

RESEARCH BRIEF

Violent Victimization among Adolescent Youth in Minneapolis

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study was to examine family contexts, socio-demographic factors, and school disciplinary incidents associated with the violent victimization of adolescents in Minneapolis.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Becoming a victim of violence is more prevalent among adolescents than any other age group (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003), with more than 60% of adolescents experiencing some type of victimization during their teenage years (Smith-Khur et al., 2004). Often the most vulnerable adolescents, including youth residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods, youth of color, and youth with mental illness are disproportionately represented as victims (Aquino & Byron, 2002; Lauritsen, 2003).

Theories emphasizing “lifestyle exposure” and “routine activities” have traditionally been used to explain adolescent vulnerability to victimization. These theories state that certain lifestyles and activities, in the absence of adult supervision, may put some adolescents in greater contact with potential offenders, thus increasing their risk of victimization (Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garofalo, 1978). Victimization research has recently expanded to explore individual, family, and community factors that are associated with greater susceptibility and/or exposure to violence. These factors include being male, being a youth of color, having a history of maltreatment, living in a neighborhood with high crime rates, and associating with delinquent peers (Schreck, Fisher & Miller, 2004; Valois et al., 2002). The result of this research is a description of common characteristics shared by victims of violence. However, these indicators are not always easy to translate into indicators that could be used to by professionals working with youth to focus service delivery.

This study sought to describe characteristics and experiences shared by adolescent victims of violence using administrative data. Specifically, this study answered the following research questions:

- 1. What are the common characteristics and experiences of violently victimized adolescents?**
- 2. Do the characteristics and experiences of violently victimized adolescents differ from the characteristics and experiences of their non-violently victimized peers?**
- 3. How are characteristics and experiences of violently victimized adolescents interrelated?**



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BECOMING A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE IS MORE PREVALENT AMONG ADOLESCENTS THAN ANY OTHER AGE GROUP, WITH MORE THAN 60% OF ADOLESCENTS EXPERIENCING SOME TYPE OF VICTIMIZATION DURING THEIR TEENAGE YEARS. OFTEN THE MOST VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS, INCLUDING YOUTH RESIDING IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBORHOODS, YOUTH OF COLOR, AND YOUTH WITH MENTAL ILLNESS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED AS VICTIMS.
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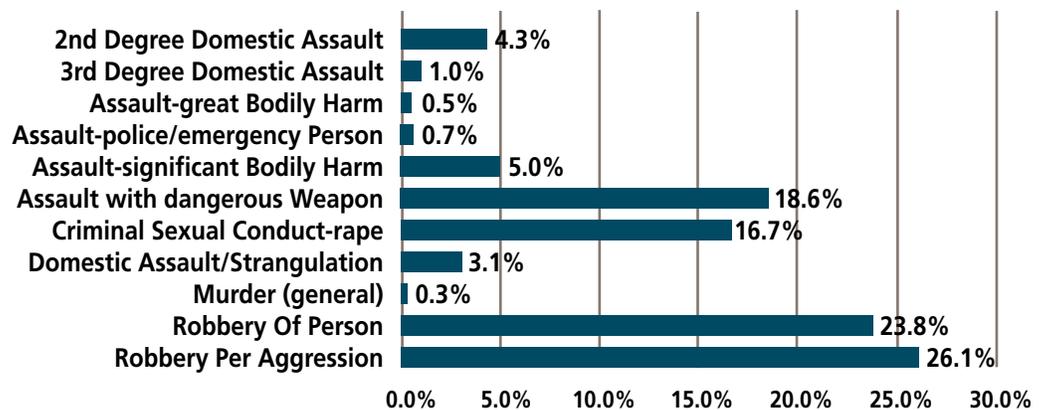
METHODS

In this study, violent victimization of adolescents (occurring in Minneapolis), school disciplinary incidents, child maltreatment experiences, and youth characteristics were assessed. Concurrent associations between disciplinary incidents and violent victimization were also examined across a 3-year period.

Through Minn-LInK, data from the Minneapolis Police Department (Computer Assisted Police Records System), Minnesota Department of Education (Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System), Minnesota Department of Human Services (Social Service Information System), and Minneapolis Public Schools (Disciplinary Incident Reporting System) were linked. The Minneapolis Police Department identified 1,716 adolescent youth (aged 14-17) who were victims of a crime between 2011 and 2013; 733 were identified as victims of violent crimes. A violent crime was defined as including those classified by the Uniform Crime Report System as Level 05 or lower - 2nd degree domestic assault, assault, criminal sexual conduct, domestic assault, murder, robbery, and 3rd degree domestic assault. Of the 733 victims, 606 (82.7%) youth were identified as Minneapolis Public School students. As seen in Figure 1, robbery, assault with a dangerous weapon, and criminal sexual conduct were the most common crimes first experienced by adolescent victims.

