neighborhood Street Culture _{W4}	.16*	1.17	.18*	1.20	.16*	1.17	.14*	1.15
<u>Criminal Justice Controls</u>								
Prior Arrest _{W1-W4}	2.06*	7.85	2.06*	7.85	1.69*	5.42	1.74*	5.70
Prior Incarceration _{W1-W4}	.51*	1.67	.52*	1.68	1.87*	6.49	1.71*	5.53
Parent Arrested _{W1-W4}	.31*	1.36	.31*	1.36	.06	1.06	.06	1.06
<u>Background Controls</u>								
Family SES _{W4}	-.02	.98	-.02	.98	-.02	.98	-.02	.98
Male _{W4}	.27*	.07	.27*	.07	.29*	1.34	.27*	1.31
Self-reported Offending _{W1-W4}	.25*	1.28	.25*	1.28	.73*	2.08	.73*	2.08
Criminal Friends _{W4}	.14*	1.15	.14*	1.15	.03	1.03	.03	1.03
Impulsivity _{W4}	.02	1.02	.02	1.02	.01	1.01	.01	1.01
Urban _{W4}	.03	1.03	.03	1.03	.03	1.03	.03	1.03
South _{W4}	.02	1.02	.02	1.02	.03	1.03	.03	1.03
Neighborhood Disadvantage _{W1}	.06	1.06	.06	1.06	.05	1.05	.05	1.05
<u>Cross-level Interaction</u>								
Street Code * Neighborhood Street Culture	—	—	.33*	1.39	—	—	.33*	1.39
<i>Neighborhood Variance Explained</i>	36.4%		37.8%		27.3%		28.9%	
<i>Pseudo R2</i>								

a. *p < .05. N₁ = 39 Neighborhoods; N₂ = 654 Individuals. Multilevel logistic regression models estimated.

b. *p < .05. N₁ = 39 Neighborhoods; N₂ = 130 Individuals. Logistic regression analyses estimated that controlled for clustering within neighborhoods.

Figure 1. The Effect of Street Code on Arrest by Neighborhood Street Culture

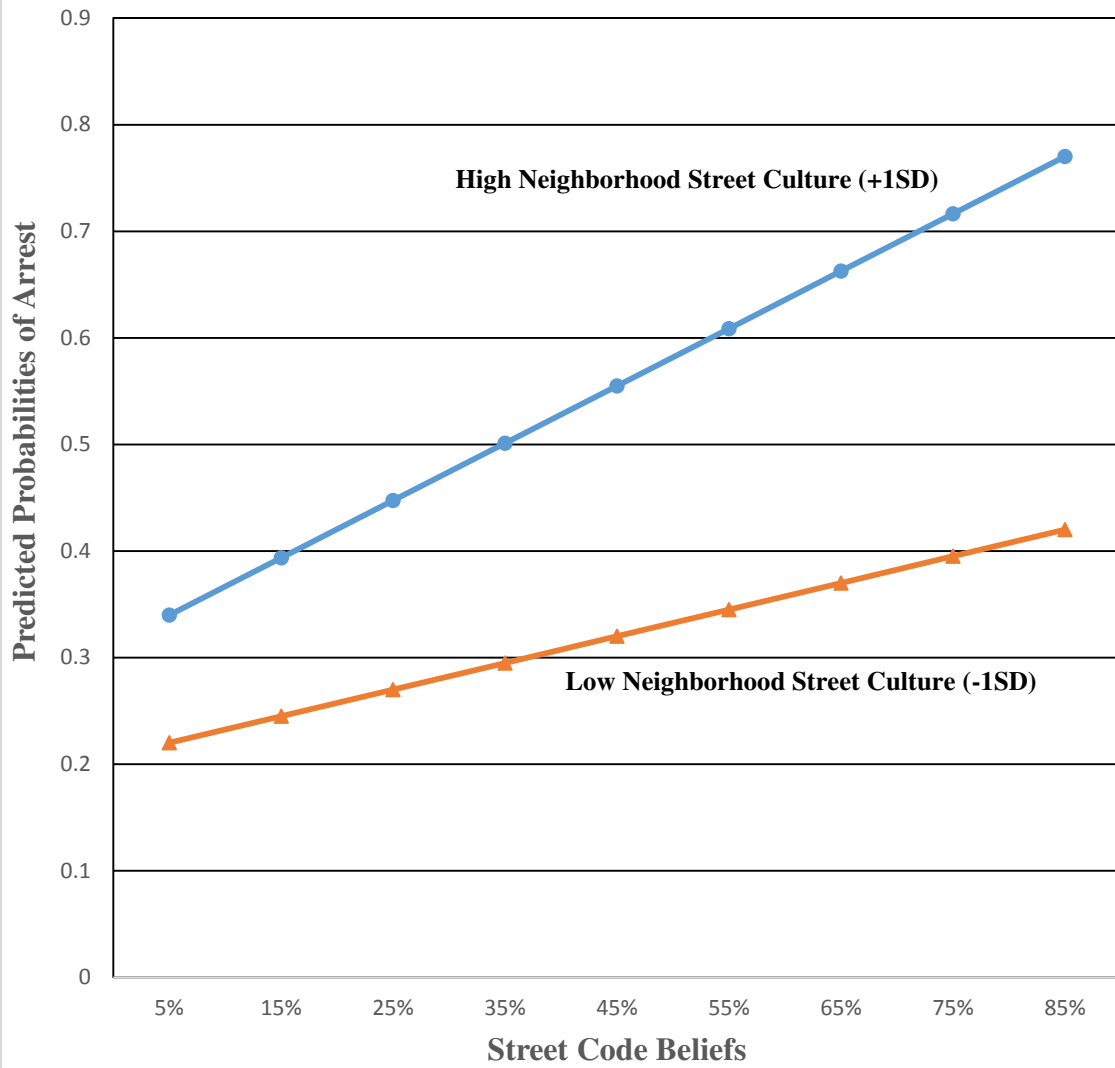


Figure 2. The Effect of Street Code on Conviction by Neighborhood Street Culture

