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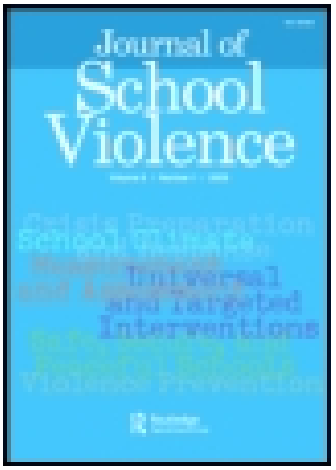

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At-School Victimization and Violence Exposure Assessed in a National Household Survey of Children and Youth

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This national household telephone survey of youth and parents assessed exposure to a broad range of at-school victimizations among a representative sample of 3,391 children and youth ages 5 to 17. Nearly half the sample (48%) had been exposed to at least one form of victimization at school during the past year (in 2011), most of which was intimidation/bullying (29.8%). Fourteen percent had been assaulted at school in the past year, 13% had witnessed an assault, 3.2% had been sexually harassed, and 0.4%, had been sexually assaulted at school. Twelve percent had an at-school victimization injury in the past year, and 6% had missed a day or more of school as a result of their at-school victimization. Some victimizations, such as weapon assault and sexual assault, were less prevalent at school than out of school, others, such as intimidation and sexual harassment, were more common.

KEYWORDS bullying, theft, sexual assault, harassment, vandalism

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INTRODUCTION

High-profile media stories about school shootings and school bullying have raised public concerns about crime, violence, and abuse in the school environment. These stories have sparked interest in such issues as how much crime exposure actually occurs at school, which children are most vulnerable, and what effects crime victimization and exposure have on the educational environment.

School victimization encompasses a range of experiences broader than bullying including assault, sexual victimizations, property offenses, and crimes against the school such as vandalism and bomb threats. School bullying and its prevalence, risk factors, and outcomes have received the most attention (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). But some research has also focused on other specific types of victimization within schools including sexual victimization (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen, 1996; Tillyer, Wilcox, & Gialopsos, 2010) and vandalism (Goldstein & Goldstein, 1996). Less research has examined a broader range of victimizations that occur in school (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005) and their interrelations. Some of the school victimization literature has included witnessing of violence and threats against the school itself because these can engender fear and have been shown to have negative consequences (Brock, Nickerson, O'Malley, & Chang, 2006).

A variety of sources collect national information about school violence in the United States, including surveys of principals, teachers, and young people themselves (Robers, Kemp, & Truman, 2013). It is generally recognized that the most thorough inventory of exposure comes from student surveys, because many victimizations might not be reported to officials. But while several victim surveys of school violence do exist, all of them are fragmented in certain respects. For example, the most comprehensive assessment, the School Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), is limited to youth ages 12 to 17. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is also confined to high-school youth, and has just a few topics, among them weapon threat, fighting, and sexual assault (Grunbaum et al., 2004). The National Adolescent Health Survey (ADD health) also collects some information on victimization in school but, like the NCVS and YRBS, is also confined to older youth. The 1993 National Household and Education Survey, School Safety and Discipline component (NHES-SSD) had a broader age range (Grades 3 through 12), but a somewhat restricted set of victimizations, assault, theft, and robbery, but no sexual victimizations, bullying, or gang attacks (Schreck, Miller, & Gibson, 2003). Other national surveys have been confined to only single topics such as bullying (Agnich & Miyazaki, 2013; Molcho et al., 2009; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009) or sexual harassment (Bryant, 1993).

The National Survey of Children Exposed to Violence (NatSCEV) is a joint project of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Center for Disease Control intended to assess victimization in a comprehensive fashion. It includes children of all ages and also covers a range of victimizations that includes property crimes, intimidation (bullying type victimizations), sexual harassment, bias offenses and sex crimes, witnessing assaults against others, and crimes against schools themselves, such as bomb threats. The survey provides a more comprehensive inventory of school victimizations than has been previously available over the full range of school-age children. It also has the capability to compare in-school and out-of-school victimization. There are also measures that allow more detail about the impact of school victimization than has typically been available in previous studies.

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Specific Aims

This study was designed to report on the following:

1. The single-year prevalence of a range of victimizations at school and the proportion of each victimization type that happened in school as opposed to out of school.
2. The characteristics of children associated with higher rates of in-school victimization.
3. The consequences of in school victimization in terms of injury and missed school days and the reporting of victimizations to authorities.

METHOD

The current analysis used the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence II (NatSCEV II), which was designed to obtain incidence and prevalence estimates of childhood victimizations including victimizations that occur at school. NatSCEV II consisted of a national sample of 4,503 children and youth ages 1 month to 17 years in 2011. For this analysis, we restricted the sample to a subset of 3,391 school age children ages 5 to 17 for whom we had information on victimization at school. The employees of a survey research firm conducted telephone interviews. The foundation for the design was a nationwide sampling frame of residential telephone numbers from which a sample of telephone households was drawn by random-digit dialing. In order to represent the growing number of households that rely exclusively or mostly on cell phones, two additional samples were obtained: an address-based sample ($n = 750$) and a small national sample of cellular telephone numbers drawn from random-digit dialing methodology ($n = 31$). A full report on NatSCEV II methodology is available in Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, and Hamby (2013).

