

The Politics of Criminal Victimization: Pursuing and Resisting Power

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Abstract

Within the growing research on the politics of crime victims are seen as resigned to their fates at the hands of powerful criminal actors. But the conventional approach to criminal victimization as a traumatic but one-time act obscures from view a layer of contentious and dynamic politics between victims and criminal actors that we have yet to analyze. I develop a new theoretical framework to analyze the strategic behaviors that victims and criminals undertake as part of the political process of criminal victimization. The framework enables us to better observe, conceptualize and theorize how victims exercise agency vis-à-vis their criminal perpetrators, and the behaviors and practices that criminal victimizers undertake but which are overlooked by the traditional focus on their use and threat of coercive force. I illustrate the framework's analytic utility with an empirical analysis of the victimization of informal street vendors in a major Latin American city under a criminal protection racket. The argument and empirical findings suggest ways to expand and deepen the research agenda on the politics of criminal victimization.

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Every Saturday morning several hundred street vendors in an informal market in the center of Medellin, Colombia pay a “tax” to members of a violent criminal organization. The vendors are *recicladores* (recyclers) that scour trash bins for items to repair and sell. In exchange for their payment as part of this criminal protection racket, vendors receive the promise of security from everyday crime and the criminal organization itself.¹ Those unable or unwilling to pay incur violent punishments that can range from a slap on the back of the head to immobilization by Taser before being urinated on. But as evident from the story of one vendor, Don Alfonso,² denouncing the racket itself risks more serious punishment.

Don Alfonso sold old tools in the market. One day he began to publicly complain about the security tax. Another vendor lamented: “We told him it was better to be quiet. But he didn’t listen. He was old and tired of this shit. Soon the media arrived. That was the beginning of the end.”³ Weeks after stories about the protection racket appeared in local papers, Don Alfonso was shot in the head in the middle of the market. The killer was never apprehended. The next Saturday the racket’s collectors were back collecting the tax. As one vendor noted: “It’s like the sun rising. You can always count on them showing up and opening their hands to get paid.”⁴

This story aligns with part of the conventional wisdom in research on the politics of crime that views victims as resigned to their fates at the hands of coercive criminal actors. Crime trends in the developing world are certainly concerning. In 2013 Africa and Latin America had the world’s highest homicide rates of 16.3 and 12.5 per 100,000 people, respectively, compared to the global average of 6.2 per 100,000.⁵ Between 2003 and 2008 the average percentage of Latin Americans that perceived their country to be less safe increased from 18 to 59 percent,⁶ and today over one-third of the region's population views crime and insecurity as the most pressing problems in their countries.⁷ In Sub-Saharan Africa, nearly one-third of urban residents feel “very unsafe”

while walking on the streets after dark.⁸ And criminal violence afflicts populations parts of U.S. and Western European cities as well.⁹ Hence scholars and policymakers concur on the need to better understand “the relationship between politics and violence in the contemporary world.”¹⁰

One area in need of greater understanding is the *political interaction* between victims and criminal victimizers. Some studies argue that victimization leads people to withdraw from political life into a “low intensity” citizenship where their political and social rights are systematically violated.¹¹ Others find that victimization spurs political engagement, from civic organizing to regularly engaging in political discussions. Both lines of research offer valuable, though somewhat contradictory, insights into the political consequences of crime. But both also overlook whether and how *victims engage their criminal perpetrators*. I began to consider this point halfway through the first of several focus groups that I conducted with informal vendors in Medellin. The six vendors in the room were visibly tired of my questions about how often and how much they paid under the protection racket – my attempt to understand what I assumed was the extent of their victimization. One vendor, an approximately fifty-year old man who sold used cell phone chargers, finally (and thankfully) motioned for me to stop. He explained:

It’s not only that I have to pay every Saturday. That hurts me...all of us, of course it does. But that’s only *one* part of the problem: something bigger with the Convivir (term used for the groups that coordinate protection rackets in Medellin’s downtown). When [the racket’s collectors] take the money from me, I don’t stop being a victim. *He* doesn’t stop being a victim (pointing at a vendor sitting across from him). *She* doesn’t stop being a victim (pointing at a vendor sitting beside him). Like them, I am a victim 12 hours a day and seven days a week (the average work schedule for a vendor) – every single time I step foot in the market, I am a victim.¹²

The prevailing approach to criminal victimization as a traumatic but one-time act is insufficient to understand its *ongoing* nature. This approach limits our ability to observe, conceptualize and theorize how victims exercise agency vis-à-vis their criminal perpetrators. It also conceals the behaviors and practices that criminal victimizers undertake to carry out and sustain victimization, but which are overlooked by the traditional focus on their use and threat of coercive force. Analyzing victimization as a dynamic and interactive process offers a fuller understanding of the politics of criminal victimization.

In this article I first show that whereas emerging research provides important insights into the political consequences of crime, it neglects to consider the inherently political nature of victim-criminal actor relations. The second section conceptually distinguishes between crime as an act and victimization as a relational process to reveal a layer of contentious politics between victims and criminals. I then develop a theoretical framework to analyze these dynamics by drawing from research on power, domination and subordination. I illustrate the framework's analytic utility in the third section of the paper with an empirical analysis of the victimization of informal vendors under a criminal protection racket in Medellin. Diverse organizations, from youth gangs to drug trafficking organizations, coordinate similar criminal rackets across Latin America,¹³ Africa,¹⁴ and Eastern Europe.¹⁵ For the empirical analysis I use data from focus groups, interviews, and participatory drawing exercises. I finish by discussing the implications of my analysis for future research on crime and policy efforts to stem it.

The Politics of Crime: Emerging Insights and a Persistent Gap

Crime poses complex challenges for order and development.¹⁶ One strand of the emerging research on crime sees victims as resigned to the harm inflicted upon them by criminal actors amid absent or complicit states in contexts of “endemic fear and insecurity.”¹⁷ Researchers find that criminal violence depresses electoral participation by increasing the risks associated with voting and eroding trust in the political system.¹⁸ This echoes broader findings of a negative relationship between levels of crime and the perceived legitimacy of political institutions, as well as support for democracy.¹⁹ By contrast, a second line of research argues that victimization can spur non-traditional forms of political engagement, including attending community meetings and assuming leadership roles in civil society.²⁰ This corresponds with the finding that victims of wartime violence are more likely to become politically engaged relative to non-victims in post-conflict settings.²¹ The valuable focus in these studies on victims either engaging or withdrawing from the state, however, overlooks the political nature of relations between citizens and criminals. Certainly anthropological studies argue that contemporary lynchings of criminals are political performances, or “moral complaint[s]”²² meant to chastise states for disregarding marginalized populations in contexts of resource scarcity. But this still reduces the victim-criminal actor relationship to one of physical violence and locates politics only in the (violent) “dialogue” between victims and the state.²³

The interactions between victims and criminals may initially seem beyond the scope of a conventional view of politics as phenomenon within the public realm. But victim-criminal actor relations are inherently political. Politics understood as competing efforts to shape the distribution of resources among actors, or “who gets what, when, how”,²⁴ is not limited to the public realm.²⁵ As Robert Dahl said: “Let one person frustrate another in the pursuit of his goal, and you already

have the germ of a political system.”²⁶ Carol Pateman and feminist scholars have convincingly shown that the “personal *is* political,” through studies on gender, sexuality, and citizenship,²⁷ as well as on regimes, states and markets.²⁸ More broadly, though much political science research focuses on the state as the protagonist of political life – what David Easton identifies as the source of the “authoritative allocation of values”²⁹ – it is not always the only, or even the primary, authority in shaping everyday lives. Instead the state is often one among several actors that orders populations, territories and lives, such as powerful firms in company towns,³⁰ large landowners,³¹ rebel groups,³² and urban gangs.³³ Sustained interactions to contest the distribution of resources between civilian and non-state actors, including criminal actors, can therefore be fruitfully analyzed as political in nature.³⁴

