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**Individual, Institutional, and Community Sources of School Violence:  
A Meta-Analysis**

National Institute of Justice  
Comprehensive School Safety Initiative  
Final Summary Overview

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## Executive Summary

Tragedies like those at Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Stoneman Douglas force us to admit that our schools are not always the safe places that we want them to be. And yet stacked on top of these events is also the daily task facing school administrators of keeping youths safe from the full spectrum of forms of violence—including bullying and intimidation, harassment, fighting, and carrying weapons—in the school environment. As a result, pressure has been placed on lawmakers to enact policies to enhance school safety. The problem, however, is that creating effective, evidence-based policies to address violence in school would first require knowing what the sources—or what might be termed the “root causes”—of school violence are. And on that front, we unfortunately fall short.

Accordingly, with the support of the National Institute of Justice, the current study subjected the body of empirical literature on school violence to a meta-analysis, or “quantitative synthesis,” to determine the key individual-, school-, and community-level factors that influence violence and related problems (victimization, offending, and aggressive behavior) within primary and secondary (K-12) schools. Our analyses are based on a total of 8,551 effect sizes drawn from 693 studies of school violence—a sample that represents the largest meta-analysis conducted in the field of criminal justice and is among the largest compiled in the social sciences generally. We assessed a total of 31 different predictors of school violence at the individual, institutional, and community levels. Separate analyses were conducted to assess the major predictors of (1) any victimization at school, (2) bullying victimization, (3) violent victimization, (4) any aggressive/delinquent behavior at school, (5) bullying perpetration, (6) violent offending, and (7) bringing a weapon to school.

Our findings indicate that the strongest and most consistent risk factors for various forms of aggression/delinquency at school were antisocial behaviors, deviant peers, victimization, peer rejection, and antisocial attitudes. For victimization at school, the strongest predictors were prior victimization, low social competence, peer rejection, violent school context, and negative school climate. LGBT students and those with disabilities were also found to have high risks of being victimized at school. Target hardening practices, such as installing security cameras and metal detectors, or having a school resource officer or school security guard present, were among the weakest mean effect size estimates and had virtually no association with any form of violence or victimization at school.

This project informs research and policy alike. First, policies and programs aimed at reducing aggressive/delinquent behavior at schools should target problematic cognitions/beliefs among students, as well as deviant peer influences and other high-risk, antisocial behaviors. Second, with respect to victimization, school officials must be able to identify vulnerable students (e.g., those low on social competence, rejected by their peers, or share other social disadvantages), and policies/interventions should be tailored toward assisting vulnerable students in navigating the social hierarchies they find themselves within. Finally, traditional target hardening approaches to school violence—including having a police presence at schools along with other formal security measures—are not sufficient solutions for reducing school violence and victimization.

## Statement of the Problem

Horrific events like the school shootings at Columbine and Sandy Hook have undoubtedly—and understandably—shocked the nation. Tragedies like these and others like them force us to admit that our schools are not always the safe places that we want them to be. And yet stacked on top of these events is also the daily task facing school administrators of keeping youths safe from the full spectrum of forms of violence—including bullying and intimidation, harassment, fighting, and carrying weapons—in the school environment. It is therefore not surprising that school violence is of great concern to scholars, policymakers, and the public.

And this concern comes with good reason. To be sure, exposure to violence—particularly when it happens when one is young—tends to carry with it a wide array of negative consequences. Being exposed to violence can comprise one’s health and psycho-emotional functioning, and lead to problems like depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and delinquent behavior. Recent work even suggests that these consequences can extend well into adulthood (Östberg, Modin, & Låftman, 2018; Turanovic & Pratt, 2015; Wolke & Lereya, 2015). That these kinds of outcomes can be tied to youths’ experiences at school leaves little doubt that addressing violence in school is critically important.

As a result, pressure has been placed on lawmakers to enact policies to enhance school safety (Cornell & Limber, 2015; Rocque, 2012). The problem, however, is that creating effective, evidence-based policies to address violence in school would first require knowing what the sources—or what might be termed the “root causes”—of school violence are (see, e.g., the discussion by Welsh & Farrington, 2011). And on that front, we unfortunately fall short. The primary implication of this knowledge gap is that any effort to develop policy-based solutions to address a problem that we do not yet fully understand would amount to little more than sheer improvisation.

Importantly, the lack of knowledge of the causes of violence in school is not due to a lack of studies on the subject. Indeed, we literally have hundreds of them already (Steffgen, Recchia, & Viechtbauer, 2013; Scheckner et al., 2002; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001). There is even a peer-reviewed journal that is devoted specifically to this topic (*Journal of School Violence*, which is now in its 18<sup>th</sup> volume). And yet despite all of that, we are still not as clear about these root causes as we would like to be. Why is this?

In large part, the reason is that there is a lack of effort to organize the knowledge that has been produced. Some narrative reviews and meta-analyses of specific domains have been undertaken (e.g., Cook et al., 2010; Gottfredson, 2001; Wilson et al., 2001). However, there is a need to subject the extensive body of empirical studies to a comprehensive meta-analytic review. Such a review is required to advance our understanding of what the existing literature tells us about the nature of school violence and about which children are at a greater risk to be victimized at school. After decades of empirical research on the subject, it is important that we firmly determine what this literature shows are the important individual, institutional (i.e., school), and community-level sources of violence at school.

## The Importance of Meta-Analysis

Conducting a meta-analysis is particularly useful when a body of literature is large and when a consensus has yet to be reached concerning the relative importance of various predictors of a key outcome of interest (Pratt, 2010)—two properties that certainly characterize the literature on violence in school. A meta-analysis—or “quantitative synthesis”—entails “the application of statistical procedures to collections of empirical findings for the purpose of integrating,

synthesizing, and making sense of them” (Niemi, 1986, p. 5). This method allows for the calculation of precise estimates of the “effect size” of certain relationships so that more concrete inferences can be made about their relative importance.

What is also useful about a meta-analysis is that it can provide firm evidence concerning how the effect size of a certain relationship varies according to the different methodological approaches taken within a body of literature (Lipsey, 2003; Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). In the present case our meta-analysis allows us to see whether the relationship between, for example, the effect of associating with delinquent peers is stronger or weaker for particular forms of violence (e.g., bullying others or engaging in violent offending), which would give us insight regarding the potential need (or not) for behavior-specific policy or program interventions. And alternatively, our meta-analysis also shows which factors are generally immune to these same methodological variations (i.e., which factors seem to have “general effects”), which would indicate that any policy or program being developed to address violence in school would need to keep those factors in mind. This is what meta-analysis can do, and it is critically needed at this point in the literature to tell us what the root causes of school violence are, to inform us about what kinds of policy interventions are likely to be most effective, and where to go next with respect to studying school violence.

### **Research Objectives**

Given the concern that NIJ has expressed regarding the “root causes” underlying school safety, the *purpose* of the current research was to subject the body of empirical literature on school violence to a meta-analysis, or “quantitative synthesis,” to determine the key individual-, school-, and community-level factors that substantially influence violence in school. The primary *goals* of the meta-analysis are to inform school violence research and evidence-based policies by: (1) organizing the existing empirical knowledge base regarding school violence; and (2) identifying the key individual-, school-, and community-level factors that should be targeted for change and/or intervention to reduce school violence, aggression, and delinquency. Specifically, this research was guided by the following three *objectives*:

1. Determine which individual-level factors are most salient in predicting whether students will perpetrate aggression/delinquency or experience victimization at school.
2. Determine which school-level factors influence the likelihood that a student will either perpetrate aggression/delinquency or will be victimized at school.
3. Determine which community-level factors are most strongly associated with student aggression/delinquency or victimization at school.

In carrying out the current research, our broader objective was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of school violence—a phenomenon that affects the lives of so many of our nation’s youth.

### **Project Design and Methods**

#### **Sample of Studies**

Consistent with standard meta-analytic methods (Moher et al., 2009), the sample of studies was assembled in three phases, the first of which involved an extensive literature search through electronic databases for empirical studies published up to January of 2016. Using Google scholar and the electronic holdings of five major academic publishing websites (Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley), we began our search using the key phrases “school” and violence,” and then linked those phrases with “victim\*,” “bullying,” “peer,” “aggress\*,” “attack,” “harm,”

“crime,” “offend\*,” “delinquency,” “threat,” “fight,” “hit,” “steal,” and “weapon.” Second, we searched through the electronic holdings of 107 different journals for any remaining studies that were not picked up during our prior searches (see Table 1 for a list of these journals). Third, the reference lists of prior literature reviews, reports, and smaller meta-analyses were harvested for any remaining studies that were not located via our prior searches.