Characteristics and experiences of the 606 students were compared with characteristics and experiences of 21,317 same-age students who attended Minneapolis Public School in 2010-2011 but were not identified by the Minneapolis Police Department as victims of violent crime. Descriptive statistics, chi-square, and Spearman correlation were used to understand common characteristics and experiences of violently victimized adolescents and their non-violently victimized peers.

Figure 1. Crimes associated with the first violent victimization of adolescents in Minneapolis (n=606)



FINDINGS

Findings suggest that adolescents who were the victims of a violent crime differ from their non-violently victimized peers in regard to gender, race, homelessness, receipt of special education services and free or reduced price lunch, Child Protection System involvement, and out-of-home placement experiences. Violently victimized adolescents were more likely to be involved in school disciplinary incidents; when involved, the majority of adolescents were subjects in more than one incident.

CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENTLY VICTIMIZED ADOLESCENTS

As can be seen in Table 1, characteristics and experiences of adolescent victims of violence differed significantly from characteristics and experiences of their non-violently victimized peers. Results of a chi-square analysis indicated that adolescents who were male, homeless or highly mobile, and those who received special education services or free and reduced price lunch were significantly more likely to be violently victimized. Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native adolescents were also at significantly greater risk of experiencing violent victimization. Adolescents who were female, or White or Asian/Pacific Islander were less likely to be victims of a violent crime.

Prior experiences in youth's families also differed for adolescents who were victims of violent crimes as compared to their non-violently victimized peers (see Table 1). Adolescents who had a history of Child Protection System involvement and adolescents who experienced an out-of-home placement (regardless of whether it was a result of child maltreatment) were at increased risk for violent victimization.

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ADOLESCENTS WHO WERE MALE, HOMELESS OR HIGHLY MOBILE, AND THOSE WHO RECEIVED SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES OR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE LUNCH WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO BE VIOLENTLY VICTIMIZED.

Table 1. Characteristics and experiences of violently victimized and non-violently victimized youth

		Victims of violent crimes (N=606)		Non-violently victimized peers (N=21,317)	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	*Female	240	39.6%	10515	49.3%
	*Male	366	60.4%	10802	50.7%
Race/Ethnicity	*American Indian or Alaskan Native	49	8.1%	845	4.0%
	*Asian or Pacific Islander	21	3.5%	2322	10.9%
	Hispanic	98	16.2%	2880	13.5%
	*Black, not of Hispanic Origin	313	51.7%	9059	42.5%
	*White, not of Hispanic Origin	125	20.6%	6211	29.1%
*Special Education Services		168	27.7%	4088	19.2%
Limited English Proficiency		32	5.3%	1260	5.9%
*Free Reduced Lunch		532	87.8%	15063	70.7%
*Homeless or Highly Mobile		137	22.6%	2140	10.0%
*Prior Child Protection System (CPS) Involvement		182	30.0%	2501	11.7%
Out-of-home Placement	*Any OHP	132	21.8%	1925	9.0%
	*OHP in CPS	9	1.5%	132	0.6%

Note. *Indicates $p < .001$

SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS AND VICTIMIZATION

Adolescents who were victims of violent crime were significantly more likely to have been the subjects of a disciplinary incident at their school than were their non-violently victimized peers during the study period ($X^2(1, N = 21,923) = 173.72, p < .001$). Approximately 50% of all violently victimized adolescents were involved in at least one school disciplinary incident, compared to 26% of their non-violently victimized peers.

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80% OF ALL VIOLENTLY VICTIMIZED ADOLESCENTS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN A DISCIPLINARY INCIDENT WERE INVOLVED IN MORE THAN ONE SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY INCIDENT DURING THE STUDY PERIOD.

Tables 2 and 3 provide information about the types of disciplinary incidents first experienced by adolescent victims of violent crime and their non-violently victimized peers during the study period. (Supplementary Table A provides detail about the individual disciplinary incidents first experienced by adolescents during the study period.) Adolescents – both victims of violent crime and their non-violently victimized peers – were most often first involved in disruption incidents. However, almost twice as many violently victimized youth were first involved in a disruption incident (32%) as compared to non-violently victimized youth (17%). Disciplinary incidents first experienced by youth did not significantly differ between victims and non-victims when comparisons were restricted by gender.