A multistage sequential process of weighting was used. This weighting process corrected for study design and demographic variations in nonresponse. In particular, the weights adjusted for differing probabilities of household selection based on sampling frames; variations in within-household selection resulting from varying numbers of eligible children across households; and differences in sample proportions according to age, gender, race/ethnicity, income, census region, number of adults and children in household, and phone status (cell only, mostly cell, other) corresponding to the 2010 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

Procedure

A brief interview was initially conducted with an adult caregiver to obtain family demographic information. One child was then randomly selected for participation in the survey by selecting the child with the most recent birthday from all eligible children living in a household. The main telephone interview was conducted with the child if the selected child was between 10 and 17 years old. For a selected child under age 10, the interview was conducted with the caregiver who "is most familiar with the child's daily routine and experiences."

Respondents were paid $20 for their participation and were assured complete confidentiality. The interviews, averaging 55 minutes, were conducted in English or Spanish. A clinical member of the research team trained in telephone crisis counseling contacted respondents who disclosed a situation of serious threat or ongoing victimization. This clinician remained in contact with the respondent until the situation was appropriately attended to locally. The Institutional Review Board of the University of New Hampshire approved all procedures.

Response Rates

The cooperation rate (the percentage of contacted respondents who completed the survey) and response rate (the percentage of all eligible respondents who completed the survey) were 60% and 40%, respectively, averaged across collection modalities. Other details about the methodology are available in Finkelhor et al. (2013). These rates are acceptable by current survey research standards (Babbie, 2007; Keeter, Kennedy, Dimock, Best, & Craighill, 2006; Kohut, Keeter, Doherty, Dimock, & Christian, 2012). Notwithstanding the steady declines in response rates that have occurred over the last three decades and pronounced drop in recent years (Atrostic, Bates, Burt, & Silberstein, 2001; Curtin, Presser, & Singer, 2005; Keeter et al., 2006; Singer, 2006), studies find that accuracy remains high when appropriate sample and design weights are applied (Keeter et al., 2006). Although

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the potential for response bias remains a consideration, several studies have shown no meaningful association between response rates and nonresponse bias (Curtin, Presser, & Singer, 2000; Groves, 2006; Keeter, Miller, Kohut, Groves, & Presser, 2000; Merkle & Edelman, 2002).

Measures

Victimization at schools: Characteristics and outcomes

To assess victimization at schools, this survey used 37 of the 54 forms of victimizations reported on in the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire along with location information. We aggregated experiences into 10 domains of victimization: theft, vandalism, robbery, assault, assault with a weapon, intimidation, sexual harassment/flashing, sexual assault, witnessing assault, and crime against the school.

Theft, vandalism, and robbery were all measured with single items (see Appendix for items). Any property victimizations perpetrated by juvenile siblings were excluded from the analysis. Dichotomous variables were constructed indicating whether the child or youth had experienced any of the following seven victimization types in the past year (2011): any assault (12 items); weapon assault (12 items); intimidation/bullying (four items; items did not ascertain whether a power differential existed between offender and victim and repetition was not required); sexual assault (four items); sexual harassment or flashing (two items); witnessing violence (three items); and crime against the school (two items). All victimization items are listed in the Appendix.

Each respondent was asked if they (or their child had) experienced each form of victimization in the child's lifetime, and if yes, if it happened in the last year. More than one victimization type could be reported as part of a single victimization incident. If the respondent endorsed the initial question, they were asked as a series of follow-up questions about the most recent episode for each type of victimization. Thus we have information only on the most recent episode for each type of victimization and not on all victimizations a child may have experienced of that type. Follow-up questions for each form of victimization provided additional information about the victimization including the location, if the child missed school as a result, who perpetrated the victimization, if they were injured, and if they sought medical attention. Follow-up questions also asked if the child spoke with someone other than friends or family about what happened—someone like a counselor or minister who tried to help the child deal with it, and whether the incident was known by a teacher, counselor or other adult at the school. For a complete list of victimization questions see Finkelhor et al. (2013) and for a complete list of follow-up questions see Finkelhor, Vanderminden, Turner, Shattuck, and Hamby (2014).

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Community crime and disorder

A measure of community crime and disorder, including both physical and social aspects of disorder, was created for the current survey. Respondents were asked nine questions regarding conditions in their neighborhood and school in the past year. In this analysis we only include the seven items related to neighborhood crime and disorder and have excluded two school-related items. These questions asked if the child had: witnessed street drug sales (11%), witnessed an arrest (15%), lived in a neighborhood with gangs (9%), seen gang graffiti (11%), witnessed police raiding a building or blocking off a crime scene (9%), been prohibited by parents from playing outside because of crime (4%), or lived in a neighborhood characterized by physical deterioration (3%). A complete list of the community crime and disorder questions can be found in (Turner, Shattuck, Hamby, & Finkelhor, 2013).