Following this process, we set our inclusion criteria to be as broad as possible: all studies printed in English that presented a statistical relationship between any of our identified individual-, school-, or community-level predictors and any form of violence, aggression, or delinquency *at school* were eligible for inclusion in the meta-analysis. We focused exclusively on violence, aggression, or delinquency within primary and secondary schools (i.e., kindergarten through twelfth grade).

We originally identified 3,874 studies that—based on their titles, abstracts, and/or general topics—seemed to be candidates for inclusion. Many of these studies were eventually excluded for: 1) not presenting any statistical associations (e.g., the study was qualitative or descriptive), 2) not presenting a statistical association between one of our predictor domains and aggression/delinquency or victimization at school, 3) not specifying that aggression/delinquency or victimization occurred specifically while *at school*, and 4) not presenting enough information to calculate an effect size estimate (e.g., not presenting standard errors in multivariate regression models, or failing to report the sample size).<sup>1</sup>

A total of 693 studies comprised our final sample (see Appendix A for a list of these studies). These studies contributed a total of 8,551 effect size estimates—3,840 for delinquency/aggression (44.91%), and 4,711 for victimization (55.09%). These effect sizes were drawn from 545 independent data sets and 68 different nations. The majority of effect size estimates (56.22%) were based on U.S. samples.

Most studies contributed more than one effect size estimate to our sample. This is because a single study could provide statistical relationships for different types of predictors and because most studies presented multiple statistical relationships per predictor variable (e.g., for different forms of violence, or separately for males and females). We elected to include multiple effect sizes per study for two reasons. First, it would be difficult to develop a methodologically defensible decision rule for selecting one effect size estimate while ignoring others from the same study. This could “introduce, wittingly or unwittingly, a ‘researcher’ bias” into the meta-analysis (Pratt & Cullen, 2000, p. 941). And second, selecting only one effect size estimate from each study would severely limit our ability to explore how methodological variations across the studies—especially with respect to different outcome variables—influence the effect size estimates (Van den Noortgate et al., 2013). While this raises the concern of a lack of statistical independence among the effect size estimates in our data, we adjust for this possibility in our analysis (described later on).

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<sup>1</sup> Although we did not explicitly exclude studies of violence against students by outsiders (individuals not authorized to be on school grounds) or by adults at school (e.g., teachers), these studies are likely underrepresented in the meta-analysis. Even so, aside from the victimization studies that focused specifically on victimization/bullying by peers, it was usually unclear who the perpetrators were. For the most part, studies assessed victimization by asking students whether they experienced some form of harassment or assault at school in the past several months, without asking them to specify who the perpetrator was.



**Table 1. Journals Targeted for Additional Searches**

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<i>Advances in School Mental Health Promotion</i>	<i>Journal of Crime and Justice</i>
<i>Aggressive Behavior</i>	<i>Journal of Criminal Justice</i>
<i>American Educational Research Journal</i>	<i>Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics</i>
<i>American Journal of Criminal Justice</i>	<i>Journal of Early Adolescence</i>
<i>American Journal of Public Health</i>	<i>Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology</i>
<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>	<i>Journal of Educational Measurement</i>
<i>American Sociological Review</i>	<i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>
<i>Anxiety, Stress, and Coping</i>	<i>Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders</i>
<i>Behaviour Research and Therapy</i>	<i>Journal of Experimental Child Psychology</i>
<i>British Journal of Developmental Psychology</i>	<i>Journal of Evidence Based Social Work</i>
<i>British Journal of Educational Psychology</i>	<i>Journal of Health and Social Behavior</i>
<i>Canadian Journal of School Psychology</i>	<i>Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment</i>
<i>Child Abuse and Neglect</i>	<i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence</i>
<i>Child Development</i>	<i>Journal of LGBT Youth</i>
<i>Child Maltreatment</i>	<i>Journal of Pediatric Psychology</i>
<i>Child Welfare</i>	<i>Journal of Pediatrics</i>
<i>Children and Youth Services Review</i>	<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>
<i>Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i>	<i>Journal of Primary Prevention</i>
<i>Crime and Delinquency</i>	<i>Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community</i>
<i>Criminal Justice and Behavior</i>	<i>Journal of Quantitative Criminology</i>
<i>Criminal Justice Review</i>	<i>Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency</i>
<i>Criminal Justice Studies</i>	<i>Journal of Research on Adolescence</i>
<i>Criminology</i>	<i>Journal of School Health</i>
<i>Criminology and Criminal Justice</i>	<i>Journal of School Psychology</i>
<i>Development and Psychopathology</i>	<i>Journal of School Violence</i>
<i>Developmental Psychology</i>	<i>Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology</i>
<i>Developmental Science</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry</i>
<i>Deviant Behavior</i>	<i>Journal of Traumatic Stress</i>
<i>Educational Psychology</i>	<i>Journal of Youth and Adolescence</i>
<i>Educational Research</i>	<i>Justice Quarterly</i>
<i>Educational Studies</i>	<i>Learning and Instruction</i>
<i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i>	<i>Maternal and Child Health Journal</i>
<i>European Journal of Criminology</i>	<i>Pediatrics</i>
<i>European Journal of Developmental Psychology</i>	<i>Personality and Individual Differences</i>
<i>International Journal of Adolescence and Youth</i>	<i>Psychology, Health, and Medicine</i>
<i>International Journal of Behavioral Development</i>	<i>Psychology of Violence</i>
<i>International Journal on School Disaffection</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of Psychology</i>
<i>International Review of Victimology</i>	<i>School Psychology Quarterly</i>
<i>JAMA</i>	<i>School Psychology International</i>
<i>JAMA Pediatrics</i>	<i>Social Development</i>
<i>Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology</i>	<i>Social Forces</i>
<i>Journal of Adolescence</i>	<i>Social Influence</i>
<i>Journal of Adolescent Health</i>	<i>Social Networks</i>
<i>Journal of Adolescent Research</i>	<i>Social Problems</i>
<i>Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma</i>	<i>Social Science Research</i>
<i>Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology</i>	<i>Sociological Focus</i>
<i>Journal of Applied School Psychology</i>	<i>Sociological Spectrum</i>
<i>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i>	<i>Stress, Trauma, and Crisis</i>
<i>Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology</i>	<i>Trauma, Violence, and Abuse</i>
<i>Journal of Clinical Psychiatry</i>	<i>Victims and Offenders</i>
<i>Journal of Community Psychology</i>	<i>Violence and Victims</i>
<i>Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology</i>	<i>Youth &amp; Society</i>
<i>Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice</i>	<i>Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice</i>
<i>Journal of Counseling Psychology</i>	

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## Publication Bias

All effect sizes included in the meta-analysis were drawn from published works, and we did not include any unpublished reports, dissertations, or theses in our sample. One potential problem with the meta-analysis of published literature is that editors and reviewers may be biased in favor of statistically significant findings—so much so that even the most comprehensive literature searches may not uncover all tests of a hypothesis (e.g., Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). Rosenthal (1979) referred to this as the “file drawer problem,” given the tendency of studies with null findings to remain in file drawers rather than to be published by authors. If present in a meta-analysis, publication bias can result in inferential errors resulting from inflated effect size estimates and a restricted range of values, especially among studies with small sample sizes (Egger & Smith, 1998; Head et al., 2015). Nevertheless, over 33% of the effect sizes that we coded were null in their original studies, and the regression-based method of detecting funnel plot asymmetry described by Egger et al. (1997) did not reveal publication bias to be an issue in our analyses.

## Effect Size Estimate

The effect size estimate is the meta-analytic equivalent of the dependent variable. In the current study, the effect size estimate represents the magnitude of the relationship between a particular predictor and school violence in each statistical model. Effect size estimates were measured using two possible proxies available in “correlational” or non-experimental research: the zero-order correlation coefficient ( $r$ ), and standardized coefficients from multivariate models (e.g., a beta weight  $\beta$ ) (Hedges & Olkin, 1985; Peterson & Brown, 2005; Pratt & Cullen, 2005). Zero-order correlation coefficients are bivariate estimates that were typically obtained from each empirical study’s correlation matrix (assuming one was either provided or could be calculated), and standardized regression coefficients were drawn from multivariate statistical models in each study. The correlation coefficient was chosen not only for its ease of interpretation, but also because formulas are widely available for converting other test statistics into an  $r$  (or  $\beta$ ) value. This kind of flexibility is particularly useful in the present literature where various multivariate methods are employed across studies.