The Politics of Criminal Victimization: A Theoretical Framework

Until the mid-20th century, the field of criminology was surprisingly a “victim-free zone”³⁵ focused on the factors that led people to commit criminal offenses. But a sub-field known as “victimology” urged criminologists to conceptualize victimization as a “duet”³⁶ between the victim and the perpetrator in order to better grapple with the “problem of dynamics”³⁷ inherent to victimization, but which were eclipsed by the predominant view of crime as an act. Yet analysis of the interactions between victims and perpetrators ultimately centered on whether the attributes of a victim – the clothing they wore or the streets they frequented – made them more or less vulnerable to particular criminal acts. The broader relational aspects of the victim-criminal actor dyad were overshadowed by an approach critiqued for its preoccupation with establishing “how guilty is the victim in a criminal incident.”³⁸ It is here where political science’s longstanding concern with

studying power, domination and subordination can advance our understanding of the politics of criminal victimization.³⁹

A crime is an act that violates the formal law established by a state.⁴⁰ The *process* of criminal victimization, however, can be defined as the extent of the direct interaction between victims and the perpetrator of the crime. Victimization encompasses the criminal act, but crucially, can extend beyond it to include other interactions between victims and perpetrators. These interactions can vary in length and nature, but they all entail the negotiation of material and non-material resources between the two parties. Figure 1 provides a simple visual representation of this conceptual decoupling.⁴¹

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

The duration of a criminal act and the span of direct interaction between a victim and their victimizer can overlap substantially, as in the case of a house break-in. Here a focus on explaining the distribution of the criminal act across space and time would be analytically fruitful. But as shown in Figure 1, the degree of overlap between the criminal act and the process of victimization varies across distinct types of crime. In particular, we need to distinguish between crimes that are one-time acts and crimes that entail extended interactions between victims and criminals over time.

A kidnapping is the act of taking or detaining someone by force, often for a ransom. But the associated process of victimization features other interactions where power between victim and victimizer is contested and negotiated. Stockholm Syndrome is a bond of dependence and even affection that victims develop for their kidnappers over time, but which victims may strategically cultivate in order to obtain improved treatment.⁴² Kidnappers also engage in calculated practices

toward their victims beyond physically detaining them, including sensory deprivation, name-calling, and humiliation, but also “positive experiences for victims” in the form of “the provision of newspaper and radios...food, books, and television” and “clean clothes” (Phillips 2011, 846-47; 865). Unpacking criminal victimization can provide surprising insights into what aspects of the process most impact victims, as illustrated by the testimony of a kidnapping victim:

“When I wanted to go to the bathroom, I had to wait until they brought me a bucket. Sometimes they would leave the bucket in the room to harass me. The sense of humiliation I felt at not being able to decide when to use the bathroom was tremendous. Even worse was trying to do my private business while blindfolded, with someone standing over me, and having to beg them for toilet paper. *This was absolutely the worst aspect of the whole experience for me*” (Wright 2009, 49, emphasis added).

Thus while the physical detention is the act used to define the criminal offense, the process of victimization associated with kidnapping encompasses additional interactions that shape the overall relationship between the victims and their victimizer.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is another instructive example. One out of every three women in the United States has experienced “sexual assault, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner” during their lifetime.⁴³ The individual criminal act of IPV cannot be fully understood without assessing the broader interactions constitutive of the relationship between the victim and their perpetrator. But it is precisely these interactions that receive less analytical scrutiny than the physical violation. Recognition that crime and victimization are not always equivalent makes visible intriguing dynamics that form part of the process of victimization. To

analyze these dynamics I theorize relations between criminals and victims as analogous to those between dominant and subordinate actors.⁴⁴

Domination, Subordination and Resistance as Political Dynamics of Criminal Victimization

Whether criminal rulers, elected politicians, or dictators, dominant actors utilize a range of practices to subordinate populations, as shown in Table 1.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Material domination is the use or threat of coercive force to extract material rents from subordinates. But while coercive force is necessary to tax populations, it is not sufficient.⁴⁵ As Margaret Levi notes: “Without a fairly high degree of *quasi-voluntary compliance*, revenue production policies are not even feasible.”⁴⁶ To obtain this compliance actors combine material with social and political strategies of domination.

Social domination undercuts efforts by subordinates to raise issues that can threaten the power of dominant actors. Bachrach and Baratz called this the “second face of power.”⁴⁷ A classic example is political actors using the status quo biases embedded within formal policymaking institutions to set agendas in ways that constrict debate.⁴⁸ Dominant actors in contexts of criminal victimization can similarly invoke predominant social norms to affirm the social hierarchy between themselves and their victims. These “symbolic taxes”⁴⁹ entail using “humiliation, disprivilege, insults, [and] assaults on dignity” to elicit “deference, demeanor, posture, verbal formulas and acts of humility.”⁵⁰ These practices can prevent challenges to the status quo

distribution of power. As a researcher of domestic abuse notes: “Victimization works best when the perpetrator produces a sense of immobilization and helplessness and a loss of self-respect.”⁵¹ A multi-country survey by the World Health Organization (WHO) found that female victims of IPV regularly experience concurrent emotional abuse at the hands of their abusive partners, including “being insulted or made to feel bad about oneself; being humiliated in front of others; being intimidated or scared on purpose.”⁵² Though a majority of victims characterize the emotional abuse as more damaging than their physical injuries, we still know little about the former precisely because of the conventional focus on the latter.⁵³ We thus need to analyze social control as an important dimension of criminal victimization.⁵⁴

Dominant actors also sustain victimization through a “third face of power” that prompts victims to question the legitimacy of their grievances and so “accept their role in the existing order of things.”⁵⁵ Lisa Wedeen argues that authoritarian rulers saturate society with conservative political rhetoric and symbols to shape the acceptable boundaries of state-society relations.⁵⁶ John Gaventa identifies how economic elites structure political norms to dissuade the poor from seeing their concerns as legitimate.⁵⁷ Parallels can be drawn with aspects of criminal victimization. Psychological studies of sexual violence examine “rape myths,” defined as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women.”⁵⁸ An example is the notion that women invite sexual violence by dressing or acting in “suggestive” ways. Such myths serve to deny victims of sexual violence their rights, undermine the perceived legitimacy of violation of those rights, and legitimize continued victimization.⁵⁹ Greater attention to when and why victimizers invoke broader social norms to shape victims’ understandings of their political subjectivity can deepen our understanding of victimization. To wit, whereas the focus in this paper is on the interactions between victims and

criminals, these are not detached from how both states and society view victims based on their socioeconomic, racial, or gender identities, among others.⁶⁰

Analyzing victimization as a process challenges us to consider how victims exercise agency vis-à-vis criminal actors. Building on James Scott, I focus here on agency as publicly observable acts of resistance by victims to negotiate the terms of their victimization directly with their criminal victimizers. Researchers have drawn on Scott to identify “everyday” forms of resistance across diverse contexts, including by black laborers against white business owners during the Jim Crow era,⁶¹ civilians against rebel groups,⁶² and ordinary citizens against authoritarian regimes.⁶³ We should expect that victims of crime too will seek to negotiate the material, social, and political dimensions of subordination.⁶⁴ It bears emphasis that contestation along everyday lines will not end victimization.⁶⁵ Instead everyday resistance can help victims to obtain what they understand to be practical, emotional, and political dividends amid victimization.