Demographics

Demographic information was obtained in the initial parent interview and included the child's gender (49% female and 51% male); age (38% 5–9 years, 30% 10–13 years, and 33% 14–17 years); sociocultural group identification (coded into four groups: White non-Hispanic (57%), Black non-Hispanic (15%), other race non-Hispanic (10%), and Hispanic heritage (19%); and residence type (categorized in five groups: large city, 20%; suburb of large city, 22%; small city, 16%; town, 10%; small town, 21%; and rural, 10%). In addition, information was obtained on socioeconomic status (SES), family structure, and child disability status. SES was a composite based on the sum of the standardized household income and standardized parental education (for the parent with the highest education) scores, which was then restandardized. In this analysis SES was coded into three groups: low (more than 1 *SD* below mean; 20%), medium (between −1 and +1 *SD* of mean; 62%) and high (more than 1 *SD* above mean; 18%). Family structure, defined by the composition of the household, was categorized into four groups: children living with (a) two biological or adoptive parents (58%), (b) one biological parent plus partner (spouse or nonspouse; 7%), (c) a single biological parent (30%), and (d) another caregiver (5%). Disability status was coded as a composite dichotomous measure reflecting the presence of a disability (25%). The child disability composite included diagnosis of a disorder, child receiving special services at school (IEP, 504, special education) or taking medication associated with emotional, behavioral, or learning problem. Diagnoses included: posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, learning disorders, oppositional/defiant disorder or conduct disorder, autism, pervasive developmental disorder or Asperger's, a developmental delay, a physical disability, or "another" disorder.

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Data Analysis

The analyses for this study included descriptives (weighted percentages), along with chi-square and bivariate logistic regression analyses. Descriptive statistics are presented indicating the prevalence rates of each type of victimization and the proportion of violence that happened at schools. Risk factors for at-school victimization were analyzed using a chi-square analysis and are presented as weighted percentages. Logistic regression was used to determine the likelihood of victimization at school by each community crime and disorder item and each at-school victimization aggregate. These analyses were used to determine the likelihood of at-school victimization among children exposed to each type of community crime and disorder and among those exposed to other types of at-school victimization. These analyses are not meant to show causal connections, nor can we be certain of their temporal ordering, but are simply meant to illustrate the association among the conditions and experiences. For each of the logistic regression analysis, each item was entered into a separate model predicting each type of victimization. Bivariate logistic regression models were used instead of chi-square analyses in order to calculate odds and risk ratios. Since these models present bivariate relations and do not include multiple independent variables, most regression diagnostics (e.g., multicollinearity, model specification) were not applicable. To adjust for outcome incidence, all odds ratios were converted to approximate the risk ratio using the conversion method recommended by Zhang (1998). Consequences and characteristics of at-school victimization are presented (in Table 1) as weighted percentages, reflecting the percentage of children exposed to each type of at-school victimization who indicated that the at-school incident had each consequence (injury, missed school, medical treatment, counselor, school authority knows) or characteristic (adult perpetrator).

TABLE 1 Comparison of NatSCEVII[a,b] Rates of At-School Victimization to NCVS[c] for Children 12 and Over

	Total		Theft		Violent victimization		Serious violent victimization	
	NatSCE VII	NCVS	NatSCE VII	NCVS	NatSCE VII	NCVS	NatSCE VII	NCVS
Total prevalence	24.7	4.9	5.1	2.6	19.0	2.4	4.6	0.4
Ages 12–14	27.2	5.5	5.2	2.1	23.2	3.4	6.4	0.6
Ages 15–18	22.2	4.4	4.9	3.0	14.9	1.4	2.9	0.2

[a]NatSCEVII includes children ages 12-17 and reflects past-year victimization. [b]Only NatSCEVII items comparable to NCV items are included in this table (see Appendix for a complete list). [c]NCVS includes children ages 12–18 and reflects incidence of victimizations occurring the past year.

RESULTS

Among children 5 to 17 years old, 48%, indicated exposure to at least one form of victimization at school in the past year (see Table 2). The most frequent exposure was intimidation/bullying (29.8%). In addition, 13.9% had been assaulted at school in the past year, 12.9% had witnessed violence, 3.2% had been sexually harassed, and 0.4%, or about one in 250, had been sexually assaulted at school. Among children exposed to victimization at school, 37% experienced one form, 25% experienced two, 16% experienced three, 10% experienced four, and 12.1% experienced five or more forms of victimizations. Forms of victimizations refer to individual victimization questions (see the appendix for a complete list), not to aggregate types.

