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Family Predictors of Sibling Versus Peer Victimization

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Though peer victimization has received more attention than sibling victimization, they both have negative associations with mental health and may share common family origins. We explore whether there are common family characteristics (family climate, interparental conflict, parenting) in the prediction of sibling and peer victimization. We employ a nationally representative sample of U.S. children ages 5−17 (N = 2,659; 51% male, mean age = 10.60 years, 58% White). A telephone interview was conducted with a parent of children ages 5–9 and with children ages 10–17. Multinomial logistic regression showed that sibling and peer victimization are both associated with exposure to family adversity, family violence, and child maltreatment. Sibling victimization is also associated with inconsistent or harsh parenting. The odds ratios of the family characteristics of interest did not differ for sibling versus peer victimization, suggesting overlap in the family etiology of sibling and peer victimization. However, in this study, sibling victimization does appear to have unique associations to demographic characteristics; sibling victimization is most common in White and educated families. Knowledge of shared familial elements of sibling and peer victimization could benefit family violence and antibullying programs to promote positive interactions and lessen and stop aggression in both sibling and peer relationships.

Keywords: childhood, family, peers, siblings, victimization

National surveys show that many children and adolescents are victimized by peers and siblings (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2015; Krienert & Walsh, 2011). Notably, more children are victimized by a sibling than by a peer (Finkelhor et al., 2015). This is not surprising, given that siblings have greater access to one another than do peers. However, media coverage and programmatic efforts are focused typically on peer victimization. Generally, separate lines of research exist on sibling and peer victimization, with the body of knowledge on sibling victimization being much smaller. Studies from these two literatures have shown that sibling and peer victimization decrease with age (Brendgen, Girard, Vitaro, Dionne, & Boivin, 2016; Tucker, Finkelhor, & Turner, 2018) and are linked to lower well-being such as more depression, mental health distress, and anxiety (Bowes, Wolke, Joinson, Lereya, & Lewis, 2014; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner, & Shattuck, 2013; Zwierzynska, Wolke, & Lereya, 2013). A few studies have revealed that many children who are victimized by peers are also victimized by their sibling (e.g., Tippett & Wolke, 2015; Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner, & Shattuck, 2014).

As we explain later, sibling and peer victimization experiences are related, and appear to share common family roots, but no study has directly tested whether there are shared family characteristics (family climate, marital and parent–child relationships) that predict children's and adolescents' sibling and peer victimization. Consistent with definitions in studies of sibling and peer victimization (Brendgen et al., 2016; Burk et al., 2008; Espelage, Low, & De La Rue, 2012; Tippett & Wolke, 2015), we define *sibling* and *peer victimization* as any episode of the following: verbal (e.g., name calling), property (e.g., destroying or taking property), psychological (e.g., feeling afraid), or physical (hitting, biting, kicking, with or without injury). Knowledge of the shared familial etiological elements of sibling and peer victimization could benefit the development and expansion of family relationship and antibullying programs by promoting positive relationships and stopping aggression in both sibling and peer relationships.

Siblings and Peers

Overlap in sibling and peer relationship experiences is likely due to the centrality of these relationships in children's and adolescents' lives. These relationships are important contexts in which to observe and learn, develop relationship skills and shared understanding, and gain support. Thus, siblings and peers play important roles in children's and adolescents' development, mental health,

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and interpersonal relationships with others (McHale, Updegraff, & Whiteman, 2012; Parker et al., 2015). Sibling and peer interactions also similarly share complementary (hierarchical elements; e.g., guiding of the less experienced partner) and reciprocal (balanced and mutual elements; e.g., joint collaboration) characteristics (Dunn, 2014; Tucker & Updegraff, 2009). Research has shown that the abilities and skills learned in sibling and peer relationships last until adulthood (e.g., Shalash, Wood, & Parker, 2013). Perhaps due to these commonalities, children who have warm sibling relationships tend to have positive peer relationships and lower rates of peer victimization (Lockwood, Kitzmann, & Cohen, 2001). However, there are also important elements that make these two relationships different. A sibling is not a voluntary choice, whereas a peer is. Often there is an age differential of 2 years, on average, for siblings (Copen, Thoma, & Kirmeyer, 2015), which can create a power differential. Thus, children and adolescents may choose friends with characteristics they prefer that are in contrast to those of their sibling's. For these reasons, there are likely common and distinct family correlates of sibling and peer victimization.

