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Violent Victimization of Youth versus Adults in the National Crime Victimization Survey

Patricia Y. Hashima

David Finkelhor

Family Research Laboratory

University of New Hampshire

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Abstract

In order to understand the characteristics of juvenile victimization, explicit comparisons between the victimization of juveniles and adults need to be made. In this paper, rates of violent victimizations of youth aged 12 to 17 and adults were compared using the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), an annual survey of 50,000 American households administered by the U.S. Bureau of Census on behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice. Analyses with 1994 data revealed that juveniles were substantially more likely than adults to be victims of violent crimes and suffer from a crime related injury. Large disparities between juveniles and adults were present for both males and females, Whites and Blacks, and persons from different types of localities. Moreover, juvenile victims were more likely than adult victims to know their offenders. Some characteristics of the NCVS may result in an underestimate of the disproportionate youth victimizations.

Violent Victimization of Youth versus Adults in the National Crime Victimization Survey

Most of the recent public concern about youth and crime has focused on youth as perpetrators. But public and policy awareness has devoted much less attention to another key fact about youth: that it is also a time of heightened vulnerability for crime victimizations. Juveniles are among the most highly victimized segments of the U.S. population. One of the reasons why this reality has not gained more attention is that crime victimization data are often not presented in a way that contrasts the experience of youth and adults. Thus in this paper, we will contrast the rates of different types of violent victimization among youth (12- to 17-year-olds) and adults (18-year-olds and above) using a national survey on criminal victimization.

While under eighteen is the conventional definition of childhood, many statistical publications in the past have not used this cut-off (Macguire & Pastore, 1995). For instance, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the nation's most important source of crime statistics has not until recently provided analyses of juvenile crime victimization using this demarcation (Perkins & Klaus, 1996; Perkins, Klaus, Bastian, & Cohen, 1996). Instead, age of victim has been divided into seven categories including one 12-15 and another 16-19. However, "under eighteen" is an important demarcation to use because it is the legal definition of a juvenile and most public policies concerning youth, including a great deal within the criminal justice system, is based on this demarcation. Eighteen is also frequently the age at which youth graduate from high school, and so it marks a significant change in lifestyles and responsibilities.

Another factor that has inhibited greater recognition of the problem of juvenile crime victimization has been a tendency to minimize its seriousness, even when statistics about its frequency have been available. For example, Garofalo, Siegel, and Laub (1987), reviewing the data from the NCVS on youth victimizations, expressed concern that what was being counted as crimes against youth might consist of trivial events, particularly peer assaults, that were a watering down of the concept of crime. Such events, they commented, "although unpleasant and perhaps frightening, are not as alarming as suggested by the labels 'assault' and robbery'" (Garofalo et al., 1987, p. 331). Cultural stereotypes do seem to consider peer assaults in schools,

for example, as less intrinsically serious than behaviorally equivalent peer assaults between adults in the workplace, but that does not necessarily mean that youth victimizations entail less injury, less physical threat and any fewer medical or psychological consequences. Thus, in this paper we also seek to document and compare the seriousness the violent victimizations occurring to youth (12- to 17-year-olds) and adults (18-year-olds and above). All together, we will examine the following: 1) the rates of crime victimization injury of juveniles and adults; as well as 2) the rates of victimization among youth and adults by gender, ethnicity, locality of residence, and relationship to the offender; and 3) the rates of reporting of victimizations of youth and adults to police.

Method

National Crime Victimization Survey

The data for this articles come from the NCVS. The NCVS, previously known as the National Crime Survey (NCS), is an annual survey of 50,000 American households administered by the U.S. Bureau of the Census on behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice. The NCVS has consistently obtained a very high response rate of about 95% and the large sample size allows calculation of rates for relatively rare types and subtypes of crime.

The NCVS has been conducted since 1973 to collect detailed information about the victims and consequences of crime in the United States. In addition to demographic information, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and income, the NCVS gathers such information as the relationship between victim and offender, whether the crime was reported to police, and reasons for not reporting the crime. American citizens 12 years of age and older living in households and group quarters within the United States and the District of Columbia are eligible as respondents for the survey. Individuals who are in institutions, crews of vessels, or members of the armed forces living in military barracks are excluded from the survey. The Census Bureau selects respondents for the NCVS using a "rotating panel" sample design. Households are randomly selected each

month and all eligible individuals become part of the panel.

Once in the sample, respondents are interviewed seven times. There is a baseline interview (which is not included in the data set) and then six follow-up interviews (one every six months for three years). During the interview, respondents are asked whether they have been victimized during the six month time prior to the interview. The first and fifth interviews are done in person and the rest by telephone, some of which are done using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). After the seventh interview, the household is removed from the panel and a new household is rotated into the sample.

In order to gain more accurate information regarding difficult-to-measure crimes like domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, the survey was recently redesigned. All households received the new redesigned survey in 1994 and the results reported in this study are based on data taken from the NCVS for that year.