Two factors define the scope conditions for this theoretical framework. First, because it emphasizes the interactions between victims and criminal actors, the framework is applicable to cases where victimization is ongoing and not a one-time act. The framework is meant to help analytically parse the criminal act from the process of victimization and assess the links between the two. The framework can also be applied to cases where criminal organizations govern some aspects of everyday life while simultaneously committing criminal offenses against the populations in the territories under their control.⁶⁶ Second, the theoretical framework is most useful for analyzing cases where the state is unable *or* unwilling to advance the rule of law. Because victims in such settings may face greater incentives to contest their victimization directly vis-à-vis their victimizers, the framework can help to make sense of the multi-dimensional nature of the interactions between the two. Contexts where these conditions are likely to be found include

violent “urban peripheries” in both the Global South⁶⁷ and North,⁶⁸ as well as settings marked by the uneven state provision of formal rights along demographic lines. Illustrative examples of the latter include gender-based violence in patriarchal contexts,⁶⁹ criminal victimization within minority racial and ethnic enclaves,⁷⁰ and settings where there are disparities in the ability of particular social classes or racial groups to access the criminal justice system in their defense.⁷¹

Criminal Victimization under a Protection Racket: Empirical Analysis

Before proceeding with the empirical analysis, I define criminal protection rackets, discuss their manifestation in Colombia and Medellin, and outline the strengths and limitations of the research design and methods.

Conceptualizing Rackets

Criminal protection rackets are ongoing arrangements under which one actor pays tribute to a coercive actor in exchange for the promise of protection from external threats and the coercive actor itself. How is this different from extortion? Varese defines extortion as taxation for “services that are promised but *not* provided,”⁷² whereas rackets are ongoing arrangements where payment of tribute offers security from some dangers.⁷³ Studies of European criminal rackets indicate that they provide seemingly high quality and effective protection to business firms from everyday crime and the violation of business contracts.⁷⁴ This may reflect the fact that rackets in these settings emerged to supply protection in response to substantial demand given rapid structural changes, including the shift from statist to market economies.⁷⁵ But this masks potential variation in the quality and efficacy of the type of protection that rackets can provide.⁷⁶ In Latin America,

including in the case that I analyze here, the protection that rackets provide varies in quality and efficacy, though their criminal coordinators still use the promise and occasional provision of protection to justify the “security tax.” As I discuss in the conclusion, this variability provides an opportunity to broaden the comparative study of criminal protection rackets.

Criminal Protection Rackets in Colombia

Criminal protection rackets in downtown Medellín, which is called the Comuna 10,⁷⁷ are run by groups called Convivir, a term that paradoxically translates as “living in harmony.” In 1994 the Colombian national government authorized the creation of the Convivir to be trained and armed by the military to combat insurgent forces in the country’s decades-old civil war.⁷⁸ Politicians and economic leaders leveraged this decree to establish Convivir that could safeguard their particular interests given the state’s limited territorial reach.⁷⁹ The Convivir found an ardent ally in Álvaro Uribe Vélez, then Governor (1995-1997) of the department of Antioquia – of which Medellín is the capital – and subsequently President (2002-2010) and then a Senator (2014-2018) long alleged to have links with right-wing paramilitary groups. Uribe encouraged the establishment of Convivir in nearly all of Antioquia’s municipalities,⁸⁰ many led by paramilitaries that used them to target civil society leaders and political leftists.⁸¹ In 1997 the Colombian Constitutional Court limited the activities that the Convivir could undertake, the weapons they could use, and the ability of their members to remain legally anonymous. But the Convivir in Antioquia, and particularly in Medellín, had by then begun to forcibly collect security taxes from businesses and residents in the territories where they operated in order to sustain themselves. And though the protection services had initially been welcomed by many given the context of intense drug-related violence,⁸² as

violence declined over time, the quality and level of protection under the Convivir deteriorated while the collection of security taxes remained constant.

Today the Convivir in the Comuna 10 are run by street gangs that work for larger criminal organizations based in the city's peripheral neighborhoods, known as *bandas* or *oficinas* (offices), that coordinate the sale of illicit drugs, weapons, and assassinations for hire. City officials estimate approximately twenty Convivir operate in the Comuna 10, though local civil society leaders place the figure closer to 20, with anywhere between 750 to 1,200 members.⁸³ The concentration of businesses in the city center makes it a prime target for establishing criminal rackets, which generate an estimated one-third of a million dollars every month.⁸⁴

Case Selection

Between 2016 and 2017 I carried out nearly five months of fieldwork in one informal market in the Comuna 10. The market stretches several city blocks and has about 400 informal vendors that work seven days a week, twelve hours a day. It emerged in 2011 when the vendors were displaced from their previous locale by local authorities that alleged criminals were using the site to sell drugs.⁸⁵ Shortly after the vendors relocated, leaders of a local gang that was part of the *Oficina del Valle de Aburrá* informed the vendors that the market was now under the gang's protection as a Convivir.⁸⁶ Each vendor is expected to pay a "security tax" of two thousand Colombian *pesos* weekly.⁸⁷ As vendors note: "*O paga o paga*" [either you pay or you pay], meaning that if the racket's enforcers cannot collect the tax from a vendor, they violently tax the vendor's body.

There are several reasons why this analysis should have implications relevant beyond my particular field-site. The unit of analysis is the dyadic relationship between the vendors and the criminal gang within the market. I therefore zoom down to the micro-level space most relevant for

analyzing the choices and behaviors of the key actors in my theoretical framework – what Arjona calls the “locus of choice.”⁸⁸ This helps to isolate the theoretically-relevant characteristics of the locus of choice that could help to identify analytically comparable units of analysis across distinct empirical settings, which Przeworski and Teune termed “cross-system equivalence.”⁸⁹ A limitation of the research design is that the politically contested nature of the urban informal economy likely restricts the nature of the resistance that the informal vendors can pursue relative to victims located in the formal economy.⁹⁰ Yet, this is precisely why informal vendors represent a “least-likely case” for mounting resistance to criminal victimization,⁹¹ which makes the evidence that they do so all the more theoretically intriguing.

Methods

Observing, documenting and analyzing the meaning of concealed interactions between victims and criminals required intensive ethnographic fieldwork during which I used multiple methodologies.⁹² I conducted focus groups with informal vendors. Focus groups can help to establish a temporary space where marginalized populations may be more at ease discussing sensitive topics given the social nature of focus groups – particularly when compared to being interviewed by a stranger.⁹³ Though focus groups are often used to interview several individuals simultaneously, Cyr identifies two other forms of data that they generate.⁹⁴ Attention to group-level dynamics enables researchers to see how a subject population collectively understands contentious or “thick concepts.”⁹⁵ This enabled me to conclude that vendors understood both their victimization and resistance as *multi-dimensional* in nature. Attention to the interactions between focus group participants can provide insights into how social processes unfold. This allowed me

to observe and analyze how strategies of resistance were collectively discussed and even rehearsed and performed by victims beyond the gaze of their victimizer.

I coordinated and carried out nine focus groups. Each had between five and seven participants, and each was balanced along dimensions of age, gender, length of time working in the market and in the informal sector, and type of merchandise or service they sold. Focus groups lasted approximately two hours and participants were assured that I would never reveal their names given security concerns. Meetings took place in a small hotel meeting room on the other side of the city center. Each vendor received \$15.00 (in Colombian *pesos*) for participating. Two longtime residents and civil society leaders from the Comuna 10 provided invaluable assistance in coordinating logistics, including helping me to identify and communicate with potential participants and arranging for some to be transported to the hotel from sites other than the informal market so as to avoid drawing the attention of the racket's members.