Importance of Family Context for Sibling and Peer Relationships

The bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) provides a useful perspective within which to examine important contextual characteristics for individual development. In childhood and adolescence, the family context is central and can form the foundation for how children interact with others. Social learning theory tenets (Bandura, 1973) provide a frame in which to suggest that behaviors modeled in the family are reflected in the nature of sibling and peer relationships. Thus, sibling and peer victimization probably share similar family etiological elements. Research has shown that families and marriages in which modeling of ineffective relationship skills and aggressive behavior occurs may lead to similar dynamics and behavior among siblings and peers (Boel-Studt & Renner, 2014; Caffaro, 2011; Caspi, 2012; Underwood, Beron, Gentsch, Galperin, & Risser, 2008). This may be especially evident because sibling and peer relationships are sometimes the first contexts in which learned interpersonal skills are enacted (McHale et al., 2012). Discrete research on siblings and peers has shown that children exposed to hostile parenting, family violence, and maltreatment are more likely to be victimized by a sibling or peer (Espelage et al., 2012; Tucker et al., 2014; Van Berkel, Tucker, & Finkelhor, 2018). However, because sibling and peer relationships are distinct, there are likely some differences in their links to family characteristics. For example, sibling relationships may be more affected by parenting competence than would be peer relationships because of parents' more frequent and direct interactions with siblings.

Currently, investigations of the family correlates of sibling and peer victimization are uncommon (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Tucker et al., 2014). Further, no researchers have examined whether there are shared family antecedents of sibling and peer victimization. Such a comparison is important for at least two reasons. First, sibling victimization is often dismissed or minimized as harmless rivalry (Caspi, 2012), although, like peer victimization, sibling victimization has important short- and long-term connections to lower well-being (Bowes et al., 2014; Mathis & Mueller, 2015; Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner, et al., 2013). Second, documentation of common factors in sibling and peer victimization will show the cost-effective benefit of aiming prevention and intervention efforts at the reduction and stoppage of both sibling and peer victimization.

Current Study

In sum, we examined overlap in the family correlates of peer and sibling victimization using a nationally representative sample of children and adolescents ages 5−17. Specifically, we investigated whether characteristics of the family (i.e., adversity, witnessing family violence) and marital (i.e., interparental conflict) and parent–child (i.e., inconsistent or harsh parenting and maltreatment) relationships were similarly linked to sibling and peer victimization. Children and adolescents experiencing such family conditions may have trouble with the ability to self-regulate and display effective social skills when faced with aggressive behavior from a sibling or peer (Burk et al., 2008; Nickerson, Mele, & Osborne-Oliver, 2010). Such family conditions are linked with aggressive behavior among siblings (Tucker et al., 2014) and sibling and peer victimization (e.g., Brendgen et al., 2016; Espelage et al., 2012; Lereya, Samara, & Wolke, 2013; Tucker et al., 2018; Van Berkel et al., 2018). We hypothesized that because of the noted similarity in sibling and peer relationship characteristics and links to family experiences, family climate and marital relationship qualities (i.e., adversity, witnessing family violence, interparental conflict) would be predictive of both sibling and peer victimization. We also expected that parenting (i.e., inconsistent or harsh parenting, maltreatment) would be more likely associated with sibling victimization than would peer victimization due to parents' greater involvement with siblings.

Our analyses controlled for demographic characteristics (child gender, age, and ethnicity; family structure; and parent education) linked to sibling and peer victimization. Previous studies have shown that sibling victimization's connection to some demographic characteristics contrasts that of peer victimization and other forms of family violence (Dirks et al., 2019; Tippett & Wolke, 2015; Tucker, Finkelhor, Shattuck, & Turner, 2013). Boys are more likely to be victimized by siblings and peers (Casper & Card, 2017; Tucker et al., 2014). However, sibling victimization is higher among White children and in married families (Dirks et al., 2019; Tippett & Wolke, 2015; Tucker et al., 2013), whereas peer victimization is higher for Black children and in single-parent and stepfamilies (Dirks et al., 2019; Turner, Finkelhor, Hamby, & Shattuck, 2013; Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015).

Method

Participants

The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence obtains incidence and prevalence estimates of a wide range of childhood victimizations (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2011). For the current study, we focused on a nationally representative sample of 2,659 children and adolescents ages 5−17 living in the contiguous United States who had at least one sibling under age 18 living in the household at the time of data collection in 2008. A nationwide sampling frame of residential telephone numbers from

which a sample of telephone households was drawn by random digit dialing was used. To ensure that the study included a sizable proportion of minorities and low-income respondents for more accurate subgroup analyses, oversampling of U.S. telephone exchanges that had a population of 70% or more African American, Hispanic, or low-income households was done. Sample weights were applied to adjust for differential probability of selection due to (a) study design, (b) demographic variations in nonresponse, and (c) variations in within-household eligibility (Wun, Ezzati-Rice, DiGaetano, Goksel, & Hao, 2005). Information on cooperation and response rates and nonresponse rates for the full sample can be obtained from the authors (see also Finkelhor, Hamby, Ormrod, & Turner, 2005).