The data set being used in this analysis is the "incident-level" file which contains all incidents reported from the redesigned survey during 1994. Although each incident is linked to a particular victim, the unit of analysis for this data is the incident rather than the victim. The NCVS defines "incident" as "[a] specific criminal act involving one or more victims and offenders...Hence, one incident may comprise several victimizations" (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, pp. 963) and a victim also could report more than one incident. However, series crimes were omitted from this analysis. The NCVS defines series crimes as six or more incidents of crime (within a six-month reference period) that are similar in nature, of which the respondent is unable to furnish details of each incident separately. The majority of juveniles and adults (79.8% and 83.6%, respectively) in this dataset reported only one incident.

The final sample included 18,889 respondents in which 2772 were juveniles from age 12 to 17 and 16,117 were adult 18 and older. Among juveniles, the data set included 481 twelve-year olds, 468 thirteen-year-olds, 474 fourteen-year-olds, 449 fifteen-year-olds, 461 sixteen-year-olds, and 439 seventeen-year-olds. The different age groups were represented in proportion to their numbers in the general population.

Measurement

Violent Crime. The "violent crime" category was divided into three categories: "rape/sexual assault," "robbery," and "assault."

Rape/Sexual Assault. The "rape/sexual assault" category included: completed and attempted rape, sexual attack with serious or minor assault, sexual assault without injury, unwanted sexual contact without force, and verbal threat of rape or sexual assault. The NCVS defined "rape" as:

> Forced sexual intercourse and includes both psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s). This category also includes incidents where the penetration is from a foreign object such as a bottle. (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, p. 998).

"Sexual assault" was defined as:

> A wide range of victimizations, separate from rape or attempted rape. These crimes include attacks or attempted attacks generally involving (unwanted) sexual contact between victim and offender. Sexual assaults may or may not involve force, such as grabbing or fondling, for example. Sexual assault also includes verbal threats. (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, pp. 1011-1012).

Robbery. The "robbery" category included the following crime categories: Completed robbery with injury from serious or minor assault, completed robbery without injury from minor assault, attempted robbery with injury from serious or minor assault, and attempted robbery without injury. The NCVS defined "robbery" as: "completed or attempted theft, directly from a person, of property or cash by force or threat of force, with or without a weapon" (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, p. 1003).

Assault. The NCVS defined "assault" as: "an unlawful physical attack, whether aggravated or simple, upon a person" (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, p. 933) and classified the severity of assaults into two major sub-categories: Simple assault and aggravated assault. "Simple assault" was defined as: "an attack without a weapon resulting either in minor injury (e.g., bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, swelling) or in undetermined injury requiring less than two days of hospitalization" (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, p. 934). Attempted assault without a weapon and verbal threat of assault also were included in the NCVS definition of "simple

assault." "Aggravated assault" was defined as "an attack or attempted attack with a weapon, regardless of whether or not an injury occurred, and attack without a weapon when serious injury results" (p. 934). Rape, attempted rape, sexual assaults, and attacks involving theft or attempted theft were excluded.

Injury. To examine if they were injured, victims were asked "What were the injuries you suffered, if any?" (no=0, yes=1). To assess the extent of injury incurred, injury was classified into the following seven categories: 1) bruises, black eye, cuts, scratches, swelling, and chipped teeth; 2) knife or stab wounds; 3) gun shot or bullet wounds; 4) other weapons injury; 5) broken bones or teeth; 6) internal injuries or knocked unconscious; and 7) other injuries.

Medical Treatment. To examine if injured victims were hospitalized, victims were asked, "Were you injured to the extent that you received any medical care, including self treatment?" (no=0, yes=1). To assess whether they were hospitalized, the injured victims were asked, "Did you stay overnight in the hospital?" (no=0, yes=1).

Victim-Offender Relationship. In this paper, the victim-offender relationship was examined for only single-offender incidents. To assess if the respondent knew the offender, the respondent was asked, "Would you be able to recognize the offender if you saw him/her?" If the response was affirmative, the respondent then was asked, "How well did you know the offender? By sight only, casual acquaintance or well known?" If the victim knew the offender well, the respondent was asked, "How did you know the offender? For example, was the offender a friend, cousin, etc.?" The responses were categorized as: 1) spouse at the time of the incident, 2) ex-spouse at the time of the incident, 3) parent or step-parent, 4) own child or step-child, 5) sibling, 6) other relative, 7) boyfriend, girlfriend, or ex-boy/girlfriend, 8) friend or ex-friend, 9) roommate or boarder, 10) schoolmate, 11) neighbor, 12) someone at work or customer, and 13) other non-relative. A variable of victim-offender relationship then was constructed containing three categories: stranger, sight only, and known (which included both casual acquaintance and well known).

Locality. The classification of urban, suburban, and rural areas are based on classification criteria

called the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). MSA is defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget as:

> 1) a city has a population of at least 50,000; or 2) the Census Bureau defines an urbanized area of at least 50,000 people with a total metropolitan population of at least 100,000 (or 75,000 in New England). (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, pp. 975-976).

Furthermore,

> The Census Bureaus' definition of urbanized areas, data on commuting to work, and the strength of the economic and social ties between the surrounding counties and the central city determine which counties not containing a main city are included in an MSA. For New England, MSAs are determined by a core area and related cities and towns, not counties. A metropolitan statistical area may contain more than one city of 50,000 and may cross State lines. (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, p. 976).

