CV9

This article compares the responses of 10- and 11-year-olds with those of 12- to 16-year-olds in a national telephone survey of 2,000 youth concerning victimization and victimization-prevention education. Although the overall participation rate was quite good for both groups, parents were slightly more likely to bar the younger children from taking part in the survey. The younger children also disclosed fewer of the most sensitive kinds of victimization, such as sexual abuse. However, by contrast, they did not give any more problematic responses to the key questions dealing with victimization and its details, and their rates for both family and nonfamily assaults, which comprised most of the victimizations, were equivalent to those of older children. The younger children also did not report any greater levels of distress in response to the survey. The few difficulties in interviewing the 10- and 11-year-old children and the quantity of valuable information they can provide suggest that they should be included in victimization surveys.

A Comparison of the Responses of Preadolescents and Adolescents in a National Victimization Survey

DAVID FINKELHOR
University of New Hampshire, Durham

Although the victimization of children is a serious public policy concern, current national data concerning the problem are widely seen as inadequate (Best, 1990; Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994b; National Research Council, 1993a). A variety of limitations have been identified. For example, there are no regularly gathered national data for some high-profile types of child victimization, such as abductions (Finkelhor, Hotaling, & Sedlak, 1990). The regularly gathered data for other kinds of child victimization, such as child abuse, have major deficiencies such as the incomplete participation of some states and the absence of uniform definitions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1997). The Uniform Crime Report system, one of the major sources of crime information, has been criticized for not collecting data (with the exception of homicide) that could distinguish crimes against children (O'Brien, 1985).

Author's Note: I want to express tremendous appreciation to Jennifer Dziuba-Leatherman for collaborating on the conceptualization, data analysis, and writing of this article. I would also like to acknowledge the Boy Scouts of America for their support of this project and to thank the following people for their help in this research: Joseph Anglim, Lawrence Potts, Mary Dowd, Charles Morrison, Nancy Asdigian, John Boyle, Patricia Vanderwolf, David Bulko, Thomas Edwards, Charles Pressey, Kathleen Kendall-Tackett, members of the Family Violence Research Seminar, and Kelly Foster. The survey research was carried out by Schulman, Ronca and Bucuvalas, Inc.

JOURNAL OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE, Vol. 13 No. 3, June 1998 362-382

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), by contrast, does collect and report data by age and thus has been the most widely used source on the victimization of young people. However, this source has been criticized, too, on several grounds. First, the information is collected in interviews that are not routinely private and confidential, which may be particularly inhibiting to young people who have not disclosed victimizations to their parents or to those who have been victimized by family members themselves (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991; Martin, 1986). Second, the questions and NCVS methodology are not particularly sensitive to the circumstances of youth (Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991). For example, no research has been undertaken to check whether youth can easily understand and follow the questions and sequences, which have been designed primarily for adult respondents. Moreover, the NCVS interview does not formulate questions geared to some types of victimization to which young people are especially vulnerable, such as various forms of child molestation and attempted abductions. Finally, the NCVS only collects data on individuals 12 years of age and older, thus ignoring the victimizations of more than half of the child population. One analysis suggests that this exclusion results in losing at least one half of the sexual assault victimizations and one fourth of the aggravated assaults of children (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995).

The exclusion of children younger than 12—a particularly serious limitation of the NCVS—is based on the assumption that valid and reliable victimization data would be difficult to obtain from younger children. However, there is no clear set of research findings that support this concern. In fact, a variety of studies suggest that even younger children can be interviewed about victimization, including family victimization (Kruttschnitt & Dornfeld, 1992), as well as about other important and sensitive matters such as family climate (Amato & Ochiltree, 1987) and involvement in delinquent behavior (Farrington, 1973).

This article reports on a national victimization survey that used the telephone for interviewing children, including 10- and 11-year-olds, about victimization and related issues. This provided an opportunity to examine whether there were any apparent differences in the quality of interviews with children younger than those commonly interviewed in the NCVS.

Children as Survey Respondents

Overall, the literature on surveying children, especially as it regards the quality of data obtained from children, is spotty (for an exception, see Amato & Ochiltree, 1987). There has been a reluctance among sociologists and policy makers in general to undertake surveys that interview children directly or to refine the methodology for doing so. Developmental psychologists recognize that children younger than age 12 may have some difficulty understanding adult vocabulary (Steward, Bussey, Goodman, & Saywitz, 1993). Moreover, such children do not have fully formed skills for searching memory in an ordered way, particularly in response to questions about timing and frequency (Kennedy, 1994). However, studies have generally found the validity of preadolescent children's memory to be excellent (Goodman, Hirschman, Hepps, & Rudy, 1991) and their motivation for accuracy to be very high (Babchuck & Gordon, 1958). Researchers tend to believe that when interviews are tailored to their vocabulary, and techniques used to help them retrieve memories in sequence, preadolescent children can be interviewed effectively in surveys (Kennedy, 1994; Steward et al., 1993).