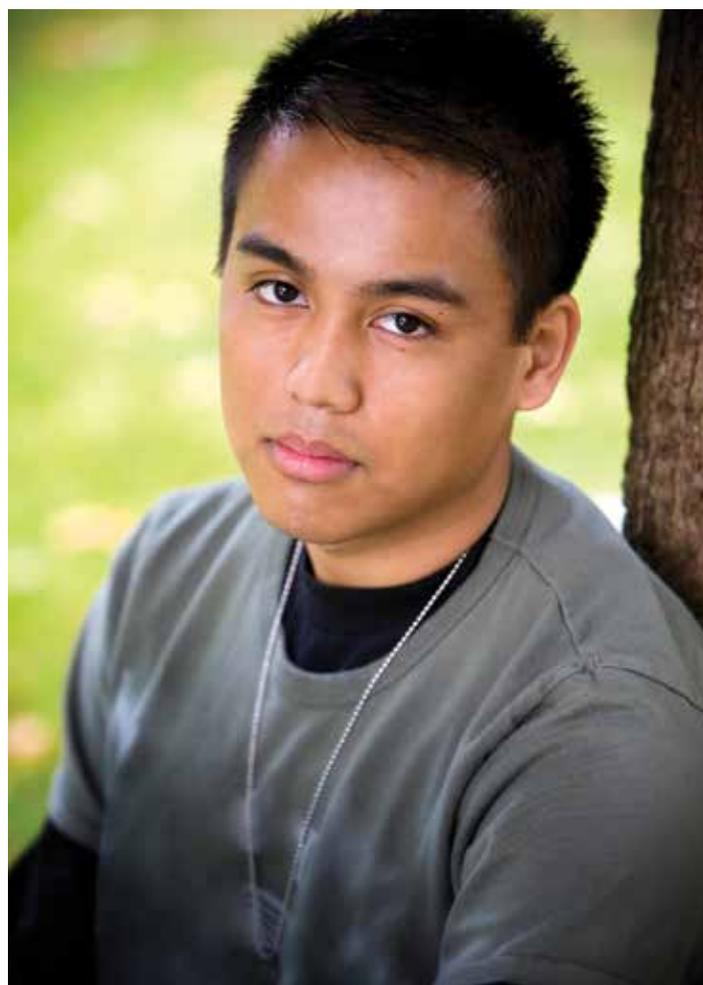


Table 2. Categorization of disciplinary incidents

Substance-related incidents
Alcohol
Controlled substances
Illegal drugs
OTC meds against school policy
Tobacco
Physical harm/aggression
Assault
Fighting
Robbery (using force)
Non-physical harm/aggression
Bullying/cyber bullying
Extortion
Harassment
Hazing
Terroristic threats
Threat/intimidation
Verbal abuse
Weapon
Other (weapon)
Property-related incidents
Arson
Theft
Vandalism/property related
Disruption incidents
Disruptive/disorderly/insubordination
Bomb threat
Other
Computer
Pyrotechnics

It is important to note that adolescents who were victims of violent crime were likely to be involved in more than one school disciplinary incident during the study period. In fact, 80% of all violently victimized adolescents who were involved in a disciplinary incident were involved in more than one school disciplinary incident during the study period. On average these adolescents were involved in 10.8 incidents over the three year time period between the 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 academic years.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the timing of adolescents' involvement in school disciplinary incidents and experiences of violent victimization differed among adolescents who were violently victimized.

Adolescents who experienced violent victimization were 2.5 times more likely to be involved in an initial school disciplinary incident that preceded their initial victimization (n=202) as they were to be involved in an initial victimization that preceded their initial school disciplinary incident (n=80) during the study period. There were fewer school disciplinary incidents that coincided with (i.e., occurred within 30 days of) the timing of violent victimization in the community (n=22). Involvement in school disciplinary incidents that preceded victimization occurred 471 days prior to the victimization incident, on average (range: 32-995 days; 95% Confidence Interval for Mean: 437-506). Victimization that preceded involvement in school disciplinary incidents occurred 259 days prior to the school disciplinary incident, on average (range: 34-968; 95% Confidence Interval for Mean: 214-304). Significant differences by gender were not found.