Second, I carried out participatory drawing exercises during the focus group. I gave participants blank sheets of paper, pencils and pens, and asked them to draw something in response to the following prompt: "Please think about the place where you work every day. Now draw what you feel generates either insecurity, security, or both in this place." Scholars have used this methodology to study how people experience and interpret political and criminal violence.⁹⁶ Drawing exercises enables participants to exercise agency in defining part of their contribution to the research process and can help researchers elicit data on highly sensitive and emotional dynamics.⁹⁷ While most participants engaged in the group discussions, others remained comparatively quiet, but then enthusiastically described their drawings to their group. Following Zuboff (1988, 141), the exercise thus helped participants to "articulate feelings that had been implicit and were hard to define."

I conducted thirty-one semi-structured interviews with civil society representatives, police officers and officials, and individual informal vendors within or in the area immediately surrounding the informal market. I triangulated data from the interviews with information from the focus groups and drawing exercises. Finally, participant observation in the informal market allowed me to observe some of the interactions between vendors and the coordinators and enforcers of the Convivir, though I was only able to understand what these interactions meant based on the insights gleaned from the other methodologies.

Domination under the Criminal Protection Racket

The criminal coordinators of the Convivir harness negative social perceptions of the informal vendors to engage in social domination. As in other parts of the world, informal vending in Medellin is derided as a source of reduced tax revenue and urban physical disorder.⁹⁸ But local authorities also publicly link the informal vendors to the micro-trafficking of drugs carried out by the gangs that run the Convivir. The vendors do not contest this reality:

We bring lots of noise and congestion and lots of things that don't look pretty, and that helps the Convivir. It lets them hide among us, take from us, but also profit from us in other ways, selling drugs, guns, all sorts of bad things. We are like the dogs, and they are like the fleas. Where we go, they go.⁹⁹

This association fuels negative social perceptions of the vendors. One female vendor that sold used clothing lamented: “When I get on the bus from my house we drive by market. I’ll sit there and I’ll hear people say, ‘Look, these are drug traffickers. All of them are traffickers, thieves, rats.’”

And I'll keep quiet. But I am ashamed. I say to myself: 'What a pity – that all of us have to pay for what we haven't been. It makes one ashamed.'"¹⁰⁰

The racket's coordinators tap into these and other negative social perceptions to publicly humiliate the vendors. Racket collectors regularly step on the vendors' merchandise and shove them at will – both during and apart from the collection of tribute. But the most commonly used form of humiliation is verbal insults that affirm a social hierarchy where vendors are considered *desechable* (disposable). Racket coordinators commonly insult the vendors' dirty clothes, how they smell, and the fact that the vendors earn their livelihoods selling *checheres* (slang word for assorted trash items). As one vendor noted: "Some Saturdays they just stick out their hands. Other Saturdays they wake up on the wrong side of the bed, because they come with their foul words to make one feel insignificant. As if taking our money wasn't enough!"¹⁰¹ Another reflected on how these insults reaffirm broader social norms: "They just say what everyone in society already thinks about us."¹⁰²

The racket's collectors intertwine social and material domination by forcing vendors to witness the physical humiliation of their own. For example, three participants in a focus group discussed one racket collector's favorite punishment for failure to pay the security tax:

Vendor 1 (male): We call him [the racket coordinator] the Enforcer. He likes to take people into his truck that he keeps parked right next to the market, where he has a motorcycle helmet for those moments. He hits us in the face with it and if you try to get in the back seat away from where everyone can see what is being done to you, he gets angry and hits you harder. He makes sure everyone can see what is happening to you, he *wants* us to see each other getting a *paliza* (beating).¹⁰³

Vendor 2 (male): Hitting a man in the face. Seeing that. (Vendor 2 grimaces and shakes his head.) They make us lose respect for ourselves and for each other. You have to keep your mouth shut while they do these things to you and your friends. You have to

be...(Vendor 2 covers his mouth with his hand). That stays with you a long time.¹⁰⁴

Vendor 3 (female): That's hard for all of us, to see that and know that we cannot move or say anything. But it's harder for them, the men. To have to watch each other being humiliated. It demoralizes the men...all of us.¹⁰⁵

Members of the gang also regularly use vendors' piles of merchandise on the ground to hide the individual doses of cocaine that they sell within the market, as shown in Figure 2.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]¹⁰⁶

Vendors understood this as further insult to their efforts to make an honest living:

How are you going to justify taking a man's work – the place where he earns the food for his family – and use it to sell *vicio* [illegal drugs]? You can't. No one that respects you could justify it. We are disposable to everyone.¹⁰⁷

This is our work. Hiding the drugs in our merchandise, selling the drugs next to us – all of that is not only bad for us, because we are the ones that would suffer the consequences, it is also disrespectful to us as workers.¹⁰⁸

Verbal insults, humiliation woven into physical punishments, and forced complicity in drug trafficking are the social taxes incurred as part of victimization and which the conventional focus on physical offenses alone overlooks. But the racket's members also impose political domination by flaunting their co-optation of the state's local coercive apparatus: the police that patrol the

market. Vendors perceive these police officers as co-opted by receiving regular payments from the gang in exchange for warning them if anyone reports its illicit activities.¹⁰⁹ Figure 3 depicts this dynamic.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]¹¹⁰

The racket's coordinators leverage their co-optation of the police to make evident to the vendors how this power comes at the expense of the vendors' rights and citizenship. An older male vendor recounted during an interview how one day he had not sold enough to even "pay for my bus ride home."¹¹¹ Instead of threatening or using coercive force, the racket collector simply reminded him that he could not turn to the state for help:

"He smiled at me because they are all *descarados* [shameless]. And he said to me, 'Of course, you could call the police, but even if they show up, it's more likely that they work for us than that they'll work for you.'"¹¹²

When` physically assaulting vendors who fall behind on their weekly tribute, racket members will tauntingly tell them to "Call the police! Call the police!" – a reminder that this basic institutional resource to which the vendors are theoretically entitled to as citizens is, in practice, denied to them as part of the criminal actor's victimization within the market.¹¹³

Everyday Resistance to Criminal Victimization

Vendors resist their victimization. To resist material domination vendors appeal to the very asymmetry in power between themselves and their victimizers. When the racket's agents collect their weekly tribute, vendors deliver discourses that affirm the racket's authority and encourage them to be benevolent in their rule.¹¹⁴ As one vendor noted: "When it comes time to pay them the *vacuna* (vaccination, slang for the security tax) we have to become movie actors because it is better to have them as friends than as enemies."¹¹⁵ Through "acting" as resistance vendors confirm and challenge the authority of the racket's collectors. During the focus groups several vendors recited some of the "lines" they use to this end:

You as the ones who see and know everything here must know that I haven't sold a thing in so long. So how could I have money to pay when no one is buying?¹¹⁶

Oh brother, you know better than I do that things have been tough this week. What can I do? What can I say?¹¹⁷

Well, nothing moves [in the market] without you saying it's okay. So can't you make people move their pockets and let loose some money here?¹¹⁸

Vendors noted that these scripts mitigate, but do not completely end, material domination:

So two or three of these little boys will arrive with their chests puffed out and tell us that it's time for our 'collaboration'. But how much you pay depends on the attitude one assumes with them. Without being rude...if you make them feel like men, then they might even let you go that day without paying.¹¹⁹

