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Contextualizing Teacher-Directed Violence in Special Education

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Contextualizing Teacher-Directed Violence in Special Education

A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Kayleigh E. Zinter

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Department of Psychology

College of Science and Health

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Thesis Committee

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Biography

Kayleigh E. Zinter was born in Rochester, New York, on March 20th, 1992. She graduated from Pasquotank County High School in North Carolina in 2010, and later received her Bachelor of Science degree, Summa Cum Laude from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2017.

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Abstract

Violence in school settings is a global phenomenon. Research tends to focus on peer-to-peer student aggression, however teacher-directed violence in school settings by various aggressors is also being explored to better understand the scope of school violence (Bounds & Jenkins, 2016; McMahon et al., 2014; Ozdemir, 2012; Sundaram, 2016; Werthein, 2003; Zeira et al., 2004). Few studies have focused on special education teacher experiences with violence, and their differing experiences from their general education counterparts. This mixed-methods study examines the extent to which general and special education teachers experience teacher-directed violence, as well as incorporates an ecological lens to contextualize special education teachers' most upsetting types of violent experiences. Data were collected via a national survey distributed across pre-K-12th grade teachers in the United States. Quantitatively, binomial logistic regression was utilized to assess victimization of 2,363 special and general education teachers. Qualitatively, this study used directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) informed by ecological systems theory to explore the most upsetting victimization experiences of 430 special education teachers. The unique experiences of special education teachers in relation to their ecological context and intersectional identities were examined. Results reveal that special education teachers have a higher likelihood of experiencing victimization across multiple aggressors and student aggressors than their general education counterparts, with general education teachers more likely to experience parent-perpetrated aggression. Further, special education teachers often attributed their most upsetting experiences to issues at the organizational (school), community, and macro levels- indicating that violence was often a byproduct of

larger systems issues. When examining experiences at the interpersonal level, special education teachers in the sample rarely discussed identity-facets in relation to their experiences with violence, but those that did often cited gender and ability status. Results indicate that policy changes be made at the federal, state, district, and school levels around student placement, resource allocation, and teacher training. Findings also suggest that intervention strategies at the community level aimed to increase equity, and at the school and community levels to promote family involvement in schools may reduce teacher-directed violence in special education. Next steps for research, measurement, and future directions are identified and discussed.

Keywords: Teacher directed violence, Special Education, Ecological Systems Theory, Mixed-Methods

Contextualizing Teacher-Directed Violence in Special Education

Violence in school settings is a pervasive and grave issue of concern (Cornell, 2017). Psychological research on school violence focuses predominantly on physical and interpersonal violence between students (Espelage et al., 2013; Galand et al., 2007). More recently however teacher-directed violence in school settings is also being explored (Reddy et al., 2018). Although this important contextual shift of recognizing other school stakeholders' experiences has begun to occur, more research is needed to assess teacher experiences with violence (Astor & Meyer, 2001; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007; Espelage et al., 2014; McMahon et al., 2014; Reddy et al., 2018). Further, there is even less research on special education teachers' experiences with violence, as teacher-directed violence research has predominantly lumped the experiences of all teachers together (e.g., Anderman et al., 2018; Gerberich et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2011).

Special education professionals and general education professionals each undergo a wide range of experiences throughout their work day. Although some of these experiences are similar, it is possible that the overall experiences of special educators vary significantly from that of their general education counterparts. Special education teachers have to deal with a broader variety of student behaviors, more Individualized Education Plans, more administrative and district mandated paperwork, more parent-teacher conferences, as well as differentiated in-class dynamics (Billingsley, 2004; Brunsting et al., 2014; Westling & Whitten, 1996). Boe and colleagues (2008) found that migration (transferring or leaving the profession) rates are higher for special education than general education professionals in public schools. Paraprofessionals working in special education Shyman (2011) report having high to extremely high levels of cognitive

demand, emotional demand, and emotional exhaustion in their jobs. Predictors of emotional exhaustion for paraprofessionals in special education include role conflict, emotional demand, supervisor support level, and perceptions of efficacy (Shyman, 2010). Work environment issues can contribute to negative affect in special education professionals (e.g., teachers) and paraprofessionals, which in turn has the potential to lead to withdrawal and attrition, particularly among educators (Billingsly, 2004). In comparing teacher satisfaction levels, special education teachers were found more dissatisfied than general education teachers (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). These studies indicate that stress levels of those who work in special education are particularly heightened, as are their rates of migration and attrition (Billingsly, 2004). Thus, there are clear differences between special and general educators, and examining differences between the groups as well as the unique experiences of special educators may facilitate better addressing their needs.