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ADOLESCENTS WHO EXPERIENCED VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION WERE 2.5 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE INVOLVED IN AN INITIAL SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY INCIDENT THAT PRECEDED THEIR INITIAL VICTIMIZATION AS THEY WERE TO BE INVOLVED IN AN INITIAL VICTIMIZATION THAT PRECEDED THEIR INITIAL SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY INCIDENT DURING THE STUDY PERIOD.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENTLY VICTIMIZED ADOLESCENTS

For adolescents in Minneapolis, certain contextual and socio-demographic factors were associated with experiencing violent victimization. Supplementary Table B

Table 3. Types of disciplinary incidents first experienced by violently victimized and non-violently victimized youth

	First Disciplinary Incident			
	Victims of violent crimes (N=606)		Non-violently victimized peers (N=21,317)	
	N	%	N	%
Substance-related incidents	11	1.8%	150	0.7%
Physical harm/aggression	38	6.3%	654	3.1%
Non-physical harm/aggression	56	9.2%	983	4.6%
Property-related incidents	6	1.0%	103	0.5%
Disruption incidents	193	31.8%	3,667	17.2%
Other	0	0.0%	11	0.0%
Missing	0	0.0%	2	0.0%
Subtotal	304	50.2%	5,570	26.1%
None	302	49.8%	15,747	73.9%
Total	606	100.0%	21,317	100.0%

Note. Disciplinary data presented here includes the first disciplinary incident at school over three school years.

presents correlations between violent victimization experiences and other characteristics and experiences of interest. As seen in Supplementary Table B, violent victimization was significantly related to involvement in school disciplinary incidents, Child Protection System involvement, out-of-home placement experience, gender, receipt of special education services, Limited English Proficiency, homeless/highly mobile status, and race/ethnicity. Although patterns of association among characteristics and experiences of adolescents reached statistical significance, the associations were weak. The association between school disciplinary incidents and violent victimization was strongest ($r=.089$) while the association between free or reduced price lunch and violent victimization was weakest ($r= -.004$).

VICTIMIZATION IS NOT AN ISOLATED INCIDENT UNIQUE TO A SPECIFIC RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP. VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION SEEMS TO BE PREVALENT ACROSS ALL ADOLESCENTS WHO FACE CHALLENGES IN FAMILY AND SCHOOL, BUT MAY BE ELEVATED PARTICULARLY FOR ADOLESCENTS OF COLOR.

Conclusion

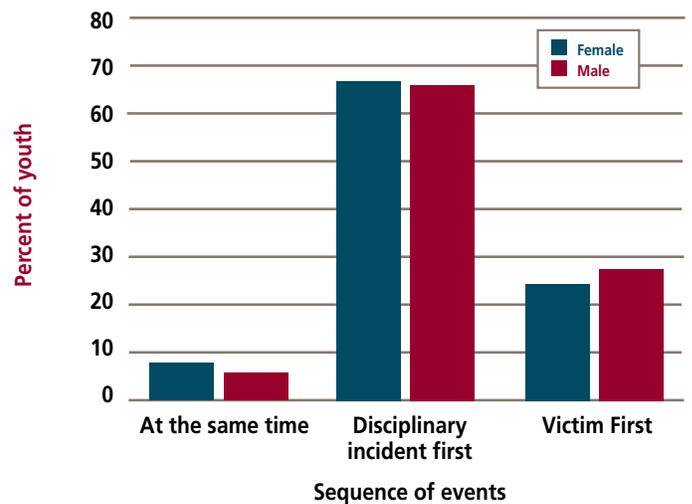
This three-year cross-sectional study suggests that various characteristics and experiences of adolescents can be identified as critical factors in predicting violent victimization of adolescents. In particular, findings revealed that adolescents at an increased risk of victimization were Black or American Indian/Alaskan Native, homeless or highly mobile, receiving special education services or free and reduced price lunch, and had a history of Child Protection System involvement and/or out-of-home placement experience. Adolescents who were female, or White or Asian/Pacific Islander were less likely to be victims of a violent crime. Victims of violent crime also had higher rates of involvement in school disciplinary incidents than their same-age, non-violently victimized peers. However, reasons for involvement were similar for violently victimized and non-violently victimized adolescents.

Concurrent associations among study variables highlight the fact that victimization is not an isolated incident unique to a specific racial/ethnic group. Violent victimization seems to be prevalent across all adolescents who face challenges in family and school, but may be elevated particularly for adolescents of color. Although associations among study variables rose to a level of statistical significance, the strength of associations was low.