These performances are effective only *at the margins* of material taxation. When the racket collectors do not reject the performances, they allow the vendors to pay half or less of the tribute. Though the reduction is small, several vendors indicated that given their economic circumstances, it still represented a gain: “*algo es algo*” (it’s better than nothing).¹²⁰ But it is the ability to sometimes deny the criminal actors exactly what they demand that vendors see as more powerful than the marginal financial gain – a way to preserve their dignity in the face of victimization: “When you don’t give [the racket collectors] everything they want, you show them, you make them see that you are not some little dog following them and obeying them when they say ‘sit’”.¹²¹

Vendors use rhetorical tools to resist verbal insults by framing themselves *and* the racket as businesses. They in turn equalize their social status in the face of their victimizers’ efforts to denigrate their position in the social hierarchy:

I tell them that ‘no’ (when the racket’s collectors verbally insult the vendors). We are in the same situation. Working on the streets, out here where *nobody* cares about *either* of us. Both of us work hard to make a living, to feed our families and to survive. We are not that different.¹²²

Vendors resist offenses against their dignity as workers when the racket’s members attempt to hide illicit drugs in the vendors’ merchandise. The vendors indirectly remind the racket’s members that they too are business owners to be treated with respect:

Yes, they try to extend the *plaza* (name given to micro-territory used for the sale of illicit drugs) into our businesses. So we sometimes we find a little “package” that doesn’t belong in our things, and so with a lot of respect, we say: ‘*Jefe* [boss], the thing is, my food is at play here. Please help me and don’t hide this here.’ Or if they take a chair and start selling (drugs) from right next to where I’m working, we say, ‘Oh, I’m so sorry, but I need the chair back for my customers.’ And then you take it and they don’t have anywhere to sit. You have to make them feel

uncomfortable. But also, in a respectful manner, we make our businesses get respected too.¹²³

They screw us by hiding drugs in our merchandise. They begin to sit around, and we see them...[crack] pipes, [crack] rocks, [crack] pipes...all mixed in our merchandise. And inside [of ourselves] we say, 'Oh god, not again! People using us, disrespecting us because we're disposable.' But on the outside, we have to walk carefully and do the dance. So we say, 'Look, *muchachos* [boys], the thing is that everyone here, you and me, we're all working. And *this* is my business. And if I get caught with your product, then it's *my* business that suffers.'¹²⁴

Finally, though police complicity with the racket's criminal coordinators prevents vendors from enlisting it to support their resistance, vendors invoke their relationship with other parts of the state to resist political domination. They do not report their victimization because they fear that the criminal group will find out, and that drawing attention to their victimization would further enable political authorities to depict the vendors as a source of criminality and insecurity. As one vendor indicated: "The state is always looking for reasons to paint us as criminals, even though we are not – we are only *surrounded* by them."¹²⁵ The informal and technically illegal nature of the vendors' work thus further discourages engaging other parts of the state as part of their resistance.¹²⁶

But the vendors do draw on aspects of the polity to resist political domination by invoking the frames and rhetoric of the ideal-type citizenship found in the Colombian Constitution. This exemplifies what Scheingold calls the "myth of rights," wherein the belief in the rights that the state formally grants, but denies in practice, can still provide a powerful catalyst for political mobilization.¹²⁷ Vendors invoke this belief in carefully worded discourses and orchestrated actions to make clear to the racket's members that the vendors reject the notion that they are second-class citizens. As one vendor noted:

They [the racket coordinators] tell us that we are trash, like what we sell. But we show them. We mobilize, we talk about rights, about the Constitution – our bible. We celebrate it while we work, talk about it, laugh about it, so that they hear us when they’re coming to collect their money.¹²⁸

I regularly observed resistance to political domination enacted through strategic everyday discussions among handfuls of vendors about their constitutionally guaranteed right to work. One morning three neighboring vendors at the market were discussing whether the city’s Public Space office would take away their merchandise to what the vendors sarcastically refer to as the “North Pole” – a far-off warehouse where they must pay large fines to retrieve their wares. The vendors complained that the legal code gave Public Space agents this power was in practice a “law that allows the state to steal.”¹²⁹ The three vendors then noticed one of the racket’s members crossing the street and approaching. “*Aquí viene el duro*” (Here comes the tough one), one of the vendors whispered. At that point I expected the conversation to end, but instead the vendors began talking more loudly about how the trip to the North Pole was another example of how Public Space did not respect their “Constitutional rights as citizens of this county.” A second stated loudly: “We all have rights, no matter how we earn [money] for our *pansito* (bread), *carajo* (fuck)!” The third vendor replied: “Even though we may not look like it, we are also citizens!”¹³⁰ I later asked one of these vendors why they carried on this way in front of a member of the racket. He answered: “So that they remember that they are not the only authorities here.”¹³¹ Far from an organic extension of a conversation, the dialogue had been a strategic declaration meant to remind the victimizer that the vendors rejected political domination as part of their victimization.

Other forms of resistance to political domination include large-scale events, such as rallies that the vendors organize within the market to highlight their vulnerability to displacement by local authorities. Light posts and cement walls in the market become canvases for politically-infused

images that reaffirm the vendors' citizenship, from tattered Colombian flags to laminated news clippings discussing previous rallies. What is analytically notable is that these regularly take place on Saturdays – the very day the racket's collectors tax the vendors. When I asked one of the rally's leaders why they would do so, she replied: "We don't have guns. We don't have politicians. But we do have dignity and rights and this (pointing to her head), and so you need to use it to make them (the racket's collectors) realize that they haven't cornered us – that we are citizens."¹³²

Conclusion

The conventional focus on crime as an act obscures from view the dynamic political interactions that make up the process of criminal victimization. To begin to analyze this process I developed a theoretical framework to identify, conceptualize and theorize this contentious political struggle as victims and criminals pursue and resist power. I illustrated the framework's analytic utility through an analysis of the victimization of informal vendors under a criminal protection racket in Medellin. The argument and empirical findings should motivate an expansion and deepening of the research agenda on the politics of criminal victimization, and also inform related policy efforts to stem crime and advance the rule of law.

Criminal actors do not rely solely on coercive force to carry out and sustain victimization. They instead combine efforts to extract material rents with strategies of social and political domination. The coordinators and enforcers of the criminal racket that I studied regularly and publicly insulted and humiliated vendors in ways that echoed the broader social stigmatization of their victims. By making clear to vendors that they had the capacity to deny them access to the basic but fundamental right to state-sponsored security, members of the criminal racket underscored the low intensity citizenship to which the vendors are relegated. The traditional focus

on the coercive capacity of criminal actors should thus be broadened to include the range of other behaviors and practices they can pursue as part of criminal victimization.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, victims exercise agency in the face of victimization. Vendors used strategic and carefully worded discourses to reduce some of the material burden of criminal taxation, and to contest the disparagement of their social and economic status. Vendors met efforts to denigrate their citizenship with indirect but public expressions of political voice, including choreographed conversations, open-air rallies, and the display of political materials – all attesting to the vendors’ belief in their status as citizens with formally accorded rights. Everyday resistance is not a panacea for victimization, but it does enable victims to negotiate particular dimensions of their victimization and to secure some material and non-material gains.