The reluctance to include preadolescents in survey research has been abating. In recent years, several large-scale youth surveys have been conducted, covering such issues as adolescent health (American School Health Association, 1989), experience with crime at school and in the community (Lauritsen et al., 1991; Louis Harris & Associates, 1993), and public opinion (Bezilla, 1993; Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates, 1994).

The methods used by social scientists for surveying children have differed to some extent from those used for surveying adults but often more for reasons of convenience than out of any evidence of their validity. A great many child-oriented surveys, for example, have been administered in school classroom settings (American School Health Association, 1989; National Institute of Education, 1978). This approach takes advantage of the fact that nearly all children attend school, that large numbers of children are aggregated in such locales, and that classroom surveying can be done quickly and inexpensively. The disadvantages of this approach, however, include the fact that the self-administered questionnaires rely on the reading ability of children, cannot use complex and branched question sequences, and may not provide adequate privacy and freedom from distractions.

Other child-oriented surveys have used a household interview approach more similar to that used with adults (Elliott & Huizinga, 1983). As may be the case with classroom surveys, one of the disadvantages of the household approach is the lack of privacy, real or perceived, when children must respond to questions asked aloud in a household in which other family members may

be present. Another disadvantage is the expense, which can be further complicated by the fact that some groups of children are particularly difficult to find at home and require multiple visits.

To cope with the increasing expense of household interviewing, many surveys, including the NCVS (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1989), have been moving toward using the telephone. Telephone surveys may have advantages for interviewing child respondents, as well, that have perhaps been insufficiently considered. For example, in contrast to reading, virtually all children of school age know how to use the telephone. Even young children generally spend a lot of time talking on the phone with their friends, usually with some degree of privacy, often about personal issues. Difficulties in comprehension or respondent noncooperation can be much more easily identified and potentially corrected in this mode than with self-administered questionnaires.

Moreover, in contrast to face-to-face interviews, children can be interviewed on the phone much less obtrusively than would be the case if an unfamiliar adult interviewer arrived on the premises. Parents who would not want an interviewer coming into the home may be more likely to give consent for a telephone interview. The telephone interview may also give the child an additional measure of privacy even within the household, as questions can easily be designed so that listeners cannot decipher their content from the children's responses. Children who use the phone frequently to talk to friends are often adept at finding privacy within their households.

Telephone interviews also give children a great deal of control over a potentially threatening situation. By simply hanging up, they can always terminate this kind of anonymous interview, something much more difficult in a face-to-face encounter. Nevertheless, telephone surveying has some important potential limitations that do need to be better understood. Among them are the following: (a) the bias to samples of excluding households without phones, (b) the potentially greater challenge in creating rapport (compared to face-to-face interviewing), and (c) the potential threat to data quality created by lengthy phone interviews.

METHODOLOGY

Survey Content

One of the primary goals of the National Youth Victimization Prevention (NYVP) study was to derive estimates of various forms of victimization among youth age 10 to 16 (Finkelhor, Dzivba-Leatherman, 1994b). The other primary objective was to obtain children's assessments of the victimization

prevention programs that many schools have begun offering during the past decade (Finkelhor, Asdigian, & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1995a, 1995b). Thus, in addition to collecting basic demographic information, the survey required children to perform the following tasks: recalling details of victimizations personally experienced, responding to a test of knowledge about victimization, recalling the content of prevention programs to which they were exposed, rendering judgments regarding the usefulness of these programs, and expressing opinions on a range of topics including personal risk for a variety of life events, the level of crime in their community, and reaction to the survey itself.

Study Design

The study staff interviewed by telephone a nationally representative sample of 2,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 16 and their caretakers during the months of May 1992 and February 1993. Random-digit dialing was used to generate phone numbers that were screened by interviewers to find households that contained children of the target age (the sole eligibility criterion). Interviewers spoke with the primary caretaker in each household, asking him or her some questions relevant to child victimization prevention and explaining the objectives of the study. They then obtained parental permission to interview the child. Speaking to the children, the interviewers again explained the study, obtained consent, and tried to establish that the child was alone and free to talk openly. They then proceeded with an interview that lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

The interviewers, employees of an experienced social science research firm, had extensive training and background in conducting interviews with children. To further protect confidentiality, most questions were designed to elicit simple yes/no responses that would not reveal any of the question content to any household member who might have happened to overhear. At the end of the interview, all children were offered the telephone number of a national child-protection hot line. In addition, children who were judged to be in possible jeopardy from child abuse were recontacted over the phone by a psychologist (part of the research team) trained in telephone counseling who, after gathering more unstructured information and assessing the problem in greater detail (such as the imminence of the danger and whether the situation was known to other professionals), arranged for referrals to local authorities when necessary. (Additional design information is available in Boyle, 1993; Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994b.)