This suggests that predicting violent victimization of adolescents is a complex task which requires an understanding of adolescent characteristics and experiences across a number of different settings and domains of functioning. Care should be taken to critically evaluate the impact of timing and chronicity of adolescent experiences when predicting violent victimization of adolescents.

Administrative data and the associations described in this study may be used as the starting point for designing programs to prevent or reduce violent victimization among adolescents at risk of victimization. Because involvement in school disciplinary events precedes violent victimization for the vast majority of violently-victimized adolescents, the school may serve as a point of early intervention to reduce the risk of victimization. However, much work remains to be done to further understand how adolescents come to be victimized before developing programs to prevent violent victimization. Using administrative data to further examine the overlaps of characteristics and experiences of youth who become violently victimized is needed to increase our understanding of the victimization trajectory. Further analysis should be focused on the

Figure 2. Sequence of first involvement in a school disciplinary incident and first victimization by gender



LIMITATIONS

This study investigated violent victimization among adolescents in Minneapolis. Results of this study should not be generalized to other age groups; care must be taken in generalizing these findings to other jurisdictions that may have different policing and disciplinary practices. Results of this study were limited by available data. Administrative data available to this study is not likely to include all variables of interest. In addition, school discipline and arrest data were only available for Minneapolis; incidents that occurred in other locations which involved adolescents in this study were not included. Developmental trajectories of victimization and chronic or poly-victimization are also not currently investigated.

effect of chronic victimization and social context on violent victimization and educational outcomes in order to strengthen prevention and intervention programs. Additional examination into the specific sequencing of disciplinary incidents and violent victimization is warranted, especially for those youth whose involvement in disciplinary incidents and victimization occur in close proximity to one another. Further research highlighting information about characteristics and experiences of adolescents that is not available in administrative data should also be taken into consideration.

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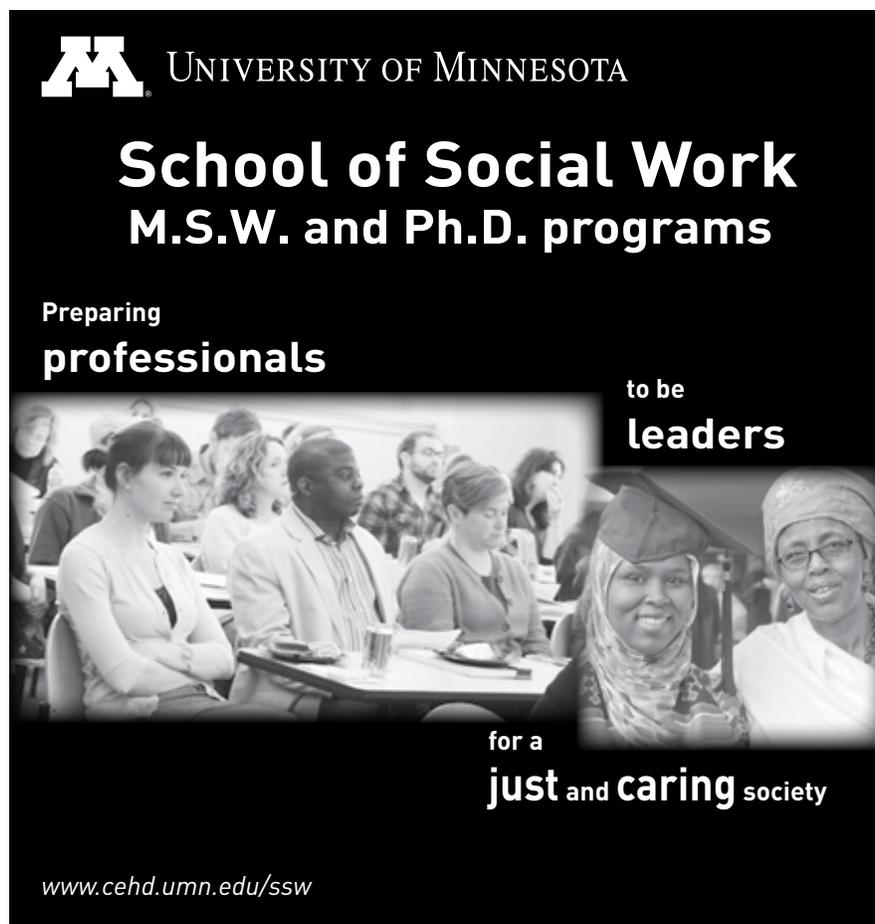
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