Table 2 also shows the past year victimization rates for all environments, both in and out of school, which allowed us to calculate the proportion of victimized children who had at least one of their victimizations in the

TABLE 2 Prevalence Rates of Victimization Generally, Within School, and by Age at School for Children Ages 5–17 ($N = 3{,}391$)

Type of victimization	Prevalence		Percent occurred at school	Age		
	Total	At school		5–9 (Proxy)	10–13	14–17
Any victimization	74.4 [72.2, 76.4]	48.0 [45.6, 50.4]	64.5 [61.7, 67.3]	29.0	54.0***	64.5
Any assault	45.6 [43.1, 48.1]	13.9 [12.4, 15.6]	30.5 [27.3, 33.8]	10.5	17.3	14.8
Weapon assault	7.4 [6.1, 8.8]	1.8 [1.3, 2.6]	24.6 [17.7, 33.0]	1.5	2.0	2.0
Sexual assault	2.9 [2.1, 3.9]	0.4 [0.2, 0.9]	14.8 [7.2, 28.0]	0.0	0.4	0.8
Sexual harassment/ flashing	6.0 [5.0, 7.2]	3.2 [2.5, 4.2]	53.8 [44.0, 63.2]	0.3	2.1***	7.7
Intimidation	45.5 [42.8, 47.7]	29.8 [27.6, 32.1]	65.9 [62.1, 69.5]	19.6	38.1	34.1
Robbery	4.7 [3.7, 5.8]	2.3 [1.7, 3.0]	48.4 [37.7, 59.2]	2.4	3.0*	1.5
Theft	8.2 [7.4, 9.5]	3.7 [2.9, 4.7]	45.3 [37.7, 53.1]	2.8	4.1	4.5
Vandalism	7.9 [6.6, 9.6]	3.2 [2.4, 4.2]	40.0 [31.0, 49.7]	1.7	3.9	4.2
Witness violence	24.6 [22.5, 26.7]	12.9 [11.4, 14.6]	52.4 [47.5, 57.3]	1.3	13.3***	25.8
Crimes against the school	14.8 [13.2, 16.6]	14.8 [13.2, 16.6]	100	2.3	12.8***	31.0

Note. Age comparisons are between children ages 10-13 and children ages 14–17.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

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school environment. Among the children reporting any victimization anywhere, 65% reported that at least one of those victimizations happened at school. Intimidation was the specific victimization with the largest proportion occurring at school (65.9%). Crimes against the school could by definition only occur in that locale. Sexual assault was the offense with the lowest in-school proportion (14.8%), and weapon assault was also relatively low (24.6%).

Age comparisons are complicated by the fact that children under the age of 10 were represented by caregiver proxy reports. The lower prevalence of victimization in school among younger children likely reflected at least in part the parent's lack of knowledge of the victimization. Results indicate that children ages 10 to 17 had higher rates of exposure to all victimizations types at school than did children ages 5 to 9 (Table 2). Among the children ages 10 to 17 (all self-reports), some school victimizations (sexual harassment, witnessing violence, and crime against the school) were higher for the older youths (ages 14–17) compared to children ages 10 to 13. Children ages 10 to 13 had significantly higher rates of robbery than older youths; however, for all other types of victimizations in school, there were no significant age differences.

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Risk Factors

There were relatively few differences for in-school victimization by gender, race, SES, place type, and disability status. Males had higher rates of assault at school (18.5% vs. 9.1% for girls, $\chi^2 = 62.2$, $p < .001$) and lower rates of sexual harassment/flashing (2.3% vs. 4.2% for girls, $\chi^2 = 9.0$, $p < .05$). Assault with a weapon showed the most significant differences across demographic categories with African-American children ($\chi^2 = 35.1$, $p < .001$) and children living in large cities having higher rates ($\chi^2 = 19.8$, $p < .01$). Children in midlevel SES families had the highest rate of sexual harassment and flashing (4.1%) compared to the high (1.4%) and low SES groups (2.3%, $\chi^2 = 12.8$, $p < .01$). Children with disabilities had higher rates of assault (18.4% vs. 12% for children without disabilities, $\chi^2 = 24.8$, $p < .001$) and higher rates of intimidation/bullying (34.2% vs. 27.9% for children without disabilities, $\chi^2 = 13.4$, $p < .05$).

Children living in stepparent homes compared to two parent families reported higher rates of any assault (20.6% vs. 12.1%, $\chi^2 = 17.4$, $p < .05$) and weapon assault (6.4% vs. 1.3%, $\chi^2 = 40.0$, $p < .001$) at school. Differences in exposure to intimidation differed by family type as well: children living with stepparents (31.8%) and those living with single parents (34.7%) had the highest rates of exposure when compared to two-parent families (27.1%, $\chi^2 = 22.6$, $p < .05$).

Features of community crime and disorder were related to nearly all types of at-school victimization with the exception of robbery (Table 3). Relations were especially strong between victimization at school and drug sales. Among children who had seen a police raid or police block, the likelihood of an assault with a weapon at school increased by a factor of 5.4.

Exposure to one type of victimization at school increased the likelihood that a child or youth had exposures to other types as well. As summarized in Table 4, in most cases risk for an additional type of exposure at school was increased by a factor of 2 or more. For example, having a last-year theft at school was associated with a nine fold higher risk of vandalism or robbery at school and a 5.8 times higher risk of weapon assault. Exposure to crime against the school was associated with increased likelihood of all types of victimization at school and was especially strong for sexual harassment and witnessing violence. The only combinations for which this risk amplification did not occur were those involving sexual assault. This is likely due to the small number of children and youth who endorsed exposure to sexual assault at school in the past year.