The NCVS uses the 1980 MSA status. In our study, we refer to a central city of an MSA as an urban area, an MSA but not in central city as a suburban area, and not an MSA as a rural area.

Data Analysis

Data analyses were conducted using the SPSS mainframe statistical package and Minitab statistical program. Although the NCVS data are often presented without statistical tests (Perkins &Klaus, 1996; Perkins et al., 1996), it is a probability sample and chi-square analyses can and should be conducted to determine whether differences between juvenile and adult victimization rates for different types of personal crimes were likely due to a chance. Instead of a simple random sample, the NCVS uses a stratified, multistage cluster sample. Because of this complex sampling, the effects of this design must be taken into consideration when conducting significance tests. Pointing out that, "variance estimates must be adjusted upward to account for any correlation which may exist between respondents in any given cluster area" (p. 97), Bachman and Coker (1995) estimated the design effect for the NCVS to be approximately 1.92 for personal crimes of violence. Thus, the chi-square statistics reported in this study were first divided by 1.92 before significance was assessed.

Weighted Data. In a large survey data representing the total population, weights are commonly used to obtain population estimates of particular events. For the NCVS data, its sample cases also can be converted to population estimates using a weight created by the U.S. Bureau of Census. (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, p. 66). For different types of analysis, the NCVS provides three classes of weights: household weight, personal weight, and incident weight. For our study, the person weight was selected to compute estimates of crime victimizations of persons in the total population. (See the NCVS Codebook (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1996) for more weighing information.)

Results

Youth versus Adult Rates. The first row of Table 1 shows that the overall violent crime victimization rate for youth 12- to 17-years of age in 1994 was 2.7 times higher than the rate for adults. The 2 x 2 chi-squares were significant for overall violent crime victimization rate ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 18.96$, $p < .01$). Among the three different types of crime, the assault rate for youth was significantly different than the assault rate for adults ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 17.24$, $p < .01$). Specifically, the simple assault rate of youth was 2.9 times higher than the rate for adults ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 13.04$, $p < .01$). It was almost four times as high for simple assault with injury ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.31$, $p < .05$) and three times as high for simple assault without injury ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 6.01$, $p < .05$).

Youth versus Adult Rates by Injury. The first row of Table 2 shows that the overall injury rate for youth 12- to 17-years of age in 1994 was 2.7 times higher than the rate for adults ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.68$, $p < .05$). Youth were almost three times more likely than adults to have a crime related injury. However, the rates of hospitalization for crime related injuries are about the same for youth and adults.

Youth versus Adult Rates by Gender. Juvenile and adult victimization rates were compared by gender in Table 3. We found that juvenile-adult ratios were similar for both sexes. For males, the 2 x 2 chi-squares were significant for overall violent crime victimization rate ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 23.26$, $p < .01$), assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 21.05$, $p <$

.01), and simple assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 15.36$, $p < .01$). For females, the 2 x 2 chi-squares were significant for overall violent crime victimization rate ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 14.21$, $p < .01$), assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 12.92$, $p < .01$), and simple assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 10.13$, $p < .01$).

However, boys were approximately three times as likely as male adults to be victims of aggravated assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.0$, $p < .05$), close to five times as likely as male adults to be victims of simple assault with injury ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 6.58$, $p < .05$), and almost four times as likely as male adults to be victims of simple assault without injury ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 8.27$, $p < .01$). In contrast, girls were four times as likely as adult females to be victims of sexual assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.69$, $p < .05$) and they were three times as likely as female adults to be victims of verbal threat of assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.18$, $p < .05$).

Youth versus Adult Rates by Ethnicity. As can be seen in Table 4, the victimization rates of youth and adults were compared for two ethnic groups: Whites and Blacks. (Other ethnic groups were omitted in our analyses.) When the victimization rate of White juveniles was compared to the victimization rate of White adults, the obtained chi-squares were significant for overall violent crime victimization rate ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 19.60$, $p < .01$), assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 18.08$, $p < .01$), aggravated assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 3.99$, $p < .05$), simple assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 13.62$, $p < .01$), simple assault with injury ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 3.98$, $p < .05$,) and simple assault without injury ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.18$, $p < .05$). For Blacks, the obtained chi-squares were significant for overall violent crime victimization rate ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 18.95$, $p < .01$), assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 18.08$, $p < .01$), aggravated assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.45$, $p < .05$), simple assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 12.82$, $p < .01$), and simple assault without injury ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 11.38$, $p < .01$).

Youth versus Adult Rates by Locality. In Table 5 the victimization rates of youth and adults were compared among three types of locality: urban, suburban, and rural areas. We found that the adult-juvenile rate ratio was the highest for residents of suburban areas ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 25.03$, $p < .01$). Youth living in the suburbs were three times more likely than adults living in the suburbs to be victims of violent crime. The adult-to-juvenile rate ratios were equal for both residents of urban ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 19.81$, $p < .01$) and rural ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 9.86$, $p < .01$) areas.

Juvenile residents of urban areas were twice as likely as adult residents of urban areas to be victims of violent crime. Similarly, juvenile residents of rural areas were twice as likely as adult residents of rural areas to be victims of violent crime.