The sample was approximately evenly divided across gender (51% male children), and children were on average 10.69 years of age (*SD* = 3.73; evenly divided across the range of ages). The ethnic composition of the sample was 58% White, non-Hispanic; 20% Hispanic, any race; 16% Black, non-Hispanic; and 6% other race, non-Hispanic. Most children were from two-parent households (63%), with the second largest group being from single-parent families (21%). The largest percentage of children had a parent with at least a bachelor's degree (39% vs. 31% with a parent with some college and 30% with a parent with a high school degree or less).

Procedure

A telephone interview by a survey research firm was conducted with an adult caregiver (usually a parent) in each household. The adult caregiver provided family demographic information. Then, to gather information about children's family experiences, we randomly selected one child from among all eligible children living in a household by choosing the child with the most recent birthday. If the chosen child was under the age of 10, interviews were conducted with the caregiver who "is most familiar with the child's daily routine and experiences." If the designated child was 10 or older, the interview was conducted with the child. Interview protocol ensured confidentiality of responses and privacy during the interview. The interviews, averaging 45 min in length, were conducted in both English and Spanish. Up to 25 callbacks were made to complete the interview. Respondents were paid $20 for their participation. All procedures were authorized by the University of New Hampshire's Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Sibling and peer victimization. Sibling and peer victimization were assessed via items from the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ; Finkelhor et al., 2005). The JVQ obtains reports on 48 forms of youth victimization covering five general areas of interest: conventional crime, maltreatment, victimization by peers and siblings, sexual victimization, and witnessing and indirect victimization (Finkelhor et al., 2005). If a participant indicated a particular form of victimization occurred (Yes or No), follow-up questions gathered additional information about each victimization, including characteristics of the perpetrator, whether the event occurred in the past year, and whether weapons were used or injury resulted. Numerous direct comparisons between proxy (i.e., parent) and self- (i.e., child) reports with this instrument have found little evidence of reporter bias across victimizations (Finkelhor et al., 2005; Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2009).

Sibling victimization assessed whether the target child had any past-year experiences perpetrated by a juvenile sibling residing in the same household. Peer victimization was determined by only past-year experiences with peers. JVQ coding results in two dichotomous variables (1 or 0), representing whether the child was victimized by either a sibling or peer. A score of 1 was based on whether the child experienced any of the following types of victimization by either a sibling or peer: *physical assault with no object/weapon or injury; physical assault involving an object/weapon or causing injury* (child hit, beaten, or attacked); *property aggression* (force used to take something away from the child that the child was carrying or wearing; something stolen from the child and never given back; and child's things broken or ruined on purpose); and *psychological aggression* (child felt bad or scared because a sibling or peer was "calling him/her names, saying mean things, or saying they didn't want him/her around"). Although we were unable to assess the frequency with which each type of victimization occurred over the past year with the available data, our data are likely to provide unique and perhaps more reliable information than do the typical retrospective measures of frequency of episodes (Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2006). Thus, a child's experience of either sibling or peer victimization in the past year was represented with a dichotomous variable scored 1 or 0.

Family adversity. Family adversity was measured by a summary score of whether the child's family experienced any of nine major life events in the past year (Yes or No). Items likely salient for children and parents to recall included whether the child was in a very bad fire, flood, tornado, hurricane, earthquake, or other disaster; mother, father, or guardian lost a job or could not find work; parents got divorced or separated; child or close family member had a very bad illness for which (child or family member) had to go to the hospital; child or close family member had a very bad accident for which (child or family member) had to go to the hospital; parent left the country to fight in a war; and someone close had died (Turner & Butler, 2003; Turner et al., 2012). The mean number of adversities experienced was .68 (*SD* = .97; range = 0−7).

Witnessing family violence. Exposure to family violence was assessed by four survey items (Yes or No) from the JVQ asking whether the child or adolescent saw or heard violence perpetrated by parents (a parent was threatened with physical harm, had his or her things broken or ruined; or was pushed, hit, slapped, kicked, choked, or beaten up by the other parent; or a parent physically hurt a sibling or another adult in the household). Children were assigned a score of 1 on the witnessing family violence variable if they witnessed any of these types of violence in the past year and a score of 0 if not.