A key task for future research is to conceptualize and theorize the range of strategies victims pursue in response to criminal victimization. We might use Albert Hirschman’s exit, voice, and loyalty framework¹³³ as a point of departure to analyze why populations facing similar forms of victimization pursue responses that vary sharply in kind. For example, since the start of Mexico’s war on drugs in 2006, some business owners in Ciudad Juarez have opted for the “exit” option – closing their shops and migrating to the United States – in the face of violent protection rackets coordinated by drug cartels. Other business owners in the same city have chosen to exercise “voice” by working with government authorities to weaken the rackets in the micro-zones where their businesses were located.¹³⁴ Meanwhile businesses in parts of Eastern Europe seem to have favored “loyalty” to rackets that offered security and order.¹³⁵ Such puzzling cross-regional and subnational variation offers fertile terrain to study why victims select distinct responses when confronted with similar forms of criminal victimization. This could help policymakers to develop interventions that foster the conditions under which victims are more likely to collaborate with the

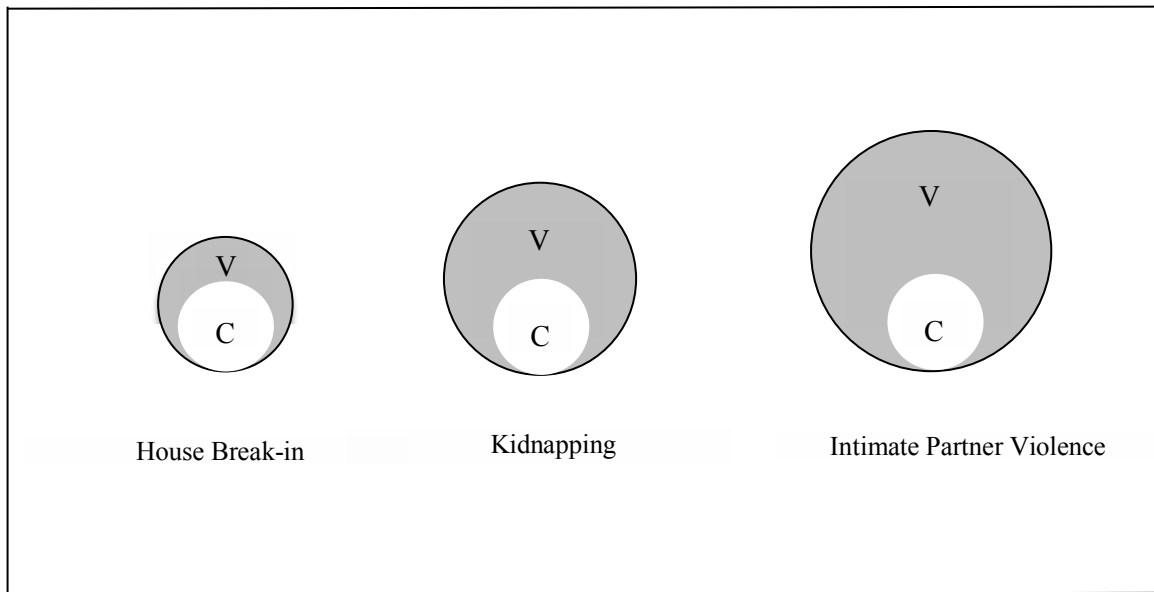
state to stem crime given that the lack of public-private collaboration is a common challenge to advancing the rule of law across much of the developing world.¹³⁶

If resistance is the way that victims of crime exercise voice, then a second challenge for future research is to explain why resistance can vary in vivid ways. A first step here is to develop typologies that capture the theoretically salient differences across distinct forms of resistance. While the informal vendors analyzed in this article engaged in everyday negotiations with their criminal victimizers, in parts of El Salvador, victims of protection rackets coordinated by powerful criminal gangs have enlisted elements of the police to carry out extra-judicial violence against their victimizers.¹³⁷ By contrast, victims of protection rackets coordinated by drug trafficking organizations in Mexico's violence-plagued state of Michoacán have established sizeable armed self-defense groups to resist victimization.¹³⁸ Why does resistance sometimes entail large-scale collective mobilization, and other times consist primarily of actions by individuals and small groups of victims? Why do some victims mobilize to end their victimization while others seek only to negotiate different aspects of their subordination at the hands of criminal actors? In addition to differentiating forms of resistance by the intent of the victims and their level of collective action, we also need to consider variation in the role of the state. One strategy here is to relax the theoretical framework's scope condition regarding the availability of the state to support resistance. Victims do not always face zero-sum situations where they must either turn to the state to receive support or directly confront their victimizers. As historian Elizabeth Dale argues, during the late 18th century construction of the coercive and punitive capacities of the U.S. state, citizens appealed to aspects of the emerging formal criminal justice system that favored their interests and rejected those that did not, but more often combined both with "popular justice" against their criminal victimizers.¹³⁹ What explains variation in the role the state plays in the distinct forms of

resistance that victims pursue?¹⁴⁰ Research along this line could inform policy efforts to prevent the rise of vigilantism and other types of extra-judicial violence in settings of intense crime and insecurity.¹⁴¹

My analysis also highlights the need to further explore the relationship between different forms of resistance, the targets of resistance, and the conditions under which resistance works or does not. Can victims pursue both violent and non-violent forms of resistance against the same criminal actor? Do victims engage in everyday and other forms of resistance against the state given the prevalence of both lethal and non-lethal forms of criminal behavior by police forces in diverse settings, from Chicago to Rio de Janeiro? Finally, further study is needed to identify and theorize the ways in which criminal actors respond to distinct forms of resistance. When do criminal actors capitulate in the face of resistance by victims? And when do they opt to fight back? Research along these lines will help to advance our understanding of criminal victimization and related concerns in the growing study of the politics of crime.