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Consequences

Two out of five children who experienced assault or assault with a weapon at school reported having an injury as a result (Table 5). Among children with an in-school assault, physical intimidation or sexual assault, nearly 12% reported an injury as a result. This figure does not include victimizations that were not followed up with injury questions (e.g., witnessing violence, crime against the school, etc.). Among children with victimization injury in any locale, 39% reported that at least one happened at school. Among children with an in-school victimization injury ($n = 190$), 20% reported seeking medical treatment as a result.

Fourteen percent of children experiencing any type of in-school victimization during the year missed school as a result, or 6% ($n = 217$) of the entire sample over the age of 5. Missing school was most common among children who experienced an assault or an assault with a weapon (15.7% and 29.4%, respectively; see Table 5).

Disclosure/Who Knows

Among children who experienced victimizations at school in the past year, 68% indicated that school personnel knew about at least one incident (see Table 5). Higher percentages of robbery, assault, and crime against the school were known to school personnel relative to other types of victimizations. School personnel knew about just over half of all children who

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TABLE 3 Logistic Regression Results Predicting Victimization at School with Community Crime and Disorder Items (Odds Ratios)[a]

	Community crime and disorder						
Type of victimization	Drug sales	Witnessed an arrest	Neighborhood gangs	Neighborhood gang graffiti	Police raid or block	Stay inside	Neighborhood physical deterioration
Any victimization	1.9	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5
Any assault	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.7	2.1	
Weapon assault	3.0	2.4	3.7	*2.3*	5.4	*3.0*	
Sexual assault[b]	6.7		*4.6*	6.6	4.6		
Sexual harassment/flashing	4.3	2.9		2.5			4.6
Intimidation	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4	*1.4*	
Robbery							
Theft	2.2	2.2					*2.4*
Vandalism					*2.1*		
Witness violence	3.9	1.9	1.8	2.1	2.4		2.0
Crimes against the school	4.0	1.8		1.7	2.2		

Note. Only significant relations are shown in table. Empty cells indicate no significant relation. Italic font indicates relation was significant at $p < .10$. All other relationships are significant at $p < .05$.

[a]Weighted odds ratios were converted to approximate the risk ratio to adjust for outcome incidence (Zhang & Yu, 1998). [b]The number of children exposed to sexual assault in school in the last year is quite small ($n = 14$) and therefore the estimates might be unreliable.

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TABLE 4 Odds Ratios[a] Reflecting Likelihood of Experiencing Each Type of Victimization at School Given Exposure to Another Type of Victimization at School

	Among children exposed to									
Past year victimization type	Any assault	Weapon assault	Sexual assault[b]	Sexual harassment/ flashing	Intimidation	Robbery	Theft	Vandalism	Witness violence	Crime against the school
Any assault	1 (reference)		3.6	3.1	2.7	3.0	2.0	2.5	2.7	2.0
Weapon assault		1 (reference)	6.0	2.3	3.4	7.3	5.8	8.2	4.1	3.5
Sexual assault[b]	6.2	6.4	1 (reference)	11.1	21.5	7.1				
Sexual harassment/ flashing	4.2	*2.3*	8.6	1 (reference)	11.4	3.6	2.7	5.5	5.6	5.4
Intimidation	2.1	2.0	3.1	3.0	1 (reference)	2.2	2.0	2.1	1.9	1.7
Robbery	4.0	7.0	6.4	3.7	4.0	1 (reference)	9.1	11.5	2.0	2.1
Theft	2.2	5.3		2.7	3.2	8.1	1 (reference)	9.5	2.3	2.0
Vandalism	3.0	7.4		3.4	3.7	10.5	10.0	1 (reference)	3.7	2.8
Witness violence	2.8	3.0		3.8	2.4	1.8	2.0	2.9	1 (reference)	4.5
Crime against the school	2.0	2.6		3.5	2.0	1.8	1.8	2.3	4.1	1 (reference)

Note. Only significant relations are shown above. Empty cells indicate no significant relation. Italic font indicates relation was significant at $p < .10$. All others are significant at $p < .05$.Assault and weapon assault include overlapping items and therefore are not included in this table.

[a]Weighted odds ratios were converted to approximate the risk ratio to adjust for outcome incidence (Zhang, 1998). [b]The number of children exposed to sexual assault in school in the last year is quite small ($n = 14$) and therefore the estimates might be unreliable.

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TABLE 5 Missed School, Perpetrator, Medical Attention, and Injury Among Those Who Experienced "X" Type of Victimization at School in Past Year ($N = 3,391$)

	Type of victimization (weighted %)										
Characteristic	Any victimization ($n = 1,673$)	Any assault ($n = 487$)	Weapon (assault $n = 58$)	Sexual assault ($n = 14$)	Sexual harassment/ flashing ($n = 129$)	Intimidation ($n = 1,031$)	Robbery ($n = 77$)	Theft ($n = 129$)	Vandalism ($n = 92$)	Witness violence ($n = 475$)	Crime against the school ($n = 541$)
Injury[a]	11.8	38.5	38.9	4.7		0.4	0.0			0.0	
Miss school	14.1	15.7	29.4	13.3	11.1	9.6	12.9	9.8	12.6	5.4	9.3
Adult perpetrator	6.0	3.2	1.2	1.2	3.4	1.8	3.6	11.9	8.8	8.2	
Medical or counseling	28.7	30.2	41.8	9.6	17.7	23.3	30.4	30.0	25.7	9.8	11.2
Medical treatment	2.5	8.3	13.9	0.0		0.0	1.8			0.0	
Counseling	28.1	27.9	38.7	9.6	17.7	23.3	28.6	30.0	25.7	9.8	11.2
School personnel knows	67.7	63.1	55.3	56.3	33.7	52.1	67.0	53.6	30.8	22.5	84.7

Note. Follow-up questions are not asked of all victimizations, this is reflected in the empty cells.