Youth versus Adult Rates by Relationship to the Offender. In Table 6 the adult-juvenile rate ratio was compared for incidents when the victim did not know the offender and when the victim knew the offender. When the victim did not know the offender, the rates of victimization did not differ between juveniles and adults. However, when the victim knew the offender, the obtained chi-squares were significant for overall violent crime victimization rate ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 13.39$, $p < .01$), assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 12.26$, $p < .01$), simple assault ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 10.02$, $p < .01$), and simple assault without injury ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.62$, $p < .05$).

In Table 7 the victim-offender relationship was broken down further into three categories (i.e., did not know the offender, knew the offender by sight only, and knew the offender well) and the "known" category of victim-offender relationship also was broken down into "related" or "unrelated" subcategories. When the distribution of juvenile and adult victimizations were compared for each of the three categories of victim-offender relationship, we found many significant differences. In particular, a larger proportion of juvenile victims knew their offenders. For overall violent crime victimization, 65% of the juvenile victims knew their offenders well compared to 50% of the adult victims ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 24.33$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, Table 7 shows that among juvenile victims who knew their offenders, the two highest percent distributions were categories of schoolmate (29%) and friend (15%). In contrast, among adult victims who knew their offenders, no one category stood out.

Youth versus Adult Rates of Reporting. In Table 8 we examined whether crime was reported to police by juvenile and adult victims. We found that less than one-third of the overall violent victimization incidents occurring to juveniles and less than one-half of those occurring to adults were reported to the police. For rape/sexual assault in which the victim did not know the offender, however, 74% of the juvenile victims had their

incidents of victimization reported (by them or by others) to the police. For robbery, 59% of adult victims (who did not know the offender) and 68% of adult victims (who knew the offender) responded that incidents of their victimizations were reported.

Youth versus Adult Reasons for Not Reporting. Because of low reporting rates of victimization for both juveniles and adults, we also decided to investigate the reasons for not reporting. As can be seen in Table 9, the highest percent distribution was the "dealt with other way" category in which 36% of juveniles and 33% of adults answered that police were not informed because they took care of their victimization informally. Thirty-one percent of juveniles and 21% of adults also answered that the most important reason was that they felt the incident was not important enough to warrant a police notification.

Discussion

The significance of this study is in highlighting the dramatically high rates and seriousness of crimes against youth. The NCVS statistics reveal that the rates of violent victimization for 12- to 17-year-olds are substantially higher than the rates for adults, for the most part by a factor of two to three times. The higher rates for juveniles held for all types of crimes, although it was only statistically significant for assaults. (Most government publications on crimes fail to distinguish statistically significant and nonsignificant differences.) Such high rates are not restricted to juveniles, in that young adults are also a highly victimized segment of the population. However, when we compared the rates of different types of violent victimization between youth (12- to 17-year-olds) and young adults (18- to 24-year-olds) we found that rates of victimization were similar. In fact, the overall violent crime victimization rate for youth was slightly higher (116 per 1000) although not significantly than the rate for young adults (106 per 1000).

NCVS statistics also cast doubt on claims youth victimizations, even if frequent, are not as serious as those suffered by adults (Garofalo et al., 1987). This analysis shows that youth were almost three times more likely than adults to have a crime related injury. Although the sample sizes for specific injuries are small and

thus unreliable, they do suggest that youth are at least as likely as adults to sustain an injury caused by a weapon. Youth are certainly no less likely than adults to sustain a knife or a gunshot wound in the course of a crime. Furthermore, their rate of hospitalization for crime injuries is at least as high as for adults. It is difficult to look at such rates and conclude that youth victimization is less violent, less threatening or less criminal.

Within the youth population, violent victimization rates were about fifty percent greater for boys than for girls ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.48$, $p < .05$), a gender disparity shown by other studies (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). But when juvenile and adult victimization rates were compared by gender, we found that juvenile-adult disproportions were similar for both males and females. Boys and girls were both almost three times more likely than their adult counterparts to be victims of assault and violent crime in general. When juvenile and adult victimization rates were compared by ethnicity, the conclusions were parallel. While the crime victimization rate for White and Black youth were similar (as in other national self-report studies, Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994), both White and Black juveniles were over two and a half times more likely than their adult counterpart to be victims.

Results also revealed that in all types of locality (i.e., urban, suburban, and rural), the overall violent crime victimization rates were higher for juveniles than adults. Even though for both juveniles and adults, urban areas were more dangerous than rural areas, the overall violent crime victimization rate for youth was higher everywhere. Interestingly, youth living in rural areas had victimization rates as high if not higher (73 per 1000) than adults living in urban areas (57 per 1000). If people think of urban areas as the crime danger zones, it may be important to recognize that youth in rural areas have a vulnerability to victimization that rivals that of adults in such danger zones.

In regards to the victim's relationship to the offender, a large proportion of juvenile victims knew their offenders. Among juvenile victims who knew their offenders, the categories of schoolmates and friends stood out. However, among adult victims who knew their offenders, no one category stood out.