The final sample of 1,042 boys and 958 girls was fairly well-matched to U.S. census statistics for a population of this age: about 10% Black, 7% Hispanic, and 3% other races, including Asian and Native American. Of those in the sample, 14% came from families with incomes of less than $20,000, 15% were living with a single parent, another 13% with a parent and stepparent, and 3% with some nonparental caretaker. There was an undercounting of Black and Hispanic children compared with U.S. census estimates (which show 15% Black and 12% Hispanic for this age group).

RESULTS

Participation Rate

The overall survey participation rate for households and children in this sample was 72%. Given that the study involved children, a sensitive topic, and a lengthy interview and required the consent of two individuals, this rate of participation is quite encouraging. The overall rate was calculated by multiplying the proportion of adults in eligible households who completed the parent/guardian interview (88%) by the proportion of eligible children in these households who completed the child interview (82%). When eligible children were not interviewed, most of the time (14% of eligible children) this was due to parents who, after completing the parent/guardian interview, refused to give consent for the child to be interviewed. The rest of the time (or for 3% of eligible children), it was due to the children not wishing to be interviewed.

As Table 1 demonstrates, barriers to participation did vary somewhat according to children's age. Parents were slightly more likely to bar the 10- to 11-year-old children from participating (18% vs. 13% for 12-16 year olds; $\chi^2 = 10.87$, $p < .001$). This suggests that parents are more uncomfortable exposing younger children to stranger interviews or sensitive subjects or may simply have doubts about the ability of their children to manage the tasks required by the interview. The effect is rather small, however, amounting to a loss of about 5 additional 10- to 11-year-old children of every 100 recruited for the survey.

If parental permission is a greater obstacle for interviewing younger children, it is of interest to note which kinds of parents appear most reluctant. We examined the impact of a variety of parental characteristics, including gender, family income, education level, race, and concern about violence in the community. The greater tendency to bar preadolescents from participating persisted across all of these characteristics except race and concern about violence. Non-White parents and those who had expressed concern about violence in the community were actually more likely to allow preadolescent

TABLE 1: Participation Rates,[a] by Age (in percentages)

Age (years)	*Interview Completed*	*Parent Refused*	*Child Refused*
10	78.4	18.7	2.9
11	80.6	17.1	2.2
12	80.6	15.1	4.3
13	80.3	15.3	4.4
14	87.5	9.4	3.1
15	84.7	10.7	4.6
16	84.4	12.6	3.0

a. $\chi^2 = 24.08, p < .05$.

participation. This finding suggests that when parents find the topic of a study relevant and important, they will be more likely to allow their child to participate even if the child is young.

When interviewers got to talk to the children, the younger children were somewhat more likely to agree to participate. However, age differences in rates of refusal were not significant. In response to ethical concerns about voluntary participation, then, these rates indicate that the 10- and 11-year-olds were about as likely as the older children to exercise their right to refuse to participate.

Victimizations

Child respondents were asked a total of 12 questions about possible victimizations. The victimization questions were followed up with more extensive questions about the details of the episode, on the basis of which the episodes were classified into one of several categories and also as attempted or completed. (The questions and definitional elements are listed in the appendix.) For reasons of time, we only gathered detailed information on a maximum of two episodes. For children with more than two victimizations, an algorithm gave priority to sexual victimizations, to episodes that the children rated as "most bothersome," and to victimizations occurring in the past year. This probably resulted in a slight undercounting of nonsexual, less severe, and more temporally remote victimizations.

One fourth of the children reported a completed victimization in the previous year, and an additional 12% reported an attempted victimization. More than one half of the children reported a completed or attempted victimization at some time in their lives. Nonfamily assaults were the single most numerous type of victimization. Children experienced family assaults at about one third the rate of nonfamily assaults. Sexual abuse in the past year

was reported by about 1 in 15 (6.7%) of the children in the sample, but occurrences of this type of abuse were much more frequent among girls. Nonsexual violence to genitals was reported by about 5% of the sample and, in contrast to sexual abuse, was more common among boys. About 2% of the children reported an attempted kidnapping in the past year, almost none of which involved the successful removal of the child. These rates of victimization, although defined somewhat differently, are substantially higher than those reported by the NCVS for children 12 to 15 years of age. (For more details on victimization incidence and prevalence rates and comparison to the NCVS, see Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994a; also Boney-McCoy & Finkelhor, 1995, 1996; Finkelhor & Wolak, 1995.)