[a]Injury follow-up question was asked for only one of the four items included in intimidation aggregate.

experienced one or more thefts, weapon assaults, intimidation/bullying, and sexual assaults. School personnel were less likely to know about witnessing violence at school, vandalism, and sexual harassment/flashing.

Aside from school personnel, speaking to someone other than a friend or family member (like a counselor or clergy member) was most common among children who experienced a weapon assault (38.7%) at school (see Table 5). Nearly one third of children exposed to theft, robbery, or any assault reported speaking with someone like a counselor (30%, 28.6%, and 27.9, respectively).

Comparison to Other Estimates

The National Crime Victimization Survey is a household survey repeated every 6 months to estimate exposure to certain crimes, both reported and unreported to police. The NCVS includes data on individuals ages 12 and older and collects information on theft, rape, robbery, and assault. Information about where the crime occurred is also available. Table 1 compares rates from NCVS to NatSCEV II for some school victimizations that are reported in both surveys (see the appendix for a list of comparable questions), using children of an equivalent age range. Among children over the age of 12 (the youngest age in the NCVS), the rates of theft, violent victimization, and serious violent victimization at school were much higher in NatSCEV II relative to the rates reported in the NCVS. NatSCEV II rates were about double NCVS rates for theft, eight times higher for violent victimization and 10 times higher for serious violent victimization. However, the age patterns for violent crimes were similar in both sources indicating children ages 12 to 14 had higher rates of victimization compared to children ages 15 to 18.

DISCUSSION

The NatSCEV II survey showed high levels of at-school victimization. Nearly half of all children and youth ages 5 to 17 in this national sample experienced at least one of 10 types of at-school victimization in the past year. Much of this (30%) was intimidation, but one in seven had been physically assaulted. Sexual harassment was experienced by one in 30 and sexual assault at school by one in 250. More than half of all victims had more than one form of victimization during that year as well. At-school victimization resulted in injury to 12% of the children. Six percent missed at least one day of school over the course of the year because of victimization. This translates to the equivalent of 3.2 million children missing school in one year due to victimization or nearly 18,000 per school day (these calculations are based on the U.S. Census Bureau population estimate of 53,772,000 children ages

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5-17 in 2011; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012) and on an average school year of 180 days. Consistent with previous research on teacher awareness of in school victimization, many instances of victimization in school were unknown to teachers (Dowling & Carey, 2013; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Smith & Shu, 2000). Teachers and school personnel did not know about a third of the students who had been victimized, and nearly half did not know about some of the more serious kinds of victimizations like sexual assault and weapon assault.

Older children appeared to have had more in-school victimization than younger children, but that finding has a caveat. The caregivers who reported as proxies on the exposures of children ages 5 to 9 may simply not have known about all the victimizations that that these younger children could have reported had they, like the older children, been interviewed directly. This could very well mean that the overall estimates were low as well, as a result of caregiver lack of awareness of victimizations. Previous research shows that parents are more likely to know about intense/severe peer victimization (Holt, Kaufman Kantor, & Finkelhor, 2009). Estimates in this sample of victimization among children under the age of 10 are likely conservative in this sample and might reflect only more severe in-school victimization experiences among younger children.

Importantly, there were relatively few large demographic disparities in the children who were exposed to at-school victimization. Boys and girls had equivalent overall exposure, although boys experienced more in-school physical assault and girls more in-school sexual harassment. The overall exposure did not vary by race or SES, although African American and large urban residents had more weapon assaults. Children from stepfamilies and children with disabilities had higher rates in certain categories like assault.

The characteristics of communities and schools, however, made a much bigger difference than did family, class, and race characteristics. Consistent with previous research, community context variables were very important in predicting school victimization (Cook et al., 2010; Everett & Price, 1995; Hong & Espelage, 2012). Communities with signs of disorder and criminal activities, like drug sales, gangs, police raids, and schools with gangs and weapons, all were associated with much more at-school victimization. It certainly makes sense that in communities with crime, this culture would affect the school and result in more in-school crime and violence as well. But, this finding also highlights the range of dangers that children in crime-ridden communities face, and the possible limitations to prevention programs that focus on schools alone.

One piece of partially encouraging evidence from the survey was that some of the most serious victimizations occurred less frequently at school than outside of school. Sexual assaults and weapon assaults occurred proportionally more out-of-school than at school. It is unclear whether this relates to steps that schools take proactively to discourage and prevent such offenses

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or whether it simply relates to the deterrent features of the school environment, such as high population density, lack of private spaces, and daytime schedule.