Another important difference between juvenile and adult victimization is in the likelihood of police reporting. Overall the rate of police reporting for juvenile crime victims is lower than for adult crime victims. There is a dramatic exception to this pattern for rape/sexual assault against juveniles and particularly rape/sexual assault by strangers, in which case 74% of the incidents against juveniles were reported to police compared to only 33% for adults. It could be that rape or sexual assault of a juvenile by a stranger is perceived as so dangerous and threatening that it overwhelms any reluctance to report. It also may be the case that adults, who have control over their own reporting, allow their embarrassment over the sexual nature of the crime to inhibit them (for adults, reporting rates for sexual assaults are somewhat lower than for other crimes), whereas the reporting of sex crimes against juveniles may be increased by adult involvement in the decision making and the operation of mandatory child abuse reporting laws.

When respondents were asked what was the most important reason why a victimization incident was not reported to the police, a large portion of juveniles and adults answered that police were not informed because they took care of it informally or they felt the incident was not important enough to warrant a police notification. The NCVS does not make it clear whether respondents felt that the nature of the victimization was not important to them or whether it would be considered as not important by the police. Furthermore, in this "not-important-enough" category, a subcategory called "child offender(s)/kid's stuff" is included. It is an interesting commentary on the prevailing societal view about juvenile victimization that a victim's decision not to report because the offender was a juvenile is so easily categorized as being that the offense was not important. In fact, victims may fail to report juvenile offenders because of a wish to spare juvenile perpetrators a criminal record, rather than a judgment that the victimization was not important.

As the nation's largest continuing survey of American households on their experience with criminal victimization, the NCVS is one of the most important information sources on the amount and distribution of crime and crime trends in the U.S. Although there have been other studies of youth victimization, one of the NCVS's additional major virtues is its ability to provide comparable, uniform, detailed information about

criminal victimization, its circumstances and consequences for both juveniles and adults. These are features that lend particular significance to the findings of this analysis that the rates of violent victimization for 12- to 17-year-olds are substantially higher than the rates for adults.

Why are youth so vulnerable to victimization? In the few places it has been analyzed, the explanatory factor that has been most emphasized in the criminology literature has been the idea that the risk-taking and delinquent behavior of youth increases their risk of crime victimization, an idea for which there is some empirical support (Lauritsen, Sampson & Laub, 1991). But this idea and evidence have also been criticized on a couple of grounds. First, it may not be adequate to explaining the excess victimization that youth suffer at the hands of intimates and acquaintances or the high rates of victimization of younger children (Finkelhor & Asdigian, 1996). Second, there may be some confounding of causal order as victimization may lead to risk-taking and delinquency rather than vice versa (Fagan, Piper & Chang, 1987).

There are other possible explanations of differential youth risk that also need to be explored. First, the dependent status of youth may make them more vulnerable to victimization. Juveniles have much less choice than adults over whom they associate with, and this can put them into more involuntary contact with high risk offenders and thus at greater jeopardy for victimization (Lynch, 1991). For example, when children live in families that mistreat them, they are not free or able to leave. When they live in dangerous neighborhoods, they cannot choose on their own to move. If they attend a school with many hostile and delinquent peers, they cannot simply change schools or quit. They cannot drive around in private cars, live alone or work in limited access offices and factories as can adults. This absence of choice over people and environments may affect juveniles' vulnerability to both intimate victimization and street crime.

Another vulnerability factor that needs to be considered is the weaker formal sanctions that apply to youth victimizations. Much youth violence is excluded de jure or de facto from formal systems of social control. With the exception of gang violence or extreme cases, most cases of juvenile-on-juvenile violence and many cases of adult-on-juvenile violence are not treated as crimes or even serious offenses by the public, police, and

other agents of social control (Finkelhor, 1997). Compared to adults, youth have less access to protection from being victimized when much of youth violence which is often characterized as school-yard fighting and the like, is considered outside the purview of the police and criminal justice system.

Unfortunately, for purposes of analyzing the disproportion of youth victimization and examining some of these theoretical issues, the NCVS has several weaknesses, some quite germane to questions raised in this analysis. First, the NCVS only interviews persons age 12 or older and has no victimization information for younger children, some of who have comparably high victimization rates, as indicated by other studies (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994), but with perhaps important differences, especially at younger ages. The age cut off at twelve in the NCVS was related to NCVS designers' doubts that children younger than twelve would be able to accurately recall an event or understand the survey questions, an assumption that more recent studies and methodologies have called into question (Richters & Martinez, 1993; Selner-O'Hagan, Kindlon, Buka, Raudenbush & Earls, 1998; Shahinfar, Fox & Leavitt, 1997; Singer, 1995). This of course makes it impossible to compare juvenile victimization to adult victimization across the spectrum of childhood. Since childhood is such an extremely heterogeneous category, twelve-year-olds and seventeen-year-olds having not much in common, it is inherently misleading to discuss juvenile victimization in general without reference to age. We would expect the nature, quantity, and impact of victimization to vary across lifespan with the different capabilities, activities, and environments that are characteristic of different stages of development. We need good studies of the different types of victimization across all ages of childhood with which to examine such changes.