Interparental conflict. Interparental conflict was determined by two items ("child/you often see(s) parents arguing"; "you/your parents get really mad when they argue") from the Conflict Properties subscale of the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict measure (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992) scored on a 3-point scale from 1 (*very true*) to 3 (*not true*). The items were reversed-scored and summed so that higher scores indicate higher levels of conflict. The two items were positively correlated ($r = .58$, $p = .001$).

Inconsistent or harsh parenting. Inconsistent or harsh parenting was determined from five items about parents' typical behaviors toward the child in the past year (Alabama Parenting Questionnaire; Frick, 1991). Examples are "Your parent/You yelled or shouted when your child misbehaved," "The punishment you received/gave (your child) depended on your parent's/your mood". An index score was created based on whether the child experienced any of the five parenting behaviors (Yes or No). The mean score was 2.22 ($SD = 1.25$; range = 0−5).

Child maltreatment. Five types of childhood maltreatment were assessed with the JVQ (Yes or No): physical abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, custodial interference, and sexual abuse by a known adult. For example, physical abuse by a parent was determined by the following questions: "Did anyone hit or attack (your child/you) on purpose with an object or weapon" and "did anyone hit or attack (your child/you) on purpose without using an object or weapon." If yes, follow-up questions regarding the identity of the perpetrator ascertained whether it was victimization by a parent. Per the coding scheme of the JVQ, children were assigned a score of 1 if they experienced any type of child maltreatment or a 0 if not.

Demographic characteristics. Demographic measures included in these analyses were as follows: *child's age, child's gender, child's race or ethnicity* (coded into four groups: White, non-Hispanic; Hispanic, any race; Black, non-Hispanic; and other race, non-Hispanic), *parent education* for parent with the most education (high school or less, some college, or college graduate), and *parent marital status* (coded into three groups: married, stepfamily, single parent). An additional item indicated whether the interview was conducted in English or Spanish.

Results

We crossed the dichotomous sibling and peer victimization variables to create four groups: sibling-only victimization, peer-only victimization, both sibling and peer victimization, no victimization (see Table 1). A majority experienced either sibling or peer victimization or both (56%) in the past year. Specifically, experiencing solely sibling victimization (22%) was more common than was experiencing solely peer victimization (18%) and both sibling and peer victimization (16%) in the past year. An analysis of variance testing differences by age showed that all the groups were significantly different from one another except that the peer-only victimization group was not different from the no-victimization group, $F(3, 2654) = 64.19$, $p < .001$, ds = .27–.74. Children in the sibling-only victimization group were the youngest, whereas children in the peer-only victimization group were, on average, the oldest.

Chi-square analyses showed that the groups differed by gender, ethnicity, and parent education level but not family structure, $\chi^2(9, N = 2659) = 15.21$, $p = .09$. Male children were more likely to be in any of the three victimization groups than in the no-victimization group compared to female, $\chi^2(3, N = 2659) = 24.39$, $p = .001$, $\Phi = .10$. The largest group across all ethnicities was the no-victimization group, but the second largest group for Black (26%) and Hispanic (19%) children was the peer-only victimization group. The second largest group for White (25%) and Other/mixed, non-Hispanic (29%) children was the sibling-only victimization group, $\chi^2(9, N = 2658) = 93.18$, $p = .001$, $\Phi = .19$. Across parent education groups, the no-victimization group was the largest, $\chi^2(6, N = 2657) = 76.33$, $p = .001$, $\Phi = .17$. The second largest group for children with parents who completed some college (27%) or had a bachelor's degree or higher (25%) was the sibling-only victimization group. The second largest group for those with parents with a high school degree or less was the peer-only victimization group (21%).

Multinomial logistic regression analyses assessed family (i.e., adversity, witnessing family violence) and marital (i.e., interparental conflict) and parent–child (i.e., inconsistent or harsh par-

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Sibling and Peer Victimization Groups (N = 2,659)

	Sibling only (n = 593; 22%)		Peer only (n = 474; 18%)		Both (n = 430; 16%)		No victimization (n = 1,162; 44%)	
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	*n*	*M* (*SD*)	*n*	*M* (*SD*)	*n*	*M* (*SD*)	*n*
Age in years	9.15 (3.46)		11.72 (3.42)		10.08 (3.50)		11.29 (3.78)	
Gender								
Male		304		280		233		538
Female		289		194		197		624
Ethnicity[a]								
White		394		235		295		628
Black		76		111		62		177
Hispanic		77		100		53		292
Other/mixed		46		28		20		64
Education[a, b]								
HS or less		111		162		99		409
Some college		218		160		134		306
College		264		152		195		446
Family structure								
Married		374		266		274		751
Stepfamily		74		62		42		141
Single		145		146		114		270

Note. HS = high school.
[a] One missing value for the no-victimization group. [b] Two missing values for the both group.

enting, maltreatment) relationships as predictors of sibling and peer victimization in the past year (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). The control variables were parents' highest education level, parents' marital status, child's race or ethnicity, child's age, child's gender, and whether the interview was conducted in Spanish or English. Our analyses assessed whether there were common family correlates of sibling and peer victimization through the direct comparison of the following: victimization by only a sibling versus only a peer, victimization by *either* only a sibling or peer versus no victimization, and victimization by either only a sibling or peer versus victimization by both a sibling and peer.