To better understand the experiences of special educators particularly as it relates to school violence, it is necessary to understand their context in the school setting. Focusing on individual factors, interpersonal relationships between educators and other school stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, colleagues, administrators), as well as the systems in which these individuals live and interact on a daily basis, allows for context to be explored. Exploring influential factors ecologically is key to understand issues affecting individuals within complex educational systems (Astor et al., 2005), particularly special education teachers experiencing violence.

School Violence

Violence in schools is an alarming phenomenon. In the most recent United States Annual School Crime Report, Musu and colleagues (2018) indicate high rates of victimization in schools among students. Twenty percent of middle and high school students in the study report being bullied, with sixteen percent of high school students indicating that they had carried a weapon to school in the past thirty days. Students who experience victimization, are more likely to exhibit and perpetrate bullying, aggression and hostile behavior (Rose et al., 2011). Cook and colleagues (2010) found that the strongest predictor of bullying in school age children was externalizing behavior. Often, children with externalizing or comorbid behaviors are placed in differentiated classrooms or isolated from general population students in schools (Cook et al, 2010; Talbott & Fleming, 2003).

Violence in Special Education

Extant literature pertaining specifically to special education often discusses the high rates of bullying and violence both experienced and perpetrated among students (Rose et al., 2011). Students in special education are more likely to be recipients of disciplinary action for aggression, with students classified to have emotional disorders perpetrating the majority of aggressive threats or behaviors (Kaplan & Cornell, 2005). Special education classrooms tend to be a “catchall” for youth with varied mental health problems, resulting in students and teachers in these settings not being able to receive or provide needed services (Talbott & Fleming, 2003). Special education students in differentiated classes or special schools seem to experience higher rates of victimization than students in inclusive settings (Rose et al., 2011). Students however, are not the only

school stakeholders subject to student violence in school settings. For teachers, successfully managing physical aggression among students with special needs has been indicated as the most demanding task (Lai et al., 2016). This may translate to teacher-directed aggression, as Gerberich and colleagues (2014) found that special education teachers in their sample were at high risk for experiencing student aggression.

Teacher-Directed Violence

According to McMahon and colleagues (2014), teacher-directed violence in grades K-12 is a serious problem, necessitating immediate reform in school procedures, research, and policy. Teachers are victims of physical, verbal, emotional and sexual aggression in their work (Ozdemir, 2012). In a national U.S. convenience sample of surveyed teachers, eighty percent of nearly 3,000 respondents reported experiencing victimization in the school setting over the current or past year (McMahon et al., 2014). Wilson and colleagues (2011) had similar findings, reporting that eighty percent of their participants had also experienced some form of teacher-directed violence during their career. In a study of seventh through eleventh grade students in Israel, one in five indicated that they had perpetrated some form of violence against teachers (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2009). The most reported victimization experiences of teachers are verbal aggression (Bounds & Jenkins, 2016; McMahon et al., 2019; Zeira et al., 2004). In a national survey of student aggression against educators in Taiwan, thirty percent of surveyed students in grades four through twelve reported engaging in an aggressive act against their teacher in the past year (Chen & Astor, 2009). Although students are the primary perpetrators of violence against teachers, teachers also report experiencing aggression from parents, co-workers and administrators (e.g., de Wet, 2010; Gwernan-

Jones et al., 2015; May et al., 2010; McMahon et al., 2014) and cyberbullies (Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017). These experiences of aggression from multiple sources have a serious impact on the lives of educators.

Effects of Teacher-Directed Violence. Victimization can have varied impacts, often affecting educator emotional, physiological, and behavioral health (Galand et al., 2007; Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017; Woudstra & Jordaan, 2018). Teacher victimization has been linked to depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and posttraumatic stress disorder (de Vos & Kirsten, 2015; Woudstra & Jordaan, 2018). In addition to issues with physical, social and psychological health problems, teachers have reported that violence significantly impacts their teaching (McMahon et al., 2014; Reddy et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2011). Diminished desire to stay in their positions and reduced feelings of self-efficacy at work are common, often resulting in teacher burnout and turnover, which are directly linked with victimization (Peist, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). In turn, these effects of violence on teachers, have an overall negative impact on the school environment as a whole, the teacher-student relationship, and the student experience in school (Koth et al., 2008).