This survey results found considerably higher rates of victimization and violence exposure than another primary source of school safety information—the NCVS. The discrepancy could have a number of sources. The NCVS makes a particularly strenuous effort to avoid the mistaken inclusion of events that are outside the designated 1-year time period by interviewing every 6 months, a process called "time bounding." It is possible that in the NatSCEV II respondents may sometimes "telescope" victimization events into the past year that really occurred prior to the 1-year time frame. Moreover, the NatSCEV II has a more comprehensive approach to measuring victimization, like asking multiple questions about sexual victimization including sexual harassment. In addition, the NCVS is a survey that is very focused on the topic of crime, which may not promote the recollection or reporting of events like peer assaults that youth may not see as crimes.

The NatSCEV II methodology placed considerable effort into to trying to make it safe to disclose episodes. Interviewers attempt to ensure that no one was within hearing distance when the youth were interviewed, whereas the NCVS staff sometimes interviewed youth in the presence of other family members.

Study Limitations

There are important limitations of this study that readers should bear in mind. It is likely that some victimizations were missed because respondents did not remember them or were reluctant to disclose, or because caregivers did not know about them. Follow-up questions, including the location of the victimization, were based on the most recent episode for each type of victimization and not on all victimizations a child may have experienced of that type which limits our understanding of in school victimization to the most recent episode for each child. This means that there is a possibility that some of our estimates (e.g., regarding injury or missing school) might be undercounts of what would be found from a complete inventory of all episodes. Respondents might have telescoped episodes into the time frame that should not have been counted. The respondents who refused to participate in the study may have included children with particularly high levels of victimization.

It is also important to note how this study dealt with the concept of bullying. While there have been efforts to arrive at a consensus about the definition and measurement of bullying (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Ybarra, Boyd, Korchmaros, & Oppenheim, 2012), there is still much debate about how to operationalize it in survey studies, for example, whether to use the term bullying or rather provide a list of behaviors.

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There is also debate about whether and how to restrict it to cases involving repeated occurrences and a power imbalance. Because of these ongoing controversies we have chosen to measure bullying type behaviors, but refer to them as intimidation and harassment, instead of bullying. This means that it may not be possible to compare the current findings to other studies with different operationalizations of bullying (Turner, Finkelhor, Shattuck, Hamby, & Mitchell, in press).

Conclusion

High rates of victimization occur to children in the school environment, some of it quite serious, resulting in injury and missed school days. Although school shootings are frightening and dramatic, they are very rare. The less dramatic but vastly more common forms of assaults, intimidation, sexual harassment, and sex assaults result in much more population level suffering and social impact. This study also highlighted how varied violence exposure is, and how a comprehensive assessment is necessary to elicit information about the full range of at-school victimizations. Targeted surveys about bullying or assault do not capture this full spectrum. Moreover, this study also showed that school authorities did not recognize at least a third of school-victimized children, suggesting how important it is for officials to improve surveillance and mechanisms for disclosure. This study also broke new ground in demonstrating the degree to which children suffer multiple in-school victimizations, the interrelations among different kinds of school victimization, as well as their outcomes in terms of injury and missed school days.

It is useful to emphasize, as this study does, the victimizations that occur at school, because this is one environment that is intensively supervised, organized and planned by professionals with the well-being of children in mind and thus amenable to systematic reform. School is a place where children have a reasonable expectation for being safe, and where social policy can potentially have a considerable amount of influence over what goes transpires on campuses. The amount of at-school victimization shows the distance still to be traveled toward that objective. At the same time, this comment is not meant to suggest that school personnel should ignore or minimize victimization that occurs outside of school. Young people are the most victimized segment of the population (Finkelhor, 2008), and it occurs in high frequencies in families and neighborhoods, as well as at school. Some of the nonschool victimization emanates from the conflicts and relationships that started in the school environment. Youth victimized out of school are at higher risk to be victimized at school as well. Moreover, nonschool victimization can strongly affect the school environment and students' ability to learn. So school personnel have a responsibility to inquire about and act on

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nonschool victimization as well, a responsibility recognized in some measure by mandatory child maltreatment reporting laws, for example.

In spite of the high incidence of at-school victimizations and the alarm they can generate among parents, school officials, and the public at large, it is important to keep in mind that school crime and youth violence have actually declined considerably since the 1990s according to several indicators including the School Crime Supplement of the NCVS, the YRBS, the Health Behavior in School Aged Children survey, and previous NatSCEV studies (Finkelhor, 2013). This may be due to greater awareness by family and school officials, and efforts to bring evidence-based prevention programs into schools (Finkelhor et al., 2014). Some of the most successful programs for mitigating victimization are school-based programs (Elliott, 2010) and schools should make every effort to adopt them. Continued efforts to raise awareness and capitalize on successful prevention programs are certainly warranted.

COMPETING INTERESTS

None.