Sibling Versus Peer Victimization

For three of the five family correlates, sibling and peer victimization did not differ, suggesting similar sibling and peer victimization family origins (see Table 2). Specifically, there were no differences in victimized children's experiences of family adversity, witnessing family violence, and child maltreatment. However, the odds of being exposed to interparental conflict in the past year for children victimized by a peer were 14% higher than for those who experienced sibling victimization. Possibly reflecting parents' greater involvement in sibling relationships, victimization by a sibling was more likely to be associated with greater inconsistent or harsh parenting than was peer victimization.

As found in previous studies, sibling victimization appears to be uniquely associated with individual and family demographic characteristics (Dirks et al., 2019; Tippett & Wolke, 2015; Tucker, Finkelhor, Shattuck, et al., 2013). Children who were male and part of a stepfamily and had parents with some college or a college degree were more likely to experience sibling victimization than were children victimized by a peer. Children who were Black, Hispanic, or older were more likely to experience peer than sibling victimization. The findings for the ethnic category Other/mixed and single parent were nonsignificant.

Table 2
Multinomial Logistic Regression of Family Predictors of Children (Ages 5–17) Experiencing Sibling-Only Victimization Versus Peer-Only Victimization in the Past Year (N = 2,659)

Variable	Sibling-only vs. peer-only victimization: *OR* [95% CI]
Parent education (ref: high school)	
Some college	.62** [.44, .87]
College degree	.51*** [.36, .73]
Family structure (ref: married)	
Stepfamily	.63* [.42, .95]
Single parent	.84 [.59, 1.17]
Child ethnicity (ref: White)	
Black	2.43*** [1.68, 3.53]
Hispanic	1.69** [1.14, 2.51]
Other/mixed	.84 [.49, 1.43]
Child gender (ref: female)	
Male	.72* [.56, .93]
Child age	1.22*** [1.17, 1.27]
Interview (ref: English)	
Spanish	3.13* [1.21, 8.09]
Family adversity	1.02 [.96, 1.10]
Witness family violence	.96 [.62, 1.49]
Interparental conflict	1.14* [1.01, 1.29]
Inconsistent–harsh parenting	.88* [.79, .98]
Child maltreatment	1.25 [.84, 1.86]
LR χ^2	702.44***

Note. *OR* = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval; ref. = referent; LR = likelihood ratio.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Sibling and Peer Victimization Only Versus No Victimization

Comparison of the family correlates of experiencing either sibling-only (see Table 3, column 1) or peer-only (column 2) victimization versus experiencing no victimization showed several common predictors of sibling-only and peer-only victimization and distinguished these two groups from the no-victimization group. Greater odds ratios (*OR*s) for experiencing family adversity, witnessing family violence, and child maltreatment were present for both sibling and peer victimization in comparison to the neither group. In addition, the odds of inconsistent or harsh parenting were 1.22 times higher for those in the sibling-only victimization group versus the no-victimization group; the no- and peer-only victimization groups for inconsistent or harsh parenting were indistinguishable. Children who experienced either solely sibling or peer victimization did not differ from children who did not report either in the past year on exposure to interparental conflict. Comparison of the odds ratios for the family, marital, and parent–child relationship correlates in column 1 versus 2 of Table 3 were nonsignificant ($zs = .09-.60$, $p = ns$) and suggests common family predictors of sibling and peer victimization.

Examination of the demographic control variables for this analysis once again demonstrated the possible uniqueness of sibling victimization's links to these family characteristics. Findings were consistent with those in previous studies. Children with parents with some college or a college degree or being an older child were associated with the sibling-only but not peer-only victimization compared to the no-victimization group. Black or Hispanic children were less likely to experience sibling victimization, but Black children were more likely to experience peer victimization in comparison to children who reported no sibling or peer victimization in the past year. The analyses of family structure, Other/mixed ethnic category, and child gender were nonsignificant.