Following the methods described by Pratt et al. (2014, p. 93) and Pyrooz et al. (2016, p. 371), effect sizes from regression models were coded by converting a  $t$ -ratio to an  $r$  using the equation  $r = t / \sqrt{t^2 + n - 2}$ ,  $z$  values were converted by  $r = z / \sqrt{z^2 + n}$ , and methods for standardizing unstandardized coefficients were employed when  $t$  or  $z$  values could not be computed (see Menard, 2004). The sample is thus composed of standardized effect sizes that can be interpreted as the change in the dependent variable (school violence) associated with a standard deviation change in the independent variable.

We recognize that using these conversion formulas carries the potential for errors in estimation, but it is important to note that meta-analytic procedures for the use of multivariate effect size estimates (i.e., partial correlation coefficients) have been understood for some time (Paternoster, 1987; Pratt & Cullen, 2000; Savage & Yancey, 2008; Tittle et al., 1978). We also note that the conversion formulas we employed are more appropriate than other methods for standardizing multivariate coefficients (see Long, 1997) that produce substantially inflated effect sizes. In all, meta-analysis methodologists tend to agree that using these methods is the best approach, even if imperfect, for the kinds of analyses we conducted (see Ferguson, 2015). Our analyses also control statistically for whether each effect size was produced from a bivariate or multivariate statistical model.

## Predictor Domains

We assessed total of 31 different predictors of school violence at the individual, institutional, and community levels, as seen in Table 2. First, at the individual level, in addition to standard sociodemographic factors (*age, sex, race, and socioeconomic status*), we coded for certain cognitive, behavioral, and experiential risk factors that have been shown to be important sources of violence and victimization generally (*self-control, antisocial attitudes, antisocial behaviors, substance use, prior victimization, affiliating with deviant peers, and weapon carrying*). Note that antisocial behaviors included predictor variables of delinquency or the perpetration of aggression, either inside or outside of school. Several protective factors were also coded that may insulate youths from violence, such as *risk avoidance behavior* (avoiding school or areas at school that seem dangerous), participating in *extracurricular activities* (sports other school clubs), strong *bonds to school*, strong *bonds to parents*, high *school performance* (e.g., grades, test scores, academic achievement), high *social competence* (e.g., social-emotional skills of communication, conflict resolution, problem solving in social situations), and *popularity* among peers. Following the literature, we also included three additional sources of vulnerability to violence or victimization at school: *peer rejection, LGBT status*, and whether the student had a physical or learning *disability*.

With respect to the institutional (or school-level) sources of violence, we coded for various factors that the literature has deemed important, such as *negative school climate* (e.g., respect for students and teachers, fairness of rules, clarity of rules, organizational focus, morale, administrative leadership quality), *urban school, school size, violent school context* (e.g., student fights, weapons, gang activity), and *school disorder* (e.g., physical and social disorder, substance use at school, graffiti). We also coded for facets of school security, including *security devices* (metal detectors and security cameras) as well as the presence of an *officer or guard* (which included school resource officers and security guards).

With respect to *community-level* sources of violence at school, for those studies that assessed these effects we coded for indicators of community *economic deprivation* (e.g., economic disadvantage, poverty, structured inequality), *community crime*, and *community disorder*—the most common ecological criminogenic risk factors used in studies of violence.

**Table 2. Predictor Domains**

Individual Level		School Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Sex (male)</li> <li>• Race (non-white)</li> <li>• Socioeconomic status</li> <li>• Self-control</li> <li>• Antisocial attitudes</li> <li>• Antisocial behavior</li> <li>• Substance use</li> <li>• Prior victimization</li> <li>• Deviant peers</li> <li>• Weapon carrying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk avoidance</li> <li>• Extracurriculars</li> <li>• Bonds to school</li> <li>• Bonds to parents</li> <li>• School performance</li> <li>• Social competence</li> <li>• Popularity</li> <li>• Peer rejection</li> <li>• LGBT</li> <li>• Disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative climate</li> <li>• Urban school</li> <li>• School size</li> <li>• Violent school</li> <li>• School disorder</li> <li>• Security devices</li> <li>• Officer or guard</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic deprivation</li> <li>• Crime rate</li> <li>• Community disorder</li> </ul>

## Type of Outcome

Because school violence can encompass a broad spectrum of behaviors and is tied to other forms of aggression and delinquency at school, we included effect sizes for various forms of violent and aggressive acts. Specifically, for victimization at school, we included *bullying victimization*, *violent victimization* (including general violence, assault, aggravated assault, and sexual assault), *nonviolent victimization* (including general nonviolent or property victimization, theft, threats, and sexual harassment), *general victimization* (for studies that combined violent and nonviolent victimization into a single measure), and *exposure to school violence*. For aggression/delinquency at school, we included *bullying*, *violent offending* (including general violence, assault, aggravated assault, and sexual assault), *nonviolent delinquency* (including general nonviolent delinquency, theft, threats, and sexual harassment), *general delinquency* (for studies that combined violent and nonviolent delinquency), and *bringing a weapon to school*.

## Coding of Studies

A coding scheme was developed to explicitly outline the coding of each effect size estimate in the meta-analysis. This code sheet contained information on all individual-, institutional-, and community-level predictors of interest, the type of statistical model, as well as the type of outcome variable and conversion formulas. Developing an extensive code sheet of this nature was important in order to minimize ambiguity in coding decisions and ensure uniformity in coding across studies. The code sheet was tested on a random sample of 10 studies before coding began to check for and resolve any problems. Disagreements that arose in coding were discussed collectively among all coders. Inter-rater reliability was assessed across 4 studies and 60 effect size estimates, and was calculated at .88 across four separate coders.

## Data Analysis

The meta-analytic data were structured hierarchically with three primary levels, where level 1 of the data included effect size estimates, level 2 included individual studies, and level 3 included independent datasets, such that effect sizes were nested within studies, nested within datasets. Since we coded multiple effect size estimates per study, there were issues of statistical dependence that needed to be addressed. For example, effect sizes drawn from the same study (or dataset) likely shared the same sample and data collection methods, and studies often assessed multiple, yet related, outcome measures. These issues can result in artificially narrow confidence intervals and underestimated standard errors—problems that can bias the results in favor of statistical significance.

Accordingly, we estimated V-known multilevel models designed to address issues associated with nested data (Hox, 2010; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).<sup>2</sup> These models explicitly recognize that effect sizes from the same study (or dataset) may be more similar than effect sizes from other studies, and that some studies (or datasets) contribute more effect sizes than others. By incorporating into the statistical model a unique random effect for each organizational unit, these multilevel models avoid violating the assumption of independent observations that traditional regression analysis would commit if applied to nested data (Van den Noortgate et al., 2013; Weisz et al., 2017).

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<sup>2</sup> The issues of statistical dependence that we face using meta-analytic data are similar to other hierarchical datasets. For example, data that contain students nested within schools, individuals nested within neighborhoods, or inmates nested within prisons face similar statistical dependence problems that can be addressed using multilevel modeling techniques (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

This means that a study that reported 10 effect size estimates will not contribute to the meta-analysis 10 times more than a study reporting only 1 effect size. Rather, when using multilevel modeling, the reliability of effect size estimates within groups (i.e., studies and datasets) is used to estimate the variance of group-level parameters. The more reliable (or stable) the effect-size estimates are within a particular group, the greater weight assigned to the group mean. Likewise, the less reliable the responses are in a group, the smaller the weight assigned to the group mean.

An important difference between meta-analytic data and other multilevel data, however, is that in a meta-analysis, a portion of the sampling variance of each effect size estimate at level 1 is assumed to be known. The calculation of this level 1 variance is necessary since effect sizes are statistics drawn from other analyses that have varying precision, reflected in the form of standard errors. When using multilevel modeling, this imprecision is reflected through a variance component equal to the square of these standard errors (the “variance known” or “V-known” model, Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

Accordingly, our multilevel models were specified by including the standard error of effect size estimates in the random part of the level 1 equation with a constrained variance of one (Hox, 2010). Following prior research, bivariate standard errors were calculated using  $\sigma = \sqrt{1/(n - 3)}$  (see Lipsey & Wilson, 2001; Pratt et al., 2016). Standard errors from multivariate effect sizes were calculated using  $\sigma = r/(b/SE)$ , where  $(b/SE)$  corresponds to a  $t$  ratio or  $z$  value (or, the unstandardized regression coefficient divided by its standard error) reported in each study (Pratt et al., 2014; Pyrooz et al., 2016). Our V-known models therefore contained both the known variance and the within-study variance of effect size estimates at level 1.<sup>3</sup> All V-known models were estimated in Stata 14 using *meglm* (StataCorp, 2015).

Our analyses proceeded in the following stages. First, we estimated mean effect size estimates across all of our predictor domains for victimization at school. We then conducted supplemental analyses specific to bullying victimization and violent victimization at school. Next, we calculated mean effect size estimates across all predictor domains for aggression/delinquency at school. Additional analyses were then conducted for bullying perpetration, violent offending, and bringing a weapon to school. For each outcome assessed, we rank ordered the predictors by their mean effect size estimates to determine the strongest and most consistent predictors of school victimization, aggression, and violence.