Children were also asked a question about corporal punishment, although corporal punishment was not counted as a victimization that could be selected for the detailed follow-up series. The survey revealed that well more than one fourth of the youth in this sample were being corporally punished by adults in their household.

Table 2 reveals some interesting differences between adolescents and preadolescents in the incidence of victimizations, some of which may be related to validity issues. On one hand, neither the nonfamily assault rate nor the overall family assault rate varied between the two age groups. By contrast, the younger group reported less sexual abuse, less violence to genitals, and less kidnapping than the older children.

It is certainly possible that these differences reflect a truly lower incidence of these victimizations among younger children. However, evidence from other sources casts doubt on this interpretation. In the case of sexual abuse, a number of studies based on adult retrospective surveys (Finkelhor, 1979, 1984; Fromuth, 1983; Keckley Market Research, 1983) find that 10- and 11-year-olds are not less likely than older children to have been victimized in this manner. If these retrospective studies are indeed accurate, it suggests that the lower rates for sexual abuse among the younger children in this sample may be due to reticence to disclose rather than to truly lower rates in the population. If this is a problem of underreporting alone, our data suggest that 10- and 11-year-olds are self-disclosing only one fourth to one third of the sexual abuse disclosed by older children.

It is interesting and supportive of this interpretation that the forms of victimization less reported by younger children (particularly sexual abuse, violence to genitals, and parental assault) might be considered more sensitive or more personal and thus more difficult to disclose. The lower rate of parental violence, although not significant, is also consistent with this interpretation, given that parental violence is known to be higher among younger children (Wauchope & Straus, 1990). Interestingly, however, if the younger children

TABLE 2: Self-Reported Victimizations in the Past Year

Type of Victimization	*Age 10 to 11 (n = 594)*	*Age 12 to 16 (n = 1,405)*	*Odds Ratio*	*95% Confidence Interval*
Any victimization (excluding corporal punishment and witnessing)				
Attempted and completed	31.8	39.2	0.72***	0.59-0.89
Completed only	22.7	26.3	0.82*	0.66-1.03
Nonfamily assault				
Attempted and completed	21.9	23.0	0.94	0.74-1.18
Completed only	15.3	16.2	0.93	0.72-1.21
Family assault[a]				
Attempted and completed	8.9	8.5	1.05	0.74-1.47
Completed only	5.1	5.2	0.97	0.62-1.50
Nonparent family perpetrator				
Attempted and completed	6.7	5.9	1.15	0.77-1.69
Completed only	4.4	3.9	1.12	0.69-1.81
Parent perpetrator				
Attempted and completed	1.9	2.3	0.78	0.39-1.56
Completed only	0.5	1.0	0.50	0.14-1.76
Corporal punishment	41.4	23.6	2.28****	1.86-2.80
Sexual abuse				
Attempted and completed	2.9	7.5	0.36****	0.21-0.61
Attempted only	1.7	4.3	0.38***	0.19-0.75
Serious noncontact only	0.8	2.1	0.40*	0.15-1.04
Contact only	0.5	2.1	0.23***	0.07-0.76
Rape (completed only)	0.0	0.5	0.70*	0.68-0.72
Violence to genitals				
Attempted and completed	3.0	6.0	0.49***	0.29-0.82
Completed only	2.4	4.7	0.49**	0.27-0.87
Kidnapping				
Attempted and completed	0.8	2.3	0.35**	0.14-0.91
Completed only	0.0	0.0	—	—

a. Nonparent and parent breakdowns do not add up to the total estimated for family assault, as some cases had missing values for perpetrator identity.
*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$. ****$p < .001$.

were more reticent to report parental violence, this reticence did not extend to the question about corporal punishment. There was a significantly higher rate of corporal punishment reported by younger children, a finding consistent with what parents themselves report in national surveys (Wauchope & Straus, 1990).

This study did include one design feature to try to enhance the ability of the children to recall and report especially sensitive victimizations. Multiple screener questions regarding victimization were provided to give children multiple cues about the experiences being asked about and a longer interview interval in which to decide to disclose. This procedure appears to have helped both younger and older children. A sizable proportion of victimization experiences were elicited by the additional screeners. For example, 43% of all disclosures of family assaults occurred in response to the second of the two family assault screeners. In addition, in the sexual assault series, 67% of the children who reported a sexual victimization that met the criteria of the first screener did not disclose it at that point. The fact that there were no age differences in the utility of multiple screeners indicates that all of the children in the sample seem to have benefited from having more than one opportunity to respond.