Another weakness with the NCVS that has bearing on this analysis is evidence that it tremendously underestimates the rates of youth victimization. Many other self-report studies of youth victimization have emerged with substantially higher rates than the NCVS estimates (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994; Wells & Rankin, 1995). For example, Wells and Rankin (1995) point out that the National Youth Survey estimated the juvenile rate of violent victimization in 1976 to be approximately 267 per 1000 compared to 66 per 1000

for the NCVS or almost four times higher. This was prior to an NCVS redesign in 1992 that has since increased the amount of youth victimization reported (Kindermann, Lynch & Cantor, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 1994) but still not to the level comparable to other studies.

Wells and Rankin (1995) and others point out several factors that probably contribute to the NCVS underestimation of juvenile victimization rates. First, the NCVS has failed to assess certain juvenile specific crime such as statutory rape and sexual abuse. Second, the NCVS sets the context of the interview as an interest in "crime" victimization. If youth are less likely to view their victimizations as crimes, they may be less likely to think of them or disclose them to interviewers. Third, the interviews are not systematically conducted in privacy. Most are done over the phone, but respondents are not asked about the presence of other persons in the room during the phone interview, and youth, who are less likely to live alone or have phones in private quarters, may be reluctant to reveal victimizations in front of their family members, even if they do not involve family victimizations (Wells & Rankin, 1995). Fourth, the NCVS makes no particular effort to render the interview child-sensitive. There may be concepts that are vague or unclear to younger respondents, terms like "illegal" or "incident", and this may inhibit disclosure.

Additionally, the NCVS allows "proxy" interviews for 12- and 13-year-olds in which another individual (e.g., a parent) answers the questions about the child identified to be interviewed. The interviewer would conduct an interview by proxy if the parent refused permission for the child to be interviewed by self-response. If the individual responding for the juvenile is the offender or not aware of the victimization, an underestimation of victimization will occur. For the 1994 data set, fifty-seven proxy interviews were conducted because parents refused permission for their children to be directly interviewed.

Furthermore, the NCVS and all other types of self-report survey are subject to response biases and sampling problems. Because youth are more likely to be victims of crimes perpetrated by intimate offenders, it is likely that candid disclosures are not always obtained. In a large scale telephone survey, obviously those who do not have access to telephone are excluded. For NCVS and many other self-report surveys, individuals

who are not clearly attached to stable household units also are omitted (e.g., runaways). Thus, homeless juveniles, in addition to institutionalized juveniles (e.g., youth in juvenile correctional facilities), who are likely to have higher than average levels of victimization will be missing in the NCVS estimates (Wells & Rankin, 1995). For all these reasons, the disparity between youth and adult victimization may be even greater than what was estimated in the NCVS.

Conclusion

The NCVS data analyzed in this paper revealed that the overall violent victimization of 12- to 17-year-olds (approximately 11 percent of the 1994 U.S. population 12 years of age and up) accounted for almost one-fourth of the estimated 10.86 million victimizations in 1994. This highlights the important issue about youth crime victimization, about which all too little is known. Data, analyses and theoretical discussions of youth victimization are sorely lacking. We desperately need more comprehensive, youth-sensitive national studies to assess the vast quantity of unreported youth victimization, including family violence and youth-on-youth violence. Some of this could be done through supplements and improvements to the NCVS itself. Some need to be done through special studies and new methodologies. Young victims need to receive the same research and policy attention that has been accorded to the problem of young offenders.

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Table 1. Violent Crime Victimizations of Juveniles and Adults: Population Estimates and Ratios, 1994

Type of Crime	Number of Victimizations		Rate of Victimizations (per 1000)		
	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juvenile/Adult Rate Ratio
Violent Crimes	2,625,569	8,235,057	116	43	2.7**
Rape/Sexual Assault	76,497	356,258	3	2	1.5
rape/attempted rape	43,291	248,725	2	1	2.0
sexual assault[1]	19,309[a]	54,179	1[a]	0.3	3.3
verbal threat of rape/sexual assault	6,893[a]	35,761	0.3[a]	0.2	1.5
unwanted sexual contact without force	7,004[a]	17,592[a]	0.3[a]	0.1[a]	3.0
Robbery	263,891	1,034,864	12	5	2.4
completed robbery	160,902	634,228	7	3	2.3
with injury	50,262	237,362	2	1	2.0
without injury	110,640	396,867	5	2	2.5
attempted robbery	102,989	400,635	5	2	2.5
with injury	12,033[a]	109,761	1[a]	1	1.0
without injury	90,956	290,874	4	2	2.0
Assault	2,285,180	6,843,935	101	36	2.8**
aggravated	594,562	1,883,588	26	10	2.6
completed with injury	165,831	512,744	7	3	2.3
attempted with weapon	184,195	538,381	8	3	2.7
threatened with weapon	244,536	832,462	11	4	2.8
simple	1,690,618	4,960,348	75	26	2.9**
with injury	418,138	1,047,924	19	5	3.8*
without injury	667,732	1,678,690	30	9	3.3*
verbal threat of assault	604,748	2,233,734	27	12	2.3

[a] Estimate is based on fewer than 10 cases.

[1] Includes sexual attack with minor or serious assault and sexual assault without injury.