### **Results for Victimization at School**

Table 3 provides an overview of the 4,718 effect size estimates that were coded for victimization at school. The majority of these effect sizes corresponded to school bullying victimization (58.99%), followed by violent victimization at school (17.15%), nonviolent victimization at school (15.52%), general victimization (i.e., for studies that used a combined measure of violent and nonviolent victimization; 6.42%), and exposure to school violence (1.93%). Most of the effect sizes for victimization at school were drawn from bivariate statistical models (64.75%).

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<sup>3</sup> Note that this same model can also sometimes be described as having a four-level hierarchical structure, where the known variance for each effect size estimate is at level 1, the within-study variation is at level 2, the between-study variation is at level 3, and the between-dataset variation is at level 4 (see, e.g., Weisz et al., 2017).

**Table 3. Overview of Effect Size Estimates for Victimization at School**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N (ESEs)</b>
Type of Outcome		
Bullying victimization	58.99%	2783
Violent victimization	17.15%	809
General violence	5.28%	249
Assault	8.99%	424
Aggravated assault	1.38%	65
Sexual assault	1.50%	71
Nonviolent victimization	15.52%	732
General nonviolent	1.78%	84
Theft	4.37%	206
Threats	5.68%	268
Sexual harassment	3.69%	174
General victimization	6.42%	303
Exposure to violence	1.93%	91
Type of Predictor		
Individual level		
Age	6.13%	289
Sex (male)	23.97%	1131
Race (non-white)	8.39%	396
Socioeconomic status	3.14%	148
Self-control	1.23%	58
Antisocial attitudes	1.50%	71
Antisocial behavior	9.03%	426
Substance use	0.78%	37
Prior victimization	10.03%	473
Deviant peers	0.74%	35
Weapon carrying	0.45%	21
Risk avoidance	0.53%	25
Extracurriculars	2.01%	95
Bonds to school	4.30%	203
Bonds to parents	1.82%	86
School performance	4.18%	197
Social competence	4.35%	205
Popularity	0.68%	32
Peer rejection	1.91%	90
LGBT	1.02%	48
Disability	2.97%	140
School level		
Negative climate	3.26%	154
Urban school	1.76%	83
School size	1.80%	85
Violent school	1.19%	56
School disorder	0.91%	43
Security devices	0.28%	13
Officer or guard	0.13%	6
Community level		
Economic deprivation	1.19%	56
Community crime	0.23%	11
Community disorder	0.11%	5
Research Design		
Bivariate	64.75%	3055
Multivariate	35.25%	1663

*N* = 4,718

*Abbreviations:* ESE = effect size estimate.

## Predictors of Any Victimization at School

Table 4 displays the rank order of the mean effect size estimates for the 31 different individual, school, and community level predictors of victimization at school across 400 data sets, 502 studies, and 4,718 effect size estimates. The rank ordering of these estimates was based on the relative magnitude of the mean effect size estimates presented in Table 5.

The top five correlates of victimization at school were prior victimization, social competence (a protective factor), violent school context, peer rejection, and negative school climate. The effect sizes for prior victimization (.3154), social competence (-.2385), and violent school context (.2028) were quite substantial by meta-analytic standards; whereas the effects of peer rejection (.1650), and negative school climate (.1475) were more moderate. Disability status (.1474), engaging in antisocial behavior (.1467), and identifying as LGBT (.1450) also emerged as moderately strong risk factors for victimization at school. Note that these estimates were adjusted to account for differences in magnitude between bivariate and multivariate effect sizes, and that the mean effect size estimates can be interpreted as the change in the dependent variable (victimization) associated with a standard deviation change in each predictor variable.

**Table 4. Rank-Ordered Effect Size Estimates of Individual-, School-, and Community-Level Predictors of Any Victimization at School**

Rank	Predictor	Direction of Effect
1	Prior victimization	+
2	Social competence	-
3	Violent school context	+
4	Peer rejection	+
5	Negative school climate	+
6	Disability	+
7	Antisocial behavior	+
8	LGBT	+
9	Self-control	-
10	Popularity	-
11	Deviant peers	+
12	Antisocial attitudes	+
13	Sex (male)	+
14	School performance	-
15	Bonds to parents	-
16	Bonds to school	-
17	Age	-
18	Community economic deprivation	+
<b>Predictors Unrelated to Victimization at School</b>		
<i>n.s.</i>	Community crime	
<i>n.s.</i>	Risk avoidance	
<i>n.s.</i>	School disorder	
<i>n.s.</i>	Weapon carrying	
<i>n.s.</i>	Race (non-white)	
<i>n.s.</i>	Community disorder	
<i>n.s.</i>	Extracurriculars	
<i>n.s.</i>	Substance use	
<i>n.s.</i>	Urban school	
<i>n.s.</i>	School size	
<i>n.s.</i>	Officer or guard at school	
<i>n.s.</i>	School security devices	
<i>n.s.</i>	Socioeconomic status	

**Table 5. Mean Effect Size Estimates for Predictors of Any Victimization at School**

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>Mean ESE</b>	<b>(SE)</b>	<b>95% CI</b>	<b>N (ESEs)</b>	<b>N (Studies)</b>
<b>Individual Level</b>					
Age	-.0502**	(.0108)	-.0713 – -.0291	289	99
Sex (male)	.0684**	(.0099)	.0490 – .0877	1131	283
Race (non-white)	-.0214	(.0115)	-.0439 – .0012	396	78
Socioeconomic status <sup>^</sup>	.0065	(.0071)	-.0074 – .0204	148	39
Self-control <sup>^</sup>	-.1091**	(.0252)	-.1585 – -.0597	58	17
Antisocial attitudes	.0702*	(.0315)	.0084 – .1319	71	20
Antisocial behavior <sup>^</sup>	.1467**	(.0165)	.1144 – .1789	426	140
Substance use	.0147	(.0570)	-.0971 – .1264	37	13
Prior victimization <sup>^</sup>	.3154**	(.0268)	.2629 – .3678	473	113
Deviant peers	.0725**	(.0199)	.0335 – .1114	35	14
Weapon carrying <sup>^</sup>	.0248	(.0255)	-.0253 – .0748	21	7
Risk avoidance <sup>^</sup>	.0600	(.0722)	-.0815 – .2014	25	8
Extracurriculars <sup>^</sup>	.0169	(.0121)	-.0068 – .0406	95	24
Bonds to school <sup>^</sup>	-.0502**	(.0147)	-.0789 – -.0215	203	61
Bonds to parents <sup>^</sup>	-.0514*	(.0220)	-.0944 – -.0083	86	37
School performance <sup>^</sup>	-.0579**	(.0200)	-.0971 – -.0187	197	64
Social competence	-.2385**	(.0325)	-.0302 – -.1748	205	69
Popularity <sup>^</sup>	-.1083*	(.0471)	-.2001 – -.0159	32	8
Peer rejection <sup>^</sup>	.1650**	(.0552)	.0567 – .2732	90	25
LGBT	.1450**	(.0247)	.0967 – .1933	48	10
Disability	.1474**	(.0449)	.0593 – .2355	140	16
<b>School Level</b>					
Negative climate	.1475**	(.0206)	.1072 – .1879	154	42
Urban school	-.0141	(.0083)	-.0304 – .0022	83	17
School size <sup>^</sup>	-.0121	(.0062)	-.0259 – .0018	85	26
Violent school	.2028**	(.0591)	.0697 – .3359	56	15
School disorder <sup>^</sup>	.0318	(.0170)	-.0015 – .0651	43	12
Security devices	-.0068	(.0132)	-.0327 – .0190	13	5
Officer or guard	.0090	(.0130)	-.1562 – .1743	6	4
<b>Community Level</b>					
Economic deprivation <sup>^</sup>	.0228*	(.0104)	.0023 – .0432	56	18
Community crime	.0662	(.0370)	-.0349 – .1673	11	5
Community disorder	.0200	(.0157)	-.1777 – .2177	5	2

*Notes:* Effect sizes represent standardized correlation coefficients. Mean effect sizes were estimated using variance-known hierarchical linear models. Models adjust for bivariate vs. multivariate effect size estimates.

*Abbreviations:* ESE = effect size estimate; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

<sup>^</sup> bivariate and multivariate effect sizes differ in magnitude ( $p < .05$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).