Ability to Provide Usable Information

One way to test for age differences in children's capacity to provide reliable information is to compare age groups in terms of the proportion of problematic responses. Problematic responses include instances in which children indicate that they "don't know" the answer (they had been instructed to give this response if they did not know or could not remember), refuse to answer, provide responses that are outside the range of possible answers, or provide responses that are incoherent. These sorts of responses may result from a failure to understand a question (e.g., not knowing the meaning of such words as "situation" or "homosexual"); confusion about events, their details and sequence; intimidation (e.g., being afraid that a response is not the correct one); or embarrassment (e.g., regarding personal experiences such as sexual abuse). For the purposes of this analysis, we looked at problematic responses to four different types of items, including the victimization screeners (e.g., "Has anyone in your family ever pushed you around, hit you, or tried to beat you up?); questions about the content of the most recent school victimization prevention program, if any (e.g., "Did they talk about dealing with bullies?"); a true-and-false test of knowledge about sexual abuse (e.g., "Most people who sexually abuse kids are strangers, true or false?"); and a series that asked the child to estimate her or his risk for a variety of life events (e.g., "How likely do you think it is that you would get badly hurt while playing sports?"). Each of these series drew on a different type of intellectual capacity: remembering a personal experience, recalling the details of an educational program, responding to abstract questions, and estimating a hypothetical quality (risk).

There is, in fact, some evidence that the younger children in this sample had more difficulty responding to certain kinds of questions. Table 3 shows

TABLE 3: Problematic[a] Data for Selected Item Series by Age

Series	*Percentage With Problematic Data*		
	Age 10 to 11 (n = *594*)	*Age 12 to 16* (n = *1,405*)	*2-Tailed* p
Screener items for victimizations (12 items)	0.25	0.18	.325
Content of most recent prevention program[b] (9 items)	3.22	2.30	.053
Knowledge about sexual abuse (13 items)	3.19	1.06	< .001
Personal risk for various events (11 items)	1.58	0.58	< .001

a. Included "refused," "not sure," or otherwise missing responses.
b. *N*s are smaller for this series because not all children reported having a prevention program; this analysis included 388 10- to 11-year-olds and 1,020 12- to 16-year-olds.

that, when asked to estimate their own risk for a variety of experiences, children age 10 to 11 responded "not sure," refused, or were simply missing a response significantly more often than their counterparts in the 12- to 16-year-old range. Some age discrepancy was also noted for the test of knowledge about sexual abuse. By contrast, there was no significant age difference in the occurrence of problematic responses to the questions on victimization experiences, and only a marginally significant difference for the questions on prevention program content.

The age differences in problematic responses—noted for both the questions about perceived risk and the true-false quiz about sexual abuse—are likely due to differences in cognitive capabilities between the two age ranges. Specifically, because children younger than 12 have less than fully-developed information processing capabilities, they may experience more difficulty than older children in responding to hypothetical or otherwise abstract questions (Flavell, 1985), such as the perceived risk item in the current study. At the same time, this developmental disadvantage did not affect younger children's ability to recall more concrete circumstances such as personal victimization experiences; this is consistent with research on event memory that suggests that, by the late preschool years, children are generally able to recall with a good deal of accuracy the details of life experiences, particularly those that have personal significance for them (Nelson, 1993; Ornstein, Gordon, & Larus, 1992). Thus, although the 10- and 11-year-olds had more trouble than the older children in trying to respond to abstract questions or questions regarding hypothetical situations, they were equally capable of providing usable answers to questions about personal victimizations and about school programs in which they participated.

Correspondence Among Responses to Similar Questions

As another check on the quality of data obtained from 10- and 11-year-olds, we compared their answers to similar questions given at two different points during the interview. That is, children who told us about a victimization experience were asked when that event occurred, in both a screener question and in a subsequent follow-up series that elicited more detailed information about the event.

The phrasing of the questions did differ somewhat. The screener provided the response categories "in the past week, the past month, the past year, or ____ years ago?" whereas the follow-up series measured the time elapsed only in months or years ago. So, for this analysis, we made the comparison on the basis of number of years ago. Values ranged from 0 (*less than 1 year ago*) to 8 (*8 or more years ago*).

Chi-square analyses revealed no significant differences by age in the consistency of time reports from the screener to the follow-up on either of the two incidents. The percentages of 10- and 11-year-olds versus 12 to 16-year-olds who provided consistent estimates regarding the timing of Incident 1 were 71.8 and 73.7, respectively ($\chi^2 = 0.34$, $p = .56$). For Incident 2, the percentages were 66.7 and 70.4 ($\chi^2 = 0.53$, $p = 0.47$).