Sibling and Peer Victimization Only Versus Both Sibling and Peer Victimization

Our final comparison included those children and adolescents who had been victimized by both siblings and peers in the last year versus those who had been victimized by one or the other (see Table 4). Generally, the odds of experiencing any of the family correlates examined in this study were less in the sibling-only or peer-only victimization groups in comparison to those in the both group. Two out of the five family correlates (i.e., family adversity, witnessing family violence) were similarly significant and distinguished the sibling-only and peer-only victimization groups from the both group. In addition, children victimized solely by a sibling experienced less interparental conflict than did children who were victimized by both siblings and peers. The odds of inconsistent or harsh parenting were less for those in the peer-only victimization group versus the both group. The odds of child maltreatment did not differ for those who were victimized by either a sibling or peer

Table 3
Multinomial Logistic Regression of Family Predictors of Children (Ages 5–17) Experiencing No Victimization Versus Sibling-Only Victimization or Peer-Only Victimization in the Past Year (N = 2,659)

Variable	No victimization vs. sibling-only victimization: *OR* [95% CI]	No victimization vs. peer only-victimization: *OR* [95% CI]
Parent education (ref: high school)		
Some college	1.91*** [1.41, 2.57]	1.18 [.88, 1.57]
College degree	1.78*** [1.32, 2.42]	.91 [.67, 1.23]
Family structure (ref: married)		
Stepfamily	1.31 [.93, 1.86]	.83 [.58, 1.18]
Single parent	1.18 [.88, 1.59]	.99 [.74, 1.32]
Child ethnicity (ref: White)		
Black	.58*** [.41, .80]	1.40* [1.03, 1.91]
Hispanic	.66** [.47, .92]	1.11 [.79, 1.56]
Other/mixed	1.03 [.67, 1.56]	.86 [.52, 1.41]
Child gender (ref: female)		
Male	.81 [.65, 1.00]	.85 [.64, 1.11]
Child age	.82*** [.80, .85]	1.00 [.97, 1.4]
Interview (ref: English)		
Spanish	.19*** [.08, .45]	.59* [.35, .98]
Family adversity	1.17*** [1.10, 1.24]	1.20*** [1.13, 1.27]
Witness family violence	1.54* [1.01, 2.35]	1.48* [1.00, 2.19]
Interparental conflict	.93 [.83, 1.04]	1.06 [.95, 1.18]
Inconsistent–harsh parenting	1.22*** [1.12, 1.33]	1.08 [.98, 1.18]
Child maltreatment	1.50* [1.01, 2.22]	1.87*** [1.30, 2.70]
LR χ^2		702.44***

Note. *OR* = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval; ref. = referent; LR = likelihood ratio.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

or by both. Notably, although some differences between the both group and the sibling-only and peer-only victimization groups emerged, there were no differences in the size of odds ratios in column 1 versus 2 of Table 3 for any of the family correlates (i.e., family adversity, witnessing family violence, interparental conflict, inconsistent or harsh parenting and child maltreatment; *zs* =.03−.35, *p* = *ns*). In other words, there was overlap in the family correlates of sibling-only and peer-only victimization when comparing the family experiences of these two groups to those of the both group.

Demographic differences were evident in the comparisons of those in the both group versus sibling-only or peer-only victimization groups. Experiencing solely sibling victimization was more common for those children who had a parent with some college and were from a stepfamily or of Other/mixed ethnicity in comparison to the both group. Risk for only peer victimization was greater for those who were Black, Hispanic, and older, but less for those whose parents had a college degree, in comparison to the both group. The findings for being from a single-parent family and gender were nonsignificant.

Additional analyses split by age group (child or adolescent)−reporter comparing the two groups, and the two groups to the whole sample, demonstrated that findings for family climate and marital and parent relationships did not differ by either direction of the odds ratios and/or significance level. There was one exception to these numerous comparisons. Witnessing family violence differed for the both versus peer-only victimization group for the child sample (*OR* = 1.20, 95% CI [.56, 2.59], *p* = *ns*) versus the whole sample (*OR* = .56, 95% CI [.37, .85], *p* = .01).

Discussion

Although it is widely recognized that many children are victimized by their peers, more children are victimized by a sibling (Finkelhor et al., 2015). In this sample, 22% were victimized exclusively by a sibling in comparison to 18% victimized solely by a peer. Compared to peers, siblings are more accessible to one another and each other's personal possessions. An additional 16% were victimized by both siblings and peers. This finding is consistent with results of other work showing that the two victimizations are related, with each making the exposure to the other more probable (Tucker et al., 2014). Despite the importance of siblings and peers to children, the study of sibling and peer victimization has generally proceeded along separate research paths. Our study provided new information about the family characteristics that may influence both sibling and peer victimization. Given that sibling and peer victimization both are linked to lower well-being (Bowes et al., 2014; Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner, et al., 2013), our findings are beneficial to those interested in lessening and stopping aggression in these two central relationships in children's lives.