## Predictors of Bullying Victimization at School

Next, the sample was limited solely to effect sizes for bullying victimization at school. In total, there were 2,783 effect sizes for bullying victimization spanning 341 data sets and 412 studies. Bullying victimization can be physical (hitting, punching, kicking, shoving), verbal (teasing, mocking, being called names, being threatened) or relational (spreading rumors, being left out, ignored, or excluded), and most studies combined these different forms of bullying victimization together into a single measure. Table 6 displays the rank order of the mean effect size estimates for school bullying victimization across 25 individual, school, and community level predictors. The rank ordering of these estimates was based on the mean effect size estimates presented in Table 7. Some predictors could not be assessed due to an inadequate number of effect sizes, and these included weapon-carrying, risk avoidance, school security devices, the presence of an officer or guard at school, community crime, and community disorder.

The top five correlates of bullying victimization at school were prior victimization, social competence (a protective factor), violent school context, peer rejection, and LGBT status. The effect sizes for prior victimization (.3235) and social competence (-.2544) were rather large, whereas the effects of violent school context (.1892), peer rejection (.1625), and LGBT status (.1580) were more moderate. Disability status (.1519), self-control (-.1501) and engaging in antisocial behavior (.1477) also emerged as moderately strong correlates of bullying victimization.

**Table 6. Rank-Ordered Effect Size Estimates of Individual-, School-, and Community-Level Predictors of Bullying Victimization at School**

Rank	Predictor	Direction of Effect
1	Prior victimization	+
2	Social competence	-
3	Violent school context	+
4	Peer rejection	+
5	LGBT	+
6	Disability	+
7	Self-control	-
8	Antisocial behavior	+
9	Bonds to parents	-
10	Popularity	-
11	Antisocial attitudes	+
12	Negative school climate	+
13	Bonds to school	-
14	School performance	-
15	Age	-
16	Sex (male)	+
<b>Predictors Unrelated to Bullying Victimization at School</b>		
<i>n.s.</i>	Substance use	
<i>n.s.</i>	Deviant peers	
<i>n.s.</i>	Race (non-white)	
<i>n.s.</i>	Socioeconomic status	
<i>n.s.</i>	School size	
<i>n.s.</i>	Urban school	
<i>n.s.</i>	Community economic deprivation	
<i>n.s.</i>	Extra curriculars	
<i>n.s.</i>	School disorder	

**Table 7. Mean Effect Size Estimates for Predictors of Bullying Victimization at School**

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>Mean ESE</b>	<b>(SE)</b>	<b>95% CI</b>	<b>N (ESEs)</b>	<b>N (Studies)</b>
<b>Individual Level</b>					
Age	-.0526**	(.0127)	-.0775 – -.0277	168	78
Sex (male)	.0300**	(.0110)	.0084 – .0516	652	225
Race (non-white)	-.0307	(.0263)	-.0822 – .0208	163	45
Socioeconomic status <sup>^</sup>	-.0241	(.0249)	-.0730 – .0247	79	20
Self-control <sup>^</sup>	-.1501**	(.0500)	-.2481 – -.0520	15	8
Antisocial attitudes	.1071**	(.0231)	.0619 – .1523	56	16
Antisocial behavior <sup>^</sup>	.1477**	(.0213)	.1059 – .1895	331	114
Substance use	.0846	(.0521)	-.0431 – .2123	10	7
Prior victimization <sup>^</sup>	.3235**	(.0322)	.2602 – .3865	297	92
Deviant peers <sup>^</sup>	.0319	(.0441)	-.1513 – .2152	7	4
Extracurriculars <sup>^</sup>	.0025	(.0264)	-.0492 – .0542	46	12
Bonds to school <sup>^</sup>	-.0605*	(.0305)	-.1201 – -.0008	128	41
Bonds to parents <sup>^</sup>	-.1113**	(.0239)	-.1582 – -.0644	66	28
School performance <sup>^</sup>	-.0550*	(.0258)	-.1055 – -.0044	131	46
Social competence	-.2544**	(.0330)	-.3190 – -.1898	183	64
Popularity <sup>^</sup>	-.1083*	(.0471)	-.2007 – -.0159	32	8
Peer rejection <sup>^</sup>	.1625**	(.0564)	.0519 – .2731	83	24
LGBT	.1580**	(.0216)	.1157 – .2003	31	9
Disability	.1519**	(.0491)	.0558 – .2481	128	16
<b>School Level</b>					
Negative climate <sup>^</sup>	.0711**	(.0264)	.0194 – .1229	61	29
Urban school <sup>^</sup>	-.0075	(.0120)	-.0474 – .0323	15	6
School size	-.0124	(.0053)	-.0263 – .0016	24	11
Violent school	.1892**	(.0645)	.0628 – .3155	32	14
School disorder <sup>^</sup>	.0014	(.0028)	-.0337 – .0366	6	5
<b>Community Level</b>					
Economic deprivation <sup>^</sup>	.0064	(.0068)	-.0069 – .0198	13	8

*Notes:* Effect sizes represent standardized correlation coefficients. Mean effect sizes were estimated using variance-known hierarchical linear models. Models adjust for bivariate vs. multivariate effect size estimates.

*Abbreviations:* ESE = effect size estimate; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

<sup>^</sup> bivariate and multivariate effect sizes differ in magnitude ( $p < .05$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

## Predictors of Violent Victimization at School

We next examined mean effect size estimates for violent victimization at school. Violent victimization encompassed forms of general violence (30.78%), assault (52.41%), aggravated assault (8.03%), and sexual assault (8.78%). In total, there were 809 effect size estimates for violent victimization spanning 105 data sets and 115 studies. Table 8 shows the rank order of the mean effect size estimates across 25 individual, school, and community level predictors of violent victimization at school. The rank ordering of these estimates was based on the mean effect size estimates presented in Table 9. The following predictors could not be assessed due to an inadequate number of effect sizes: antisocial attitudes, popularity, school security devices, the presence of an officer or guard at school, community crime, and community disorder.

The top five correlates of violent victimization at school were prior victimization, peer rejection, violent school context, social competence (a protective factor), and negative school climate. The effect sizes for prior victimization (.3426) and peer rejection (.2346) were substantial, and the effects of violent school context (.1559), social competence (-.1524), and negative school climate (.1423) were more moderate. Being male (.1305) and engaging in antisocial behavior (.1179) fell close behind as moderate risk factors for violent victimization at school.

**Table 8. Rank-Ordered Effect Size Estimates of Individual-, School-, and Community-Level Predictors of Violent Victimization at School**

Rank	Predictor	Direction of Effect
1	Prior victimization	+
2	Peer rejection	+
3	Violent school context	+
4	Social competence	-
5	Negative school climate	+
6	Sex (male)	+
7	Antisocial behavior	+
8	Bonds to school	-
9	LGBT	+
10	School performance	-
11	School disorder	+
12	Self-control	-
13	Age	-
14	Deviant peers	+
15	Community economic deprivation	+
<b>Predictors Unrelated to Violent Victimization at School</b>		
<i>n.s.</i>	Risk avoidance	
<i>n.s.</i>	Disability	
<i>n.s.</i>	Weapon carrying	
<i>n.s.</i>	School size	
<i>n.s.</i>	Extracurriculars	
<i>n.s.</i>	Socioeconomic status	
<i>n.s.</i>	Bonds to parents	
<i>n.s.</i>	Urban school	
<i>n.s.</i>	Substance use	
<i>n.s.</i>	Race (non-white)	

**Table 9. Mean Effect Size Estimates for Predictors of Violent Victimization at School**

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>Mean ESE</b>	<b>(SE)</b>	<b>95% CI</b>	<b>N (ESEs)</b>	<b>N (Studies)</b>
<b>Individual Level</b>					
Age	-.0593**	(.0175)	-.0936 – -.0250	60	28
Sex (male)	.1305**	(.0210)	.0893 – .1716	202	79
Race (non-white)	-.0029	(.0114)	-.0252 – .0194	101	27
Socioeconomic status	.0204	(.0159)	-.0146 – .0554	25	14
Self-control	-.0629*	(.0259)	-.1137 – -.0121	12	6
Antisocial behavior <sup>^</sup>	.1179**	(.0219)	.0750 – .1608	40	21
Substance use	.0044	(.0188)	-.0324 – .0412	8	4
Prior victimization <sup>^</sup>	.3426**	(.0419)	.2605 – .4247	74	25
Deviant peers	.0480**	(.0131)	.0224 – .0736	16	10
Weapon carrying <sup>^</sup>	.0328	(.0245)	-.0153 – .0810	6	4
Risk avoidance <sup>^</sup>	.0679	(.0463)	-.0227 – .1586	9	4
Extracurriculars	.0209	(.0117)	-.0063 – .0480	19	9
Bonds to school <sup>^</sup>	-.0804**	(.0195)	-.1186 – -.0421	22	13
Bonds to parents	-.0197	(.0046)	-.0718 – .0323	9	4
School performance	-.0755*	(.0379)	-.1497 – -.0012	28	14
Social competence	-.1524**	(.0544)	-.2591 – -.0458	13	6
Peer rejection	.2346**	(.0009)	.2328 – .2364	5	4
LGBT	.0794**	(.0196)	.0410 – .1177	9	3
Disability	.0567	(.1086)	-1.3238 – 1.4371	8	2
<b>School Level</b>					
Negative climate	.1423**	(.0431)	.0578 – .2268	31	15
Urban school <sup>^</sup>	-.0064	(.0096)	-.0252 – .0125	30	9
School size <sup>^</sup>	-.0288	(.0205)	-.0758 – .0182	24	12
Violent school	.1559*	(.0371)	.0463 – .2655	12	6
School disorder <sup>^</sup>	.0747**	(.0244)	.0269 – .1126	17	7
<b>Community Level</b>					
Economic deprivation	.0300*	(.0114)	.0007 – .0452	20	10

*Notes:* Effect sizes represent standardized correlation coefficients. Mean effect sizes were estimated using variance-known hierarchical linear models. Models adjust for bivariate vs. multivariate effect size estimates.