Figure 1. Conceptual Decoupling: Crime as an Act, Victimization as a Process

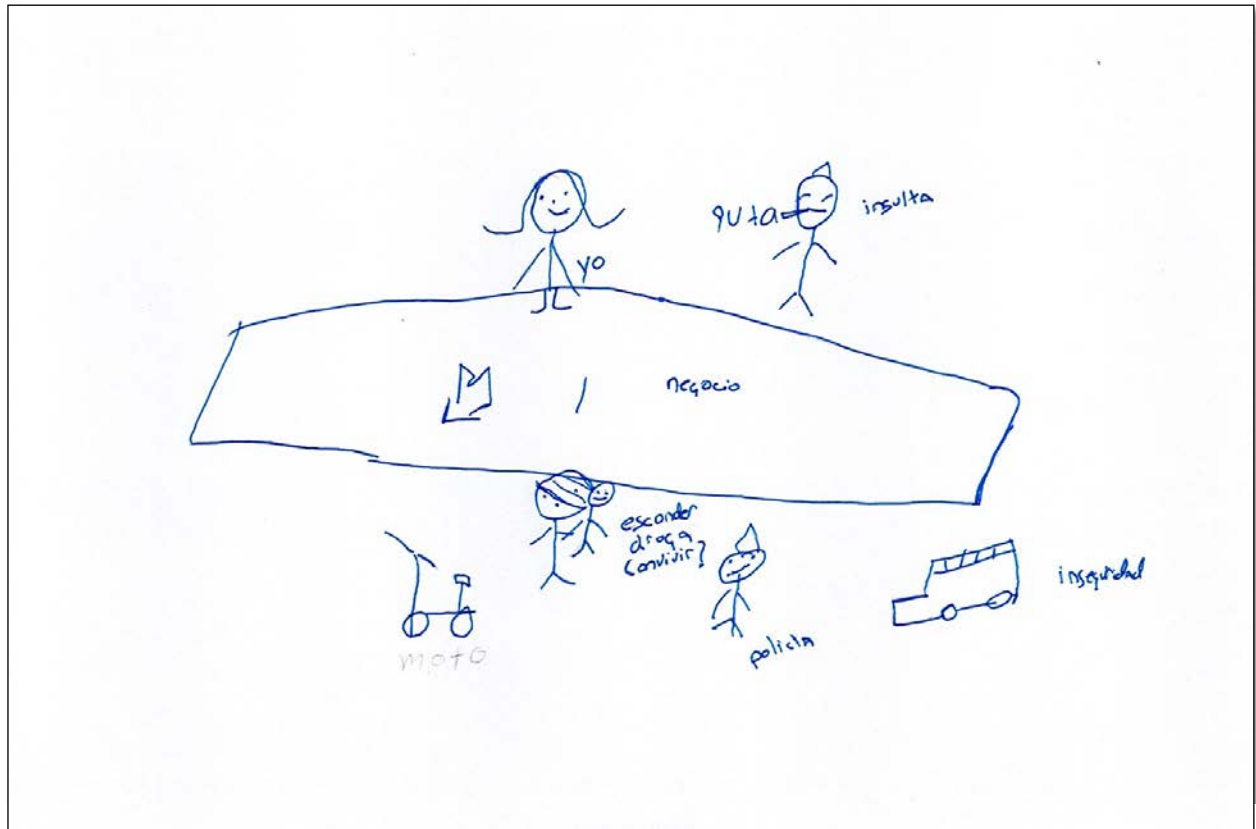


Note: C = criminal act and V = process of victimization.

Table 1. Strategies and Practices of Domination

Type	Strategy	Practice
Material	Extract rents	- Threat or use of coercive physical force
Social	Limit contestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Insult- Humiliate- Invoke status quo values and norms
Political	Undermine the perceived legitimacy of grievances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Rationalize

Figure 2. Focus Group Participant Drawing #1



Note: This vendor, an approximately thirty-five-year-old female, explained her drawing to the focus group in the following way: “This is me [*yo*] and my business [*negocio*]. What generates insecurity (*inseguridad*) for me? Lots of things. The police [*policia*], the cars and motorcycles [*moto*] that speed by so fast. But the worst is when they (Convivir) make me hide their drugs [*esconder droga*]. And when they do it they insult [*insulta*] me, say ugly things to me [*puta*, Spanish slang for “whore”].

Figure 3. Focus Group Participant Drawing #2



Note: This vendor, an approximately forty-year-old woman that sold used clothing, explained her drawing in the following way: “If I see a thief [*delincuente*] and tell the police [*policia*], then the police should take him away [*se debe llevar*] to jail [*CAI*]. But instead they will go around the corner and make a deal [*se arreglan*] where the police take off the handcuffs [*esposas*] in exchange for some money. And if the thief offers enough money, the police will tell him who reported him [*sapo*], and they will come to where I am working [*trabajando*] and kill me [*me matan*].”

¹ See Tilly 1985 on protection rackets as forms of institutional rule comparable to states. For analyses of protection rackets in Russia, see Varese 2001 and Volkov 2002, and in Italy, see Gambetta 1996.

² This is a pseudonym used for security reasons.

³ Interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_1630), Medellin, July 6, 2016.

⁴ Interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_1010), Medellin, July 1, 2016.

⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2014, 22.

⁶ Casas-Zamora 2013, 31.

⁷ CAF, Development Bank of Latin America 2014, 211.

⁸ Baliki 2013, 3.

⁹ Vargas 2016; Wacquant 2008.

¹⁰ Barnes 2017, 980.

¹¹ O'Donnell 1993.

¹² Focus group participant (MDE_FG1_911), Medellin, July 6, 2016.

¹³ Oxford Analytica 2016.

¹⁴ Shaw 2016.

¹⁵ Frye 2002; Gambetta 1996; Varese 2001; Volkov 2002.

¹⁶ Arias 2017; Barnes 2017; Durán-Martínez 2018; Kalyvas 2015; Lessing 2018; Moncada 2016; Ungar 2002; Yashar 2018.

¹⁷ Moser and McIlwaine 2004, 3 - 4.

¹⁸ Ley 2017; Trelles and Carreras 2012.

¹⁹ Carreras 2013; Malone 2010; and Pérez 2003.

²⁰ Bateson 2012.

²¹ Bellows and Miguel 2009; Blattman 2009; Voors et al. 2012.

²² Goldstein 2003, 22-43; see also Godoy 2004, 623 and Smith (forthcoming).

²³ Bateson's 2013 study on vigilantism in Guatemala shows that people use the skills and networks forged during wartime violence to establish order in contemporary contexts of crime. But this too overlooks the political interactions between victims and criminals beyond violence.

²⁴ Lasswell 1936, 3.

²⁵ See Warren 1999 for a conceptual analysis of politics.

²⁶ Dahl 1963, 72.

²⁷ Nicholson 1981. As Gal 2002, 78 argues: "Similarly, the "personal is political" in part because private institutions such as families often operate, like the polity, through conflict, power hierarchies, and violence."

²⁸ Pateman 1988.

²⁹ Easton 1953, 129-34.

³⁰ Gaventa 1982.

³¹ Scott 1985.

³² Arjona 2016; Mampilly 2012.

³³ Moncada 2013.

³⁴ Arjona 2017 similarly analyzes civilian-rebel interactions as political.

³⁵ Dignan 2004, 16.

³⁶ Von Hentig, 1948.

³⁷ Von Hentig, 1948.

³⁸ Mukherjee 1983, 120.

³⁹ Critical criminologists and critical race scholars analyze the intersection between crime and power relations. Rios (2011, xv) shows that applying labels such as "deviant" to young people of color fosters a "spiral of hypercriminalization and punishment." Van Cleve (2016) argues that racial inequities are codified into the interpretation and enactment of legal norms in the U.S. criminal justice system. And Costa Vargas (2018) investigates the everyday criminalization of race in the U.S. and Brazil.

⁴⁰ Because laws are derived from social norms and the distribution of power within society, state-sponsored definitions of crime are not objective interpretations of right and wrong, but instead socially-informed judgments of what is acceptable and unacceptable to those in power.

⁴¹ The focus on one-time criminal acts within existing research also reflects significant challenges in systematically collecting granular data on criminal processes. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for highlighting this point.

⁴² Ochberg 1978.

⁴³ Triantafyllou et al. 2016, 2.

⁴⁴ See Arjona 2017 for an analogous approach to the study of civilian-rebel group relations.

⁴⁵ Levi 1988.

⁴⁶ Levi 1998, 13.

⁴⁷ Bachrach and Baratz 1962 developed this by drawing on Schattschneider's 1960 notion of the "mobilization of bias."

⁴⁸ Bratton and Haynie 1999; Hall and Wayman 1990.

⁴⁹ Scott 1990, 188.

⁵⁰ Scott 1990, 198.

⁵¹ Boss 2002, 161.

⁵² WHO 2005, xiii.

⁵³ WHO 2005, 37.

⁵⁴ Acts of social domination may also elevate the social status of the actors engaging in them. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

⁵⁵ Steven 1974, 11.

⁵⁶ Wedeen 1999.

⁵⁷ Gaventa 1982.

⁵⁸ Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994. On the normalization of violence under projects of domination, see Fanon 1965.

⁵⁹ Burt 1980.

⁶⁰ As researchers of IPV argue, cases of violence against women reside within “larger patterns of male domination and control of women.” See Anderson and Umberson 2001, 538.

⁶¹ Kelley 1993.

⁶² Arjona 2016.

⁶³ O'Brien 1996.

⁶⁴ Scott 1989, 37.

⁶⁵ Rubin 1996. See Moyn 2017 for a critique of Scott's depiction of the relationship between subordinates and the state as zero-sum.

⁶⁶ Researchers are starting to study these aspects of “criminal governance.” See Arias 2017; Arias and Barnes 2017; Magaloni et al. 2015; and Penglase 2014.