Sibling Versus Peer Victimization

Our most novel contribution was the direct comparison of the family correlates of sibling and peer victimization. To our knowledge, no study has done such a comparison. Notably, direct comparison of those who experienced sibling-only versus peer-only victimization, and of these two groups versus children who had not been victimized in the past year, showed that sibling and peer victimization have common family risk factors. Specifically, three

Table 4
Multinomial Logistic Regression of Family Predictors of Children (Ages 5–17) Experiencing Both Sibling and Peer Victimization Versus Either Sibling-Only Victimization or Peer-Only Victimization in the Past Year (N = 2,659)

Variable	Both vs. sibling-only victimization: *OR* [95% CI]	Both vs. peer-only victimization: *OR* [95% CI]
Parent education (ref: high school)		
Some college	1.57* [1.09, 2.26]	.97 [.67, 1.39]
College degree	1.19 [.83, 1.71]	.60** [.42, .87]
Family structure (ref: married)		
Stepfamily	2.10*** [1.34, 3.28]	1.32 [.84, 2.10]
Single parent	1.41† [.99, 2.01]	1.18 [.82, 1.69]
Child ethnicity (ref: White)		
Black	.91 [.61, 1.36]	2.21*** [1.50, 3.56]
Hispanic	.98 [.65, 1.49]	1.66* [1.09, 2.55]
Other/mixed	2.09** [1.18, 3.70]	1.76† [.93, 3.30]
Child gender (ref: female)		
Male	1.17 [.90, 1.52]	.85 [.64, 1.11]
Child age	.97† [.93, 1.01]	1.18*** [1.13, 1.23]
Interview (ref: English)		
Spanish	1.23 [.33, 4.66]	3.85*** [1.24, 11.89]
Family adversity	.85*** [.78, .91]	.87*** [.82, .93]
Witness family violence	.56** [.37, .85]	.54** [.36, .81]
Interparental conflict	.85** [.75, .96]	.97 [.86, 1.10]
Inconsistent–harsh parenting	.94 [.84, 1.05]	.83** [.74, .93]
Child maltreatment	.72† [.49, 1.06]	.90 [.61, 1.31]
LR χ^2		702.44***

Note. *OR* = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval; ref. = referent; LR = likelihood ratio.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

of the five family characteristics of interest predicted sibling and peer victimization: family adversity, witnessing family violence, and child maltreatment. These findings are consistent with social learning theory (Bandura, 1973) tenets and past research demonstrating that family members' display of poor relationship skills and aggressive behavior is linked with such behavior between siblings and peers (Espelage et al., 2012; Underwood et al., 2008; Van Berkel et al., 2018).

Our hypothesis that parenting would differentiate sibling from peer victimization was partially supported. Inconsistent or harsh parenting (but not child maltreatment) was associated with sibling more than peer victimization and experiencing no victimization in the past year. Perhaps parenting competence matters more for sibling than peer victimization due to parents' greater and direct involvement in the management of siblings compared to peers. However, additional analyses showed that the size of the odds ratios for sibling versus peer victimization were not different, suggesting the degree of the relationship did not differ. Thus, our work advances understanding of how family elements are important for both sibling and peer victimization.

Uniqueness of Sibling Victimization

Relationships with siblings and peers share many features but are also distinct. We make a notable contribution to the literature through our examination of the links between demographic characteristics and sibling and peer victimization groups. Our work shows the possible uniqueness of sibling victimization. In contrast to the findings in the larger literatures on peer victimization, child maltreatment, and family violence, sibling victimization was generally more common in higher educated and White families. However, our results are consistent with those of the small but growing literature on sibling victimization (Dirks et al., 2019; Tippett & Wolke, 2015; Tucker, Finkelhor, Shattuck, et al., 2013). Still, the findings should be viewed with caution until a larger body of evidence is created. Our analyses also showed that Black and Hispanic children are more likely to experience peer than sibling victimization, a finding that is also consistent with results in previous work on siblings (Dirks et al., 2019). The uniqueness of sibling victimization may come about for multiple reasons. In higher educated families, children are often pressured to excel and produce notable individual achievements and demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills (Luthar & Becker, 2002). In higher educated families, because of the pressure to achieve, gaining access to greater resources may fuel sibling victimization. Also, these parents may be sensitive to any negative sibling interactions and thus more likely to report such behavior in our survey.