*Abbreviations:* ESE = effect size estimate; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

<sup>^</sup> bivariate and multivariate effect sizes differ in magnitude ( $p < .05$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

### **Results for Aggressive/Delinquent Behavior at School**

Table 10 provides an overview of the 3,840 effect size estimates that were coded for any form of aggression, violence, or delinquency at school. The majority of these effect sizes corresponded to bullying and general aggression toward peers (60.29%), followed by violent offending at school (15.91%), nonviolent delinquency at school (9.32%), general delinquency (i.e., for studies that used a combined measure of violent and nonviolent delinquency; 7.06%), and bringing a weapon to school (7.34%). More than half of the effect sizes for aggression/delinquency at school were drawn from bivariate statistical models (59.11%).

**Table 10. Overview of Effect Size Estimates for Aggression/Delinquency at School**

Characteristic	Percent	<i>N</i>
Type of Outcome		
Bullying	60.29%	2315
Violent offending	15.91%	611
General violence	4.38%	168
Assault	9.51%	365
Aggravated assault	1.02%	39
Sexual assault	1.02%	39
Nonviolent delinquency	9.32%	358
General nonviolent	1.02%	39
Theft	0.60%	23
Threats	6.67%	256
Sexual harassment	1.12%	43
General delinquency	7.06%	271
Bringing a weapon to school	7.34%	282
Type of Predictor		
Individual level		
Age	5.62%	216
Sex (male)	20.60%	791
Race (non-white)	4.09%	157
Socioeconomic status	3.57%	137
Self-control	2.50%	96
Antisocial attitudes	5.68%	218
Antisocial behavior	15.52%	596
Substance use	0.78%	30
Victimization	7.37%	283
Deviant peers	1.69%	65
Weapon carrying	0.23%	9
Risk avoidance	0.57%	22
Extracurriculars	0.42%	16
Bonds to school	3.91%	150
Bonds to parents	3.26%	125
School performance	2.50%	96
Social competence	4.17%	160
Popularity	2.01%	77
Peer rejection	2.06%	79
LGBT	0.13%	5
Disability	1.85%	71
School level		
Negative climate	2.29%	88
Urban school	2.03%	78
School size	1.25%	48
Violent school	1.28%	49
School disorder	0.55%	21
Security devices	0.47%	18
Officer or guard	1.80%	69
Community level		
Economic deprivation	0.42%	16
Crime rate	1.17%	45
Community disorder	0.23%	9
Research Design		
Bivariate	59.11%	2270
Multivariate	40.89%	1570

*N* = 3,840

## Predictors of Any Aggressive/Delinquent Behavior at School

Table 11 displays the rank order of the mean effect size estimates for the 31 different individual, school, and community level predictors of aggressive/delinquent behavior at school across 364 data sets, 441 studies, and 3,840 effect size estimates. The rank ordering of these estimates was based on the mean effect size estimates presented in Table 12.

The top five correlates of aggressive/delinquent behavior at school were antisocial behavior, deviant peers, victimization, peer rejection, and weapon carrying. The mean effect size for antisocial behavior (.3862) was rather large in magnitude, and the effect sizes for deviant peers (.2444), victimization (.2024), peer rejection (.2020), and weapon carrying (.1934) were also moderately strong by meta-analytic standards. Antisocial attitudes (.1680) also emerged as a moderate risk factor for aggressive/delinquent behavior at school. Recall that these estimates were adjusted to account for differences between bivariate and multivariate effect sizes, and that the mean effect size estimates can be interpreted as the change in the dependent variable (aggression/delinquency) associated with a standard deviation change in each predictor variable.

**Table 11. Rank-Ordered Effect Size Estimates of Individual-, School-, and Community-Level Predictors of Any Aggressive/ Delinquent Behavior at School**

Rank	Predictor	Direction of Effect
1	Antisocial behavior	+
2	Deviant peers	+
3	Victimization	+
4	Peer rejection	+
5	Weapon carrying	+
6	Antisocial attitudes	+
7	Social competence	-
8	Self-control	-
9	Substance use	+
10	Bonds to parents	-
11	Violent school context	+
12	Bonds to school	-
13	Negative school climate	+
14	Sex (male)	+
15	School disorder	+
16	Community crime	+
17	School performance	-
18	Socioeconomic status	-
19	Officer or guard at school	+
<b>Predictors Unrelated to Aggression/Delinquency at School</b>		
<i>n.s.</i>	Popularity	
<i>n.s.</i>	Disability	
<i>n.s.</i>	Community disorder	
<i>n.s.</i>	School size	
<i>n.s.</i>	LGBT	
<i>n.s.</i>	Race (non-white)	
<i>n.s.</i>	Economic deprivation	
<i>n.s.</i>	Age	
<i>n.s.</i>	Extracurriculars	
<i>n.s.</i>	School security devices	
<i>n.s.</i>	Risk avoidance	

**Table 12. Mean Effect Size Estimates for Predictors of Any Aggressive/Delinquent Behavior at School**

Predictor	Mean ESE	(SE)	95% CI	N (ESEs)	N (Studies)
<b>Individual Level</b>					
Age <sup>^</sup>	.0148	(.0121)	-.0089 – .0385	216	84
Sex (male) <sup>^</sup>	.0827**	(.0100)	.0632 – .1023	791	251
Race (non-white) <sup>^</sup>	.0305	(.0227)	-.0139 – .0749	157	47
Socioeconomic status <sup>^</sup>	-.0448*	(.0215)	-.0870 – -.0026	137	41
Self-control <sup>^</sup>	-.1286**	(.0309)	-.1892 – -.0680	96	23
Antisocial attitudes <sup>^</sup>	.1680**	(.0209)	.1269 – .2090	218	46
Antisocial behavior <sup>^</sup>	.3862**	(.0223)	.3425 – .4300	596	138
Substance use <sup>^</sup>	.1244**	(.0334)	.0589 – .1898	30	12
Victimization	.2024**	(.0206)	.1620 – .2428	283	90
Deviant peers	.2444**	(.0315)	.1828 – .3061	65	16
Weapon carrying	.1934**	(.0469)	.1020 – .2857	9	5
Risk avoidance	.0006	(.0468)	-.1242 – .1253	22	7
Extracurriculars	.0118	(.0327)	-.0522 – .0759	16	10
Bonds to school <sup>^</sup>	-.0932**	(.0137)	-.1200 – -.0664	150	46
Bonds to parents <sup>^</sup>	-.1140**	(.0228)	-.1586 – -.0693	125	40
School performance <sup>^</sup>	-.0554**	(.0200)	-.0946 – -.0162	96	40
Social competence	-.1338**	(.0443)	-.2207 – -.0469	160	54
Popularity	-.0410	(.0450)	-.1293 – .0472	77	16
Peer rejection	.2020*	(.0935)	.0188 – .3852	79	17
LGBT <sup>^</sup>	-.0420	(.0234)	-.0879 – .0039	5	2
Disability	.0273	(.0898)	-.1487 – .2034	71	15
<b>School Level</b>					
Negative climate	.0874**	(.0262)	.0360 – .1387	88	30
Urban school	.0152	(.0186)	-.0209 – .0518	78	18
School size	.0510	(.0274)	-.0027 – .1047	48	14
Violent school	.1100*	(.0489)	.0141 – .2058	49	9
School disorder <sup>^</sup>	.0817**	(.0168)	.0489 – .1146	21	3
Security devices	.0062	(.0127)	-.0186 – .0311	18	2
Officer or guard <sup>^</sup>	.0155*	(.0073)	.0012 – .0299	69	5
<b>Community Level</b>					
Economic deprivation	.0273	(.0579)	-.0862 – .1408	16	5
Community crime	.0737*	(.0326)	.0098 – .1377	45	11
Community disorder	.0517	(.0603)	-.0665 – .1698	9	2

*Notes:* Effect sizes represent standardized correlation coefficients. Mean effect sizes were estimated using variance-known hierarchical linear models. Models adjust for bivariate vs. multivariate effect size estimates.