[2] The total population for age 12 to 17 was 22,578,916 in 1994; for age 18 or older, it was 191,168,354.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 2. Crime Victimization Injury of Juveniles and Adults

	Population Estimate		Rate per 1000		
	Juveniles	Adults	Juveniles	Adults	Ratio
Injury (all)	681,160	2,124,798	30	11	2.7*
Bruises, cuts	519,825	1,662,030	23	9	2.6
Knife, stab wound	14,654[a]	44,182	1[a]	0.2	5.0
Gunshot, bullet wound	11,576[a]	27,820[a]	1[a]	0.1[a]	10.0
Other weapon injury	69,437	239,017	3	1	3.0
Broken bones or teeth	21,628[a]	115,276	1[a]	1	1.0
Internal injury/knocked unconscious	12,868[a]	125,410	1[a]	1	1.0
Other injury	123,646	406,025	5	2	2.5
Hospitalization	14,999[a]	67,222	1[a]	0.4	2.5

[a] Estimate is based on fewer than 10 cases.
* $p < .05$

Table 3. Juvenile and Adult Victimizations Rates by Gender.

	Number of Victimizations		Rate of Victimizations (per 1000)		
	Male		Male		
	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juvenile/Adult Rate Ratio
Violent Crimes	1,581,745	4,584,540	137	50	2.7**
Rape/Sexual Assault	4,220[a]	21,346[a]	0.4[a]	0.2[a]	2.0
sexual assault[1]	-	8,123[a]	-	0.1[a]	-
Robbery	182,829	659,246	16	7	2.3
Assault	1,394,696	3,903,949	121	43	2.8**
aggravated	392,970	1,189,470	34	13	2.6*
simple	1,001,725	2,714,479	87	30	2.9**
with injury	272,689	473,850	24	5	4.8*
without injury	431,236	912,161	37	10	3.7**
verbal threat of assault	297,801	1,328,467	26	14	1.9
	Females		Females		
	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juvenile/Adult Rate Ratio
Violent Crimes	1,043,824	3,650,516	95	37	2.6**
Rape/Sexual Assault	72,277	334,912	7	3	2.3
sexual assault[1]	19,309[a]	46,057	2[a]	0.5	4.0*
Robbery	81,063	375,618	7	4	1.8
Assault	890,484	2,939,987	81	30	2.7**
aggravated	201,591	694,118	18	7	2.6
simple	688,893	2,245,869	63	23	2.7**
with injury	145,449	574,074	13	6	2.2
without injury	236,496	766,529	21	8	2.6
verbal threat of assault	306,948	905,267	28	9	3.1*

[1] Includes sexual attack with minor or serious assault and sexual assault without injury.

[a] Estimate is based on fewer than 10 cases.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 4. Juvenile and Adult Victimizations Rates by Ethnicity

	Number of Victimizations		Rate of Victimizations (per 1000)		
	White		White		
	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juvenile/Adult Rate Ratio
Violent Crimes	2,087,914	6,828,844	116	42	2.8**
Rape/Sexual Assault	57,684	287,655	3	2	1.5
Robbery	173,399	697,198	10	4	2.5
Assault	1,856,832	5,843,992	103	36	2.9**
aggravated	456,184	1,505,605	25	9	2.8*
simple	1,400,647	4,338,387	78	27	2.9**
with injury	357,940	909,662	20	6	3.3*
without injury	513,216	1,447,155	28	9	3.1*
verbal threat of assault	529,491	1,981,570	29	12	2.4
	Black		Black		
	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juvenile/Adult Rate Ratio
Violent Crimes	466,535	1,117,196	128	51	2.5**
Rape/Sexual Assault	18,814[a]	50,012	5[a]	2	2.5
Robbery	73,509	286,361	20	13	1.5
Assault	374,212	780,823	103	36	2.9**
aggravated	125,258	300,906	34	14	2.4*
simple	248,954	479,916	68	22	3.1**
with injury	46,255	117,673	13	5	2.6
without injury	137,420	161,328	38	7	5.4**
verbal threat of assault	65,279	200,915	18	9	2.0

[1] Includes sexual attack with minor or serious assault and sexual assault without injury.

[a] Estimate is based on fewer than 10 cases.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 5. Juvenile and Adult Violent Crime Victimization Rates by Locality of Residence[1]

	Population Estimate		Rate per 1000		
	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Ratio
Urban	845,493	3,240,739	139	57	2.4**
Suburban	1,363,036	3,705,320	127	41	3.1**
Rural	417,040	1,288,997	73	30	2.4**

[1] Definition based upon the 1980 Metropolitan Statistical Area.
** $p < .01$

Table 6. Juvenile and Adult Victimization Rates by Relationship to Offender

	Number of Victimizations		Rate of victimizations (per 1000)		
	Stranger		Stranger		
	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juvenile/Adult Rate Ratio
Violent Crimes	352,495	2,415,707	16	13	1.2
Rape/Sexual Assault	9,489[a]	60,290	0.4[a]	0.3	1.3
Robbery	37,633	369,928	2	2	1.0
Assault	305,373	1,985,488	14	10	1.4
aggravated	105,803	570,131	5	3	1.7
simple	199,571	1,415,357	9	7	1.3
with injury	47,993	208,193	2	1	2.0
without injury	70,778	541,480	3	3	1.0
verbal threat of assault	80,799	665,684	4	3	1.3
	Non-Stranger		Non-Stranger		
	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juveniles ages 12-17	Adults	Juvenile/Adult Rate Ratio
Violent Crimes	1,483,463	3,873,640	66	20	3.3**
Rape/Sexual Assault	54,912	253,043	2	1	2.0
Robbery	72,840	194,622	3	1	3.0
Assault	1,355,710	3,425,975	60	18	3.3**
aggravated	271,906	747,800	12	4	3.0
simple	1,083,804	2,678,174	48	14	3.4**
with injury	268,093	646,179	12	3	4.0
without injury	445,550	824,000	20	4	5.0*
verbal threat of assault	370,161	1,207,995	16	6	2.7

[1] Includes sexual attack with minor or serious assault and sexual assault wihtout injury.