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APPENDIX

Robbery: C1

C1. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone use force to take something away from (your child/you) that (he/she was/you were) carrying or wearing? *Excluding juvenile sibling perpetrators.*

Theft: C2

C2. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone steal something from (your child/you) and never give it back? Things like a backpack, money, watch, clothing, bike, stereo, or anything else? *Excluding juvenile sibling perpetrators.*

Vandalism: C3

C3. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone break or ruin any of (your child's/your) things on purpose? *Excluding juvenile sibling perpetrators.*

Any Assault: C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, M1, P1, P2, P3, P6, A1, A2

C4. Sometimes people are attacked with sticks, rocks, guns, knives, or other things that would hurt. At any time in (your child's/your) life

did anyone hit or attack (your child/you) on purpose with an object or weapon? Somewhere like: at home, at school, at a store, in a car, on the street, or anywhere else?

C5. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone hit or attack (your child/you) WITHOUT using an object or weapon?

C6. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did someone start to attack (your child/you), but for some reason, it didn't happen? For example, someone helped (your child/you) or (your child/you) got away?

C8. When a person is kidnapped, it means they were made to go somewhere, like into a car, by someone who they thought might hurt them. At any time in (your child's/your) life, has anyone ever tried to kidnap (your child/you)?

C9. At any time in (your child's/your) life, (has your child/have you) been hit or attacked because of (your child's/your) skin color, religion, or where (your child's/your) family comes from? Because of a physical problem (your child has/you have)? Or because someone said (your child was/you were) gay?

M1. Not including spanking on (his/her/your) bottom, At any time in (your child's/your) life did a grown-up in (your child's/your) life hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt (your child/you) in any way?

P1. Sometimes groups of kids or gangs attack people. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did a group of kids or a gang hit, jump, or attack (your child/you)?

P2. (If yes to P1, say: "Other than what you just told me about . . . ") At any time in (your child's/your) life, did any kid, even a brother or sister, hit (your child/you)? Somewhere like: at home, at school, out playing, in a store, or anywhere else?

P3. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did any kids try to hurt (your child's/your) private parts on purpose by hitting or kicking (your child/you) there?

P6. At any time in your life, did a boyfriend or girlfriend or anyone you went on a date with slap or hit you?

A1. Not counting the things I've already asked you about, has any grown-up ever hit or attack (your child/you)?

A2. Not counting the things I've already asked you about, (was your child/were you) ever hurt because someone hit or attacked (him/her/you) on purpose?

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Weapon Assault: C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, M1, P1, P2, P3, P6, A1, A2 (Listed Previously) With a Weapon

Intimidation: P4, P5, P7, P8

P4. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did any kids, even a brother or sister, pick on (your child/you) by chasing (your child/you) or grabbing (your child/you) or by making (him/her /you) do something (he/she/you) didn't want to do?
P5. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did (your child/you) get really scared or feel really bad because kids were calling (him/her /you) names, saying mean things to (him/her /you), or saying they didn't want (him/her/you) around?
P7 At any time in (your child's/your) life, did any kids ever tell lies or spread rumors about (him/her/you), or tried to make others dislike (him/her/you)?
P8. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did any kids ever keep (him/her/you) out of things on purpose, excluded (him/her/you) from their group of friends, or completely ignored (him/her/you)?

Sexual Harassment/Flashing: S5, S6

S5. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone make (your child/you) look at their private parts by using force or surprise, or by "flashing" (your child/you)?
S6. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone hurt (your child's/your) feelings by saying or writing something sexual about (your child/you)?

Sexual Assault: S1, S2, S3, S4

S1. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did a grown-up (your child knows/you know) touch (your child's/your) private parts when they shouldn't have or make (your child/you) touch their private parts? Or did a grown-up (your child knows/you know) force (your child/you) to have sex?
S2. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did a grown-up (your child/you) did not know touch (your child's/your) private parts when they shouldn't have, make (your child/you) touch their private parts or force (your child/you) to have sex?
S3. Now think about other kids, like from school, a boyfriend or girlfriend, or even a brother or sister. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did another child or teen make (your child/you) do sexual things?

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S4. At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone TRY to force (your child/you) to have sex, that is sexual intercourse of any kind, even if it didn't happen?

Witnessing (Community): W3, W4, W8

W3. At any time in (your child's/your) life, in real life, did (your child/you) SEE anyone get attacked or hit on purpose WITH a stick, rock, gun, knife, or other thing that would hurt? Somewhere like: at home, at school, at a store, in a car, on the street, or anywhere else?

W4. At any time in (your child's/your) life, in real life, did (your child/you) SEE anyone get attacked or hit on purpose WITHOUT using a stick, rock, gun, knife, or something that would hurt?

W8. At any time in (your child's/your) life, (was your child/ were you) in any place in real life where (he/she /you) could see or hear people being shot, bombs going off, or street riots?

Crime Against the School: SC1, SC2

SC1. (Has your child/Have you) ever gone to a school where someone said there was going to be a bomb or attack on the school and (your child/you) thought they might really mean it?

SC2. (Has your child/Have you) ever gone to a school where someone damaged the school or started a fire in the school on purpose? Or did anyone break or ruin other school property like buses, windows, or sports equipment?

NCVS Comparable Composites

See Robers, Kemp, & Truman (2013) for question wording.

Theft: C2

Violent Victimization: S1, S2, S3, S4, C1, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, M1, P1, P2, P3, P6, A1, A2

Serious Violent Victimization: S1, S2, S3, S4, C1, C4

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