Teacher-Directed Violence in Special Education. Unfortunately, although special education teachers have been included in studies of teacher-directed violence, there is a dearth of research on their specific experiences or needs. Of the studies that have considered special education, Gerberich and colleagues (2014) found that special education teachers in Minnesota are at heightened risk for student-perpetrated aggression; however, they were unable to ascertain a reason for this greater risk status. Rasmussen and colleagues (2013) found that 71% of employees in Danish schools for students with

special needs reported experiencing some form of physical aggression in their job. Additionally, Borg (2012) assessed workplace violence in Denmark and found that special education professionals and child care workers are included in the top ten professions in the country where employees are exposed to threats or violence. Gwernen-Jones and colleagues (2015) found that between parents of students with ADHD and/or learning disabilities, conflicts with teachers and schools is a commonplace occurrence. Similar findings in the UK indicate that teachers blame disruptive behavior of students with social, emotional and behavior difficulties on poor parenting (Broomhead, 2013). Often, perceptions of otherness (i.e., differences in appearance, mannerisms or cultural beliefs) between parents and teachers have been cited as grounds for conflict (Gwernen-Jones et al., 2015; Lasky, 2000; Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012). These findings indicate that special education teachers may be at increased risk for both student and parent perpetrated aggression.

Contextual Understanding

Ecological Lens

Individuals live and exist within nested relational webs. People are not only affected or influenced by intrinsic factors, but also by their relationships and the systems in which they live and interact (Kloos, & Shah, 2009). Ecological systems theory posits that individuals grow and develop in relation to their context and environment. The theory also emphasizes the bidirectional effects that individuals and context have on one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Rudasill et al., 2018). Contextual environments, or systems can be distal- which have indirect influences on an individual, proximal- which directly influence an individual's life, or time-based (Bronfenbrenner,

1989; Rudasill et al., 2018). Incorporating an ecological approach allows for consideration of environmental factors that affect wellness, and the interaction between and impact of varied systems on individuals (Kloos & Shah, 2009).

In research on individuals within the education system, ecological systems theory provides a lens to understand the multi-level individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal factors that influence teachers' experience. Micro-systems are proximal, and are contexts in which an individual interacts that have direct effects. In educational settings, an example of this would be a classroom, where teachers and students spend a great deal of time. Meso-systems are comprised of interactions between micro-systems. For teachers, interactions between parents and teachers or administrators in the school could be considered mesosystems. Another example of this would be if a teacher interacts with a student or parent outside of school, at their church or in the grocery store they frequent. There are two distal systems, exo-system and macro-system. Exo-systems are environments that affect an individual's proximal systems. For teachers, this could be the community in which the school is located. The macrosystem refers to the influences of societal, cultural, and governmental factors (e.g., federal and state level education policies). Chrono-systems (e.g., life events or eras in which an individual lives) are time-based, and reflect the way in which time plays a role in the development of an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Rudasill et al., 2018). The emphasis that ecological theories of analysis place on multiple context supports the idea that varied aspects of the school atmosphere (e.g., classroom environment, school board policies, and community context) work together to influence school stakeholders (Wang & Degol, 2016).

Intersectionality

At the center of ecological theory lies the individual. Factors that create and contribute to identity, and personal experience can be environmental or intrinsic. Intrinsic factors such as gender identity, race, class, sexuality, ability, and other social categories are created by distal systems, intertwined with historical and societal influences (Hancock, 2007; Rice et al., 2019). Attending to intersectionality in research means focusing on multiple facets of identity together with environmental influences. This is necessary for conceptualizing diverse experiences (Crenshaw, 1991; Rice et al., 2019). The use of an inclusive, intersectional approach in research allows exploration of unique experiences of the sample population and their intersecting identities. It also promotes the recognition of societal and organizational elements that promote cultural norms and structures of privilege and oppression (García et al., 2012). When research focuses on only one aspect of an individual's identity, intragroup differences are often overlooked and people are perceived to be subject to a particular experience (in the case of this study, teacher-directed violence) due to their gender identity or race, when quite often, a person experiences something due to a combination of gender, race, class and other systematic factors (Crenshaw, 1991). Moreover, when other identity aspects are left out, it is often subliminally presumed by readers that other aspects of their identity conform to that of traditional, white, individualistic US based cultural norms, which may not be the case, particularly in a representative sample of US citizens (Cole, 2009). As facets of identity are not mutually exclusive, and rather make up a person's entire identity contributing to their lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1991), it is important to try to ascertain how multiple, combined facets of identity interact and are perceived in relation to the experience being studied.

Intersectional Ecological Perspective to Examine Teacher-Directed Violence

Grant and Zwier (2011) emphasize that educational questions need to be theorized