Some of the disparity between responses to the screeners and to the follow-ups is likely due to children's efforts to recall information more precisely in the detailed follow-ups or due to the slight difference in response categories provided in the two sections. An example of this would be a child who responded "a year ago" to the screener but "11 months ago" to the follow-up. The importance of the finding is that any changes in response due to confusion or clarification were distributed throughout the sample, not confined to the younger children.

Correspondence With Parent Responses

Still another way of looking at the quality of information from children is to compare their responses to responses from parents on items about which both had been asked similar questions. The questionnaire included two types of such items.

The first item was concerned with whether the parent and child had had a discussion about preventing abuse. This is an event in which, presumably, both parents and children were directly involved. If the younger children had less concordance with parents on this question than the older children, it would suggest that younger children were less reliable respondents. How-

ever, as can be seen in Table 4, the frequency of concordance was about the same for older and younger children. Interestingly, there was a large amount of discordance on this question for both ages. This discordance consisted mostly of cases in which parents said they had talked with children, but the children did not remember or report it. One possible explanation that would account for such differential memory is that children and parents may define such discussions differently. Another possibility is that parents may have felt some social desirability pressure to report having had such a discussion with the child. Or, it may be that children are simply less likely than parents to remember such discussions. Regardless of the interpretation, however, the data do not suggest that the younger children accounted for more of the discordance.

A second item on which parents and children could be compared concerned the question of whether the child had been victimized in the past year. This is an event about which parents and children did not have equal information, because parents were likely to know about victimizations only if their children had revealed such experiences to them in some way. An issue touched on by this question was whether young children might be differentially shy about disclosing their victimization, which would result in more cases of parents reporting a victimization that the children did not report. In fact, as shown in Table 4, there were relatively few cases of parents reporting victimizations not corroborated by the child, and there was only a small difference between younger and older children in this regard. More dramatic, however, is the larger percentage of older children who reported a victimization that the parent did not know about. This suggests that older children are less likely to tell parents about victimizations they have experienced. Although this shows that parents may be better proxy reporters for the victimizations of young children, it also emphasizes that, even for young children, a count based exclusively on parents' reports might well miss more than one fourth of children's victimizations. It should be kept in mind, however, that in the current study parents were asked only a single general question about child victimization, whereas the children themselves were asked a series of questions about specific types of victimizations, a process that may have enhanced the children's memory to a greater degree than the single-question format.

Reaction to the Survey

Another important issue for this research was whether younger children would be more upset or uncomfortable talking about victimization and

TABLE 4: Consistency Between Parent and Child Reports, by Age Group (in percentages)

Parent/Child Responses	*Age Group*	
	10 to 11 (n = 594)	*12 to 16* (n = 1,405)
Parent talked to child about abuse prevention?		
Parent and child concordant	59.8	60.5
Parent yes, child no	37.2	34.4
Parent no, child yes	3.0	5.0
	$\chi^2 = 5.70, p = .13$	
Child victimized within the past year?		
Parent and child concordant	70.8	65.4
Parent yes, child no	4.0	3.2
Parent no, child yes	25.1	31.5
	$\chi^2 = 10.19, p = .02$	

prevention topics. In our survey debriefings, we asked participants whether the interview had been a good experience for them. Two thirds of the youth said it had been good, and only five children reported that it had been bad. The rest indicated neither bad nor good. Of the 2,000 children we spoke to, 39 said they found something in the interview upsetting.

There were no age differences in children's reaction to the survey. An analysis revealed that, in general, the children who had found something upsetting were the ones more likely to have disclosed sexual and/or family assaults ($\chi^2 = 10.38, p < .05$), experiences that may be more painful to recall and disclose.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study yield mixed findings about the performance of 10- and 11-year-olds in a telephone victimization survey of some length and complexity. Much of the survey evidence is supportive of the inclusion of younger children in large-scale victimization research. The 10- and 11-year-old children were not more likely to report being upset by the content of the interview, even though it included such sensitive topics as family violence and sexual abuse. They reported equally high rates for most forms of assault and had no higher levels of problematic responses to the victimization series. This all suggests that they were at no disadvantage in understanding the victimization questions or articulating appropriate responses. They provided

a great deal of specific information about their victimizations, including victimizations some years in the past.

At the same time, other evidence suggests that 10- and 11-year-old respondents had some difficulties with particular aspects of the study. First, the youngest children did demonstrate marginally lower rates of participation, due mostly to parental reluctance to allow them to be interviewed.