⁶⁷ Arias 2017, 6; Denyer-Willis 2015, 7-8; Holston 2008.

⁶⁸ Wacquant 2008.

⁶⁹ Heise 1998.

⁷⁰ See Alves 2018 on the victimization of Afro-Brazilians by both criminal and state actors, and Brinks 2007 on how informal norms explain state violence against marginalized populations in Latin America.

⁷¹ Van Cleve 2016.

⁷² Varese 2014, 350.

⁷³ Volkov, 35.

⁷⁴ Gambetta 1993; Volkov 2002; Varese 2001; see also Frye 2002.

⁷⁵ Gambetta 1993, 17. The demand for protection can also emerge from state behavior, as when states classify markets or goods as illicit (Gambetta, Chapter 9), or when predatory (Frye 2002) or excessive (Johnson et al. 1997, 160) state regulation fosters informality.

⁷⁶ Gambetta 1993, 9 notes that extortionists may eventually build protection rackets to capitalize on demand for order from victims.

⁷⁷ Medellin is divided into sixteen such administrative jurisdictions.

⁷⁸ The term Convivir is an acronym for *Cooperativas de Seguridad Rural* (Cooperatives for Rural Security).

⁷⁹ On uneven state formation in Colombia, see Centeno 2002; López-Alves 2000; and Soifer 2015.

⁸⁰ *El Tiempo*. See: <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-375992>. Accessed on March 14, 2017; *Razón Pública*. “2011: Las Guerras de Álvaro Uribe.” December 19, 2011. Available at: <http://www.razonpublica.com/index.php/politica-y-gobierno-temas-27/2626-2011-las-guerras-de-alvaro-uribe.html>. Accessed on April 13, 2017.

⁸¹ *Semana*. See: <http://www.semana.com/cartas/articulo/amnistia-refuta-uribe-velez/30889-3>. Accessed on March 14, 2017.

⁸² Moncada 2016, Chapter 3.

⁸³ Bargent, James. “The Legacy of Colombia’s Vigilante Security: The Convivir.” *Insight Crime*. May 20, 2015. Available at: <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/the-legacy-of-colombia-vigilante-security-the-convivir>. Accessed on March 14, 2017.

⁸⁴ *El Tiempo*. “Miembros de ‘Convivir’ de Medellín Ganan un Millón de Pesos Mensuales.” August 12, 2014. Available at: <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-14369716>. Accessed on July 14, 2017.

⁸⁵ Author interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_1010), July 1, 2016, Medellín.

⁸⁶ This *Oficina del Valle de Aburrá* is an outgrowth of the former armed wing of Medellín drug cartel called the *Oficina de Envigado*.

⁸⁷ Based on the 2016 exchange rate, 2,000 Colombian pesos are approximately .68 U.S. cents. With approximately 400 vendors, this translates into nearly \$290 weekly or about \$1,100 monthly.

⁸⁸ Arjona (forthcoming).

⁸⁹ Przeworski and Teune 1970, Chapters 5 and 6.

⁹⁰ Vendors are essentially caught between two orders: a formal legal one and an informal criminal one. On “legal plurality,” see de Sousa Santos (2002, Chapter 3).

⁹¹ Gerring 2007, 232.

⁹² See Kapiszewski et al. 2015, Chapter 2 on the evolution of field research in political science, and Schatz 2013 on the role of ethnography in the study of power.

⁹³ Laimputtong 2011, 9.

⁹⁴ Cyr 2016.

⁹⁵ Coppedge 1999.

⁹⁶ Auyero and Berti 2015; Moser and McIlwaine 2004; Wood 2003.

⁹⁷ Kearney and Hyle 2004, 376.

⁹⁸ On ties between formal and informal economic sectors, see Portes and Sassen 1987. See Sassen 1991 on the global and local origin of informal markets.

⁹⁹ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_735), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Focus group participant (MDE_FG2_720), Medellin, July 6, 2016.

¹⁰¹ Focus group participant (MDE_FG8_1112), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹⁰² Focus group participant (MDE_FG2_720), Medellin, July 6, 2016.

¹⁰³ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_406), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹⁰⁴ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_735), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_550), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_550), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_406), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Focus group participant (MDE_FG8_1112), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Focus group participant (MDE_FG5_30), Medellin, March 5, 2017.

¹¹⁰ Focus group participant (MDE_FG2_01), Medellin, July 6, 2016.

¹¹¹ Author interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_1010), Medellin, July 1, 2016.

¹¹² Author interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_1010), Medellin, July 1, 2016.

¹¹³ Author observations at informal vendor market, Medellin, Colombia, July 1-15, 2016. Also confirmed as a common practice during focus groups 1 and 2 with informal vendors on July 6, 2016, and focus groups 3 and 4 with informal vendors on March 5, 2017.

¹¹⁴ See Kaplan 2017 on civilian use of “rhetorical traps” in wartime contexts.

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- ¹¹⁵ Focus group participant (MDE_FG8_1112), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹¹⁶ Focus group participant (MDE_FG7_101), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹¹⁷ Focus group participant (MDE_FG7_1212), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹¹⁸ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_735), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹¹⁹ Focus group participant (MDE_FG6_45), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹²⁰ Focus group participant (IV_MDE_551), Medellin, July 3, 2016. Several vendors across multiple focus groups used variants of this phrasing.
- ¹²¹ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_550), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹²² Author interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_899), Medellin, July 6, 2016.
- ¹²³ Focus group participant (MDE_FG6_45), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹²⁴ Focus group participant (MDE_FG5_30), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹²⁵ Focus group participant (MDE_FG3_753), Medellin, March 5, 2017.
- ¹²⁶ On the political factors that shape when states refrain from enforcing the law, see Holland 2016.
- ¹²⁷ Scheingold 1974, Chapter 2; see also McAdam 1982 on how African-Americans asserted formally accorded rights to mobilize against structural racism, and Ewick and Silbey 1998 on everyday interpretations of laws as political acts.
- ¹²⁸ Author interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_911), Medellin, July 6, 2016.
- ¹²⁹ Several vendors across multiple focus groups used variants of this phrasing.
- ¹³⁰ Author observation at informal vendor market, Medellin, July 3, 2016.
- ¹³¹ Author interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_551), Medellin, July 3, 2016.
- ¹³² Author interview with informal vendor (IV_MDE_1010), Medellin, July 1, 2016.
- ¹³³ Hirschman 1970.
- ¹³⁴ Morales et al. 2014.
- ¹³⁵ See Moyn 2017 on why subordinate actors may not always resist hegemonic actors and Arjona 2017 for a useful conceptual typology of forms of civilian cooperation with rebels.

¹³⁶ Arias and Ungar 2009; Moncada 2009. See González 2017 on the relationship between policing and citizenship.

¹³⁷ Cruz 2010.

¹³⁸ *New York Times*. “Losing Faith in the State, Some Mexican Towns Quietly Break Away.” January 7, 2018.

¹³⁹ Dale 2011. Denyer-Willis 2015 and Penglase 2014 identify analogous dynamics in the favelas of Brazil, as does Smith (forthcoming) in South African townships.

¹⁴⁰ Future studies should also examine whether and how coercive government institutions located at different levels of the state influence the feasibility and prevalence of resistance to criminal victimization. Durán-Martínez (2018) argues that the cohesiveness or fragmentation of the state’s coercive apparatus explains patterns of criminal violence, while Daly 2015 and Lessing 2018 analyze the implications of state strategies toward armed non-state actors.

¹⁴¹ See Moncada 2017 on the concept of vigilantism.

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