Ethnic differences evident in our analyses for sibling victimization may reflect a cultural emphasis on either collective or individualistic values. For example, European American siblings are more likely to use controlling strategies to resolve conflict that are consistent with individualistic values in comparison to the case with Mexican American siblings (Killoren, Thayer, & Updegraff, 2008). Other work has suggested that Black and Hispanic families highly value loyalty, cooperation, and support among family members (McHale, Whiteman, Kim, & Crouter, 2007; Updegraff et al., 2016). In addition, different cultural values regarding the nature of family interactions may affect perceptions of family aggression. Whites are more likely to mention mild verbal sibling abuse than

are other ethnicities (Rapoza, Cook, Zaveri, & Malley-Morrison, 2010). Our findings could be due to a higher level of detection rather than occurrence or because our sample is over 50% White.

Victimization by Both Siblings and Peers

The final significant finding was that children victimized by both siblings and peers are at greater risk than are children victimized by either siblings or peers. Children victimized by both siblings and peers have worse mental health in comparison to children who have been victimized solely by either a sibling or peer or not victimized at all (Tucker et al., 2014). Children in the both group were more likely to experience family adversity, witness family violence, and experience maltreatment than were children in the sibling-only and peer-only victimization groups. Further, none of the odds ratios comparing sibling-only versus peer-only victimization groups was significantly different from one another and suggests that solely experiencing sibling or peer victimization is similarly different from experiencing both kinds of victimization.

Limitations and Future Work

Although our study identified several new and important findings, it does have some shortcomings. Though we used the best available data for our goals, we relied on cross-sectional data and cannot disentangle the causal linkages between family characteristics and sibling and peer victimization. Because our data were collected in 2008, it is possible that sibling, peer, and family dynamics may have changed. However, our findings are consistent with those of other contemporary investigations of sibling victimization (Krienert & Walsh, 2011; Tippett & Wolke, 2015). Another potential limitation is that our work is based on information from a sole reporter. Thus, the extent to which the reporters' perceptions of family experiences match those of other family members is unknown. In addition, the use of self-report data introduces the potential problem of shared method variance for the predictor and outcome variables. We relied on parents' perceptions of sibling experiences, but they may not be aware of all sibling and peer interactions. As previously noted, our work, and other numerous comparisons (Finkelhor et al., 2005, 2009), have shown no reporter bias for the JVQ. However, future research can continue to explore the potential limitation of relying on parents' reports of children's victimizations. We used an aggregate measure of sibling and peer victimization for ease of interpretation. Future research could examine whether there are shared family characteristics for the range of severity and subtypes of sibling and peer victimization. Finally, we were not able to assess the importance of sibling birth order and gender composition of the sibling dyad due to data set limitations. Future work could investigate the importance of these characteristics in the examination of the shared family correlates of sibling and peer victimization.

Our findings have several implications for research and practice. Over half of the sample experienced sibling, peer, or both kinds of victimization. Further, consistent with results of previous studies (Finkelhor et al., 2015; Hoetger, Hazen, & Brank, 2015), more children experienced sibling than peer victimization. The pervasiveness of sibling and peer victimization is notable, and our work supports recent calls to increase awareness of sibling victimization. Research should continue to identify family experiences related to sibling and peer victimization. Differential treatment is related to more conflictual sibling relationships (McHale et al., 2012). Children who are the recipient of unfavorable treatment by their parents could be at risk for sibling victimization. Also, researchers could directly examine common and distinct links between experiences in other contexts, such as neighborhoods and schools, for sibling and peer victimization. Such information would be valuable in the enhancement of family relationship and antibullying programs and clinical work. Parents could be taught the value of developing positive relationships and constructive conflict strategies, such as reasoning and negotiation, with siblings and peers. In addition, efforts to highlight how widespread sibling victimization is in the United States, and that it is not something to be dismissed or minimized given its links to mental health, should be increased (Bowes et al., 2014; Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner, et al., 2013). It is possible the frequency of sibling victimization is underreported due to a lack of education on its forms and importance to well-being and relationships.

Conclusion

The current study makes a significant contribution to understanding the common familial etiological elements of sibling and peer victimization. It is rare that sibling and peer victimization are examined in the same study, and exploration of the family correlates of peer victimization is uncommon. We were able to address these gaps in the literature using a large, nationally representative sample. A notable strength is that we were able to investigate the extent of overlap and importance of a variety of family characteristics. Our findings show that family experiences are important for both sibling and peer victimization and that there are common family predictors of sibling and peer victimization. Sibling victimization may have some unique connections to parenting competence and demographic characteristics. Our pattern of findings corroborates the pervasiveness of sibling and peer victimization and suggests that the development of family and antibullying programs would benefit from a focus on family characteristics such as adversity, violence, and child maltreatment.

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