Second, the 10- and 11-year-olds disclosed significantly lower rates of the most sensitive kinds of victimization, such as sexual abuse and violence to their genitals. Because this is not a difference in true incidence supported by other research, we think it is most likely due to a discomfort about such episodes and a reticence among younger children to disclose. This suggests that the data gathered from younger children about some kinds of victimization may be less complete.

Finally, younger children had more problematic replies in response to the more abstract types of questions. Because this pattern was not true for the victimization items, it does not pose a problem for inquiries about victimization, but it does highlight some of the potential restrictions on the kinds of questions younger children are capable of responding to in a survey of this type.

On balance, we think the evidence here points in the direction of including—rather than excluding—10- and 11-year-olds in victimization surveys. They provided a great deal of valuable data and overall performed almost as well as the other children. Moreover, one of the problems identified here does not seem particularly serious: The excess of invalid responses applied to a very small group of youngsters and only to more abstract questions that are not essential in victimization surveys.

The participation rate difference is a somewhat more serious problem but not enough to discourage the inclusion of preadolescents. Slightly more younger respondents may be blocked from participation by their caretakers, but the participation rates that can be achieved are still quite respectable. Moreover, it is possible that experiments with recruitment statements and reassurances to parents may be able to overcome some of the parental reticence. It is particularly noteworthy that non-White parents and those most concerned about violence were the least likely to refuse access to their preadolescent children. This is encouraging for the many studies of violence in high-crime and minority areas (Richters & Martinez, 1993), and it also suggests to researchers that to increase participation of preadolescent children, they should try to heighten the salience of the issue among the parents they approach.

The final problem—nondisclosure of sensitive victimizations—is a much more serious one that goes directly to a core issue of whether younger

children's responses can be valid and reliable. Nonetheless, we would contend that if younger children's responses are only problematic for sensitive victimizations, it is better to include them than not, first, because a great deal of relatively valid information will be available at least on less sensitive victimizations, and second, because even in the case of the sensitive victimizations, some data are probably better than none at all. The nondisclosure of sensitive victimizations is in all likelihood a continuum that applies to some extent to the older children and adults, as well. Moreover, it may be a problem that can be in part ameliorated by adapting question wording, placement, and preambles, as recent alterations in the NCVS (Redesign Phase III) questions on sexual assault are currently demonstrating (National Research Council, 1993b).

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the NYVP study reported here suggest that 10- and 11-year-old children are able to provide information of generally good quality regarding their experiences with victimization and other significant life events. The NCVS should consider adding 10- and 11-year-olds to its sample, because currently there is no national data source (other than child abuse and neglect estimates) on the victimizations of people younger than age 12. The addition of the younger children would allow the NCVS to present a more complete picture of the experience of crime in America and would provide valuable information for victimization prevention program designers and others concerned about violence toward children. The inclusion of 10- and 11-year-olds in the NCVS would almost certainly have to be accompanied by efforts to make the interview more appropriate for children, however, both to protect the children and to ensure the validity of the responses. Consideration needs to be given to younger children's cognitive capacities, vocabulary, emotional vulnerability, and consent protections as well as to additional interviewer training. Further research efforts are certainly needed in a variety of areas in anticipation of such interviewing. For example, the current study provided evidence that 10- and 11-year-olds are somewhat more difficult to access by telephone, that younger children have more trouble responding to questions phrased in the abstract, and that although all children are more likely to disclose important life experiences if multiple opportunities to do so are provided, younger children may still have more difficulty disclosing sensitive victimizations. More in-depth research on these and related issues will aid in the design of more child-sensitive interview techniques. The findings from research on forensic interviews with children need to be

incorporated into thinking about survey approaches as well and consideration given to whether specially trained interviewers should be used. Although such research is likely to contribute to an improvement in the quality of data obtained from all young people, it would be most beneficial for the youngest, who appear to experience the most difficulty responding to certain types of questions in a telephone interview.

Additional research is also needed to explore the possibility of interviewing children even younger than 10 about victimizations and related experiences. Relatively little is known about extrafamilial violence and threats against elementary school-age children, and a prime reason for the dearth of information on this topic is that viable interview methodologies for subjects this young have yet to be developed. Comparisons of different modes of interviewing younger children (e.g., by telephone versus face-to-face) would be a useful contribution to the methodological literature in this area.

APPENDIX
Instrumentation

Nonfamily assault

Screener questions

1. "Sometimes kids get hassled by other kids or older kids, who are being bullies or picking on them for some reason. Has anyone—in school, after school, at parties, or somewhere else—picked a fight with you or tried to beat you up?"
2. "Has anyone ever ganged up on you, you know, when a group of kids tries to hurt you or take something from you?"