*Abbreviations:* ESE = effect size estimate; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

<sup>^</sup> bivariate and multivariate effect sizes differ in magnitude ( $p < .05$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

## Predictors of Bullying Perpetration at School

Next, the sample was limited solely to effect sizes for bullying perpetration at school. There were 2,315 mean effect size estimates, drawn from 347 studies and 306 datasets. Bullying could be physical (hitting, punching, kicking, shoving), verbal (threatening, teasing, mocking), or relational (spreading rumors, ignoring or alienating someone), and most studies used a single, combined measure of bullying. Table 13 displays the rank order of the mean effect size estimates for 25 individual, school, and community level predictors of bullying. The rank ordering is based on the mean effect size estimates presented in Table 14. Some predictors could not be assessed due to an inadequate number of effect sizes: weapon-carrying, risk avoidance, LGBT, school security devices, the presence of an officer or guard at school, and community disorder.

The top five correlates of bullying others at school were antisocial behavior, substance use (drugs or alcohol), peer rejection, antisocial attitudes, and victimization. The effect size for antisocial behavior was substantial (.3764), and the effect sizes for substance use (.2480) and peer rejection (.2191) were also strong. The mean effect sizes for antisocial attitudes (.1838) and victimization (.1794) were more moderate, and similar in magnitude to the predictors of social competence (-.1595) and deviant peers (.1455). The community crime rate (.1275) was also found to have a moderately strong influence on school bullying, with a mean effect size similar to that of self-control (-.1256) and bonds to school (-.1222). Disability status, which was one of the strongest risk factors for bullying victimization, was unrelated to bullying perpetration.

**Table 13. Rank-Ordered Effect Size Estimates of Individual-, School-, and Community-Level Predictors of Bullying Perpetration at School**

Rank	Predictor	Direction of Effect
1	Antisocial behavior	+
2	Substance use	+
3	Peer rejection	+
4	Antisocial attitudes	+
5	Victimization	+
6	Social competence	-
7	Deviant peers	+
8	Community crime	+
9	Self-control	-
10	Bonds to school	-
11	Violent school context	+
12	Bonds to parents	-
13	School disorder	+
14	School performance	-
15	Negative school climate	+
16	Sex (male)	+
<b>Predictors Unrelated Bullying Perpetration at School</b>		
<i>n.s.</i>	Race (non-white)	
<i>n.s.</i>	Socioeconomic status	
<i>n.s.</i>	Popularity	
<i>n.s.</i>	Urban school	
<i>n.s.</i>	Economic deprivation	
<i>n.s.</i>	Extracurriculars	
<i>n.s.</i>	Age	
<i>n.s.</i>	Disability	
<i>n.s.</i>	School size	



**Table 14. Mean Effect Size Estimates for Predictors of School Bullying Perpetration**

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>Mean ESE</b>	<b>(SE)</b>	<b>95% CI</b>	<b>N (ESEs)</b>	<b>N (Studies)</b>
<b>Individual Level</b>					
Age <sup>^</sup>	.0206	(.0156)	-.0100 – .0512	161	69
Sex (male) <sup>^</sup>	.0693**	(.0135)	.0429 – .0958	521	208
Race (non-white) <sup>^</sup>	.0553	(.0323)	-.0079 – .1185	76	27
Socioeconomic status <sup>^</sup>	-.0525	(.0277)	-.1067 – .0018	116	30
Self-control <sup>^</sup>	-.1256*	(.0502)	-.2240 – -.0272	41	16
Antisocial attitudes <sup>^</sup>	.1838**	(.0218)	.1412 – .2265	176	38
Antisocial behavior <sup>^</sup>	.3764**	(.0249)	.3276 – .4252	390	111
Substance use	.2480**	(.0691)	.1126 – .3834	15	7
Victimization	.1794**	(.0350)	.1107 – .2481	151	66
Deviant peers <sup>^</sup>	.1455*	(.0584)	.0310 – .2600	10	6
Extracurriculars <sup>^</sup>	.0222	(.0370)	-.0503 – .0948	14	8
Bonds to school <sup>^</sup>	-.1222**	(.0233)	-.1680 – -.0765	65	31
Bonds to parents <sup>^</sup>	-.1090**	(.0324)	-.1726 – -.0455	69	31
School performance <sup>^</sup>	-.0902**	(.0324)	-.1538 – -.0267	74	33
Social competence	-.1595**	(.0454)	-.2486 – -.0705	128	44
Popularity <sup>^</sup>	-.0323	(.0488)	-.1279 – .0632	64	15
Peer rejection	.2191*	(.0974)	.0281 – .4100	67	17
Disability	.0170	(.0846)	-.1489 – .1828	48	15
<b>School Level</b>					
Negative climate	.0814**	(.0309)	.0209 – .1419	45	21
Urban school <sup>^</sup>	-.0290	(.0268)	-.1020 – .0440	11	6
School size	-.0162	(.0164)	-.0772 – .0448	8	5
Violent school	.1106*	(.0476)	.0173 – .2038	4	2
School disorder <sup>^</sup>	.0955**	(.0179)	.0605 – .1305	18	2
<b>Community Level</b>					
Economic deprivation	-.0283	(.0895)	-.2038 – .1472	7	2
Community crime	.1275**	(.0469)	.0356 – .2195	17	5

*Notes:* Effect sizes represent standardized correlation coefficients. Mean effect sizes were estimated using variance-known hierarchical linear models. Models adjust for bivariate vs. multivariate effect size estimates.

*Abbreviations:* ESE = effect size estimate; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

<sup>^</sup> bivariate and multivariate effect sizes differ in magnitude ( $p < .05$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

## Predictors of Violent Offending at School

We next examined mean effect size estimates for violent offending at school. Violent offending encompassed forms of general violence (27.50%), assault (59.74%), aggravated assault (6.38%), and sexual assault (6.38%). In total, there were 611 effect size estimates for violent offending, based on 99 studies and 90 datasets. Table 15 presents the rank order of the mean effect size estimates across 23 individual, school, and community level predictors of violent victimization at school. The rank ordering of these estimates was based on the mean effect size estimates presented in Table 16. The following predictors could not be assessed due to an inadequate number of effect sizes: socioeconomic status, weapon carrying, risk avoidance, extracurricular activities, peer rejection, school disorder, community economic deprivation, and community disorder.

The top five correlates of violent offending at school were antisocial behavior, victimization, deviant peers, antisocial attitudes, and social competence (a protective factor). The mean effect sizes for antisocial behavior (.3548), victimization (.2636), and deviant peers (.2543) were rather large. Antisocial attitudes (.1967) and social competence (-.1943) were moderately strong predictors of violence at school, as were predictors of popularity (-.1574), school bonds (-.1495), male (.1481), and self-control (-.1204). School-level predictors of negative school climate (.1092) and violent school context (.1063) also emerged as somewhat moderate risk factors of violent offending at school. The presence of a school resource officer or security guard, and the use of school security devices (metal detectors and cameras) were unrelated to school violence.