[a] Estimate is based on fewer than 10 cases.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 7. Percent Distribution[b] of Juvenile and Adult Victimizations by Type of Crime and Relationship to Offender[c]

	Violent Crimes		Rape/ Sexual Assault[1]		Robbery		Assault	
	Juv.	Ad.	Juv.	Ad.	Juv.	Ad.	Juv.	Ad.
Stranger	19%	39%**	15%[a]	20%	35%	66%**	19%	37%**
Had Seen Before	16%	11%*	4%[a]	11%	16%[a]	5%*	17%	12%*
Known	65%	50%**	82%	69%	49%	29%	65%	51%**
Known - related								
Spouse	-	5%	-	8%[a]	-	3%[a]	-	5%
Ex-Spouse	-	2%	-	4%[a]	-	1%[a]	-	2%
Parent/Step parent	2%[a]	1%	-	1%[a]	5%[a]	1%[a]	1%[a]	1%
Child/Step child	-	1%	-	-	-	2%[a]	-	1%
Sibling	1%	2%	-	1%[a]	2%[a]	2%[a]	1%[a]	2%
Other Relative	2%	2%	4%[a]	1%[a]	5%[a]	1%[a]	1%[a]	3%
Total	**5%**	**13%**	**4%[a]**	**15%**	**12%[a]**	**10%**	**4%**	**14%**
Known - unrelated								
Boy/Girlfriend	3%	8%	15%[a]	16%	2%[a]	7%	3%	8%
Friend	15%	6%	20%[a]	16%	5%[a]	5%	16%	6%
Roomate/Boarder	-	1%	-	2%[a]	-	-	-	1%
Schoolmate	29%	1%	8%[a]	4%[a]	20%[a]	-	31%	1%
Neighbor	5%	4%	4%[a]	2%[a]	7%[a]	1%[a]	5%	4%
Co-Worker/Customer	1%[a]	8%	-	5%[a]	-	0.5%[a]	1%[a]	9%
Other Non-Relative	6%	8%	31%[a]	9%	4%[a]	4%[a]	6%	9%
Total	**60%**	**37%**	**77%**	**55%**	**36%**	**18%**	**61%**	**38%**

[1] Includes sexual attack with minor or serious assault and sexual assault without injury.
[a] Estimate is based on fewer than 10 cases.
[b] Percentages may not add up to total due to rounding.
[c] Single offender case only.
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 8. Percent Distribution of Juvenile and Adult Victimizations Reported to Police by Relationship to Offender

	% Reported to Police	
	Juvenile	Adult
Violent Crimes		
stranger	33%	44%
non-stranger[1]	21%	43%
Rape/Sexual Assault		
stranger	74%[a]	33%[a]
non-stranger	44%[a]	27%
Robbery		
stranger	26%[a]	59%
non-stranger	33%	68%
Assault		
stranger	32%	41%
non-stranger	19%	43%

[1] Included victim knowing the offender well and by sight only.
[a] Estimate is based on fewer than 10 cases.

Table 9. Percent[b] of Most Important Reasons for Not Reporting Victimizations to the Police

	Juvenile	Adult
Violent Crimes		
Dealt with other way	**36%**	**33%**
reported to another official (guard, apt. manager, school official)	19%	10%
private or personal matter or took care of it myself	17%	23%
Not important enough	**31%**	**21%**
minor or unsuccessful crime, small or no loss, recovered property	24%	18%
child offender(s), "kid stuff"	5%	1%
not clear it was a crime or harm was intended	2%	3%
Insurance wouldn't cover	-	-
no insurance, loss less than deductible, etc.	-	-
Police couldn't do anything	**1%**	**4%**
didn't find out until too late	0.1%	0.4%
could not recover or identify property	0.2%	0.3%
could not find or identify offender, lack of proof	1%	3%
Police wouldn't help	**4%**	**9%**
police wouldn't think it was important enough	3%	6%
police would be inefficient, ineffective	1%	2%
police would be biased, would harass/insult respondent	-	1%
offender was police officer	-	0.1%
Other reason	**28%**	**32%**
did not want to get offender in trouble with the law	2%	3%
was advised not to report to police	0.3%	0.3%
afraid of reprisal by offender or others	4%	3%
did not want to or could not take time - too inconvenient	3%	3%
other	14%	19%
respondent not present or doesn't know why it wasn't reported	4%	1%
no one reason was more important	2%	3%

[b] Percentages may not add up to total due to rounding