Definitions

The definition of an attempted or completed assault included any child responding yes to either of these questions (except that any episode involving a family member perpetrator was moved from this category to the family assault category). A completed nonfamily assault was an episode that included actual punching, kicking, hitting with an object, or threatening with a weapon.

Family assault

Screener questions

1. "Sometimes kids get pushed around, hit, or beaten up by members of their own family, like an older brother or sister or parent. Has anyone in your family ever pushed you around, hit you, or tried to beat you up?"
2. "Has anyone in your family gotten so mad or out of control you thought they were really going to hurt you badly?"

Definitions

A completed family assault included the occurrence of actual punching, slapping, kicking, hitting with an object, or threatening with a weapon.

APPENDIX (Continued)

Kidnapping

Screener questions

1. "We've heard about some kids getting hassled by adults or older kids in cars. Has anybody ever tried to kidnap you or tried to get you to get into their car when you thought you might be taken somewhere and hurt?"

Definitions

Completed kidnappings were limited to episodes in which the child was actually taken somewhere.

Sexual abuse/assault

Screener questions

NOTE: The introduction to this set of screeners read as follows:

"Now another thing some kids report these days is adults or older kids who try to trick them or force them into doing something sexual. This includes an older person who tries to touch your private parts or tries to make you touch or look at their private parts. Kids report that these types of things sometimes happen to them even with people they know well and trust, like teachers and relatives."

1. "Has there ever been a time when an older person, like an adult, an older teenager, a baby-sitter, or someone like that, deliberately touched or tried to touch your private parts (for females: including your breasts)?"
2. "Has there ever been a time when an older person, like an adult, an older teenager, a baby-sitter, or someone like that, tried to make you touch or look at their private parts?"
3. "Has there ever been a time when an older person tried to feel you, grab you, or kiss you in a sexual way that made you feel afraid or bad?"
4. "Has there ever been a time when someone your own age—a boy, a girl, or a group of them —tried to threaten, force, or trick you into doing something sexual that you didn't want to do?"
5. "Has there ever been a time when anyone—an older person or someone your own age—did something sexual to you that you didn't want?"
6. "Sometimes they won't actually threaten or hurt you, but adults and older teenagers may act in ways that are strange or suspicious or that make you wonder what they're up to. Has there ever been a time when an older person began to act in a strange or suspicious way around you that made you wonder if they were trying to get sexual with you? This would include acting in a way that seemed too friendly, or hanging around you when they weren't wanted, or touching you in ways you didn't like, or trying to get you to do things that were weird or strange. Has this ever happened to you?"

Definitions

The sexual incidents that we defined as completed fell into two categories: Serious noncontact incidents and contact incidents. Serious noncontact inci-

(continued)

APPENDIX (Continued)

dents included a perpetrator touching the child in a sexual way (but without contact to the private parts) or exposing himself or herself to the child. Also included in the serious noncontact incidents were those in which a parent asked the child "to do something sexual." Contact incidents included a perpetrator touching the sexual parts of a child under or over the clothing, penetrating the child, or engaging in any oral-genital contact with the child.

Violence to genitals

Screener questions

1. "Has there ever been a time when anyone intentionally tried to hurt your private parts by hitting you, kicking you there, or trying to hit them with an object?

Definitions

Completed genital violence included any episode that involved actual violent contact with the child (e.g., hitting or kicking). It should be noted that, although it could not be unambiguously ascertained that the violent contact landed on the private parts, it was clear from the context that this was the intent of the contact.

Corporal punishment

Screener questions

1. "When was the last time one of the adult(s) where you were living slapped, hit, or spanked you?"

Definitions

These two questions were not included in the algorithm for the selection of two incidents for the extensive follow-up questions.

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David Finkelhor, Ph.D., is the codirector of the Family Research Laboratory and a professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire, Durham. He has been studying the problems of child victimization, child maltreatment, and family violence since 1977. He is well-known for his conceptual and empirical work on the problem of child sexual abuse, reflected in publications such as Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse *(Sage, 1986) and* Nursery Crimes *(Sage, 1988). He has also written about child homicide, missing and abducted children, children exposed to domestic and peer violence, and other forms of family violence. In his recent work, he has tried to unify and integrate knowledge about the diverse forms of child victimization in a field he has termed "developmental victimology." He is editor and author of 10 books and more than 75 journal articles and book chapters. He has received grants from the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the U.S. Department of Justice, among others. In 1994, he was given the Distinguished Child Abuse Professional Award by the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children.*