**Table 15. Rank-Ordered Effect Size Estimates of Individual-, School-, and Community-Level Predictors of Violent Offending at School**

Rank	Predictor	Direction of Effect
1	Antisocial behavior	+
2	Victimization	+
3	Deviant peers	+
4	Antisocial attitudes	+
5	Social competence	-
6	Popularity	-
7	Bonds to school	-
8	Sex (male)	+
9	Self-control	-
10	Negative school climate	+
11	Violent school context	+
12	Substance use	+
13	Bonds to parents	-
<b>Predictors Unrelated to Violent Offending at School</b>		
<i>n.s.</i>	Disability	
<i>n.s.</i>	School size	
<i>n.s.</i>	Race (non-white)	
<i>n.s.</i>	Community crime	
<i>n.s.</i>	Urban school	
<i>n.s.</i>	Age	
<i>n.s.</i>	School performance	
<i>n.s.</i>	Officer or guard at school	
<i>n.s.</i>	LGBT	
<i>n.s.</i>	School security devices	

**Table 16. Mean Effect Size Estimates for Predictors of Violent Offending at School**

Predictor	Mean ESE	(SE)	95% CI	N (ESEs)	N (Studies)
Individual Level					
Age	-.0219	(.0269)	-.0746 – .0308	17	10
Sex (male)	.1481**	(.0267)	.0958 – .2004	112	53
Race (non-white)	.0365	(.0299)	-.0424 – .1154	24	9
Self-control <sup>^</sup>	-.1204**	(.0303)	-.1798 – -.0610	16	8
Antisocial attitudes	.1967**	(.0484)	.1018 – .2917	19	8
Antisocial behavior	.3548**	(.0637)	.2299 – .4797	97	26
Substance use	.0979**	(.0258)	.0474 – .1484	4	3
Victimization	.2636**	(.0481)	.1693 – .3579	39	17
Deviant peers	.2543**	(.0582)	.1402 – .3684	15	7
Bonds to school	-.1495**	(.0244)	-.1974 – -.1016	21	9
Bonds to parents <sup>^</sup>	-.0867**	(.0233)	-.1324 – -.0410	16	7
School performance	-.0216	(.0564)	-.1321 – .0889	8	5
Social competence	-.1943**	(.0625)	-.3169 – -.0718	22	9
Popularity	-.1574**	(.0314)	-.2188 – -.0959	13	4
LGBT	-.0021	(.0245)	-.0502 – .0459	5	2
Disability	.0650	(.1920)	-.3112 – .4412	21	4
School Level					
Negative climate	.1092**	(.0326)	.0453 – .1731	18	6
Urban school	.0220	(.0180)	-.0133 – .0572	25	9
School size <sup>^</sup>	.0514	(.0585)	-.0632 – .1660	15	6
Violent school	.1063*	(.0402)	.0003 – .2123	27	6
Security devices	-.0020	(.0199)	-.0410 – .0369	10	2
Officer or guard	.0199	(.0112)	-.0020 – .0418	33	3
Community Level					
Community crime	.0326	(.0371)	-.0400 – .1053	14	5

*Notes:* Effect sizes represent standardized correlation coefficients. Mean effect sizes were estimated using variance-known hierarchical linear models. Models adjust for bivariate vs. multivariate effect size estimates.

*Abbreviations:* ESE = effect size estimate; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

<sup>^</sup> bivariate and multivariate effect sizes differ in magnitude ( $p < .05$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

## Predictors of Bringing a Weapon to School

Lastly, effect sizes for bringing a weapon to school were examined. Table 17 presents the rank-ordered mean effect size estimates across 16 predictor domains, based on the findings in Table 18. In total, there were 282 effect size estimates for bringing a weapon to school, based on 32 studies and 26 datasets. Several predictor domains could not be assessed due to having too few effect sizes, including self-control, involvement in extracurricular activities, bonds to parents, school performance, social competence, popularity, peer rejection, LGBT status, disability, school size, school disorder, community economic deprivation, community crime, and community disorder.

The top five correlates of bringing a weapon to school were prior weapon carrying (either at school or outside of school), antisocial behavior, substance use, deviant peers, and violent school context. All of these predictors were moderate in magnitude, with weapon carrying (.1860), antisocial behavior (.1696), substance use (.1567), and deviant peers (.1516) having similar mean effect sizes. Violent school context (.1300) and negative school climate (.1168) also emerged as moderate predictors of weapon carrying. School security devices (metal detectors and security cameras) and the presence of an officer at school (a school resource officer or security guard) were the weakest mean effect size estimates, and had virtually no influence on the likelihood of bringing a weapon to school.

**Table 17. Rank-Ordered Effect Size Estimates of Individual-, School-, and Community-Level Predictors of Bringing a Weapon to School**

Rank	Predictor	Direction of Effect
1	Prior weapon carrying	+
2	Antisocial behavior	+
3	Substance use	+
4	Deviant peers	+
5	Violent school context	+
6	Negative school climate	+
7	Sex (male)	+
8	Socioeconomic status	-
9	Race (non-white)	+
<b>Predictors Unrelated to Bringing a Weapon to School</b>		
<i>n.s.</i>	Bonds to school	
<i>n.s.</i>	Victimization	
<i>n.s.</i>	Age	
<i>n.s.</i>	Risk avoidance	
<i>n.s.</i>	Urban school	
<i>n.s.</i>	Officer or guard at school	
<i>n.s.</i>	Security devices	

**Table 18. Mean Effect Size Estimates for Predictors of Bringing a Weapon to School**

Predictor	Mean ESE	(SE)	95% CI	N (ESEs)	N (Studies)
Individual Level					
Age	.0264	(.0141)	-.0324 – .0852	10	4
Sex (male)^	.0965**	(.0114)	.0741 – .1189	72	23
Race (non-white)	.0245*	(.0096)	.0005 – .0485	35	13
Socioeconomic status^	-.0375*	(.0057)	-.0582 – -.0169	11	6
Antisocial behavior^	.1696**	(.0602)	.0517 – .2875	26	9
Substance use^	.1567**	(.0260)	.1057 – .2077	8	5
Victimization^	.0346	(.0227)	-.0450 – .1142	43	10
Deviant peers^	.1516†	(.0290)	-.0086 – .3119	7	3
Prior weapon carrying	.1860*	(.0794)	.0304 – .3416	5	3
Risk avoidance^	.0242	(.0273)	-.0612 – .1096	10	5
Bonds to school^	-.0462	(.0432)	-.2019 – .1094	9	4
School Level					
Negative climate^	.1168*	(.0450)	.0285 – .2051	9	4
Urban school	.0119	(.0122)	-.0119 – .0358	12	5
Violent school	.1300†	(.0665)	-.0004 – .2604	27	6
Security devices	.0075	(.0162)	-.0441 – .0591	4	2
Officer or guard	-.0165	(.0118)	-.0424 – .0093	12	2

Notes: Effect sizes represent standardized correlation coefficients. Mean effect sizes were estimated using variance-known hierarchical linear models. Models adjust for bivariate vs. multivariate effect size estimates.

Abbreviations: ESE = effect size estimate; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

^ bivariate and multivariate effect sizes differ in magnitude ( $p < .05$ ).

†  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

### Conclusions and Implications for Criminal Justice Policy and Practice

This project informs research and policy alike. First, the sources of aggression and delinquency in schools largely mirror those of aggression and delinquency generally. In particular, factors like delinquent peer associations, antisocial attitudes, and engaging in various forms of antisocial behavior all weigh rather heavily in predicting aggression, violence, and delinquency at school. Policies and programs aimed at reducing aggressive/delinquent behavior at schools should therefore target problematic cognitions/beliefs among students, as well as deviant peer influences and other high-risk, antisocial behaviors.

That said, our findings also illuminate gaps in the literature on school violence that should be addressed in future research. For instance, due to a small number of studies on the topic, we were unable to assess whether theoretically-relevant factors such as self-control, bonds to parents, school performance, social competence, popularity, peer rejection, LGBT status, disability, school size, school disorder, community economic deprivation, community crime, or community disorder were associated with bringing a weapon to school. It is vital that future studies on school weapon carrying include a richer set of theoretical predictors to truly understand ways to intervene and effectively address the problem of weapons in the school environment.

Second, with respect to victimization, it is clear that traditional “risky” behaviors that are often linked to victimization on the streets—such as engaging in offending, drinking alcohol, and using other controlled substances—do not necessarily apply in the school setting. Instead, victimization at school is much more likely to reflect social hierarchies, with those at the bottom being more at risk of victimization. School officials must therefore be able to identify vulnerable

students (e.g., LGBT students, disabled students, those low on social competence, or those rejected by their peers), and policies/interventions should be tailored toward assisting vulnerable students in navigating the social hierarchies they find themselves within.

Accordingly, it would be helpful for future research to assess how the presence of peer-support interventions, empathy training, or mindfulness-based school programs might impact rates of victimization. We were unable to assess the effectiveness of these kinds of programs in the current meta-analysis, in part because such programs were few in number and inconsistent across the literature. However, given the importance of social hierarchies to school victimization, it is critical for subsequent work in this area to develop and evaluate programs that are intended to improve the ways in which socially vulnerable youth are perceived and treated by their peers.

Finally, our results have important implications for traditional law enforcement approaches to school violence. Having a police presence at schools and implementing other formal security measures, for example, are still politically popular approaches for addressing school safety. Nevertheless, our results demonstrate that such measures are not likely to have any meaningful effect on levels of school violence and victimization. Still, additional research is needed to more thoroughly assess whether “hardening” schools has any impact on school violence in its various forms. It would also be useful for future research to assess how the presence of other individuals, such as school therapists, victim advocates, or school social workers, might help to prevent and reduce violence and victimization at school.

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## Appendix A. Studies Included in the Meta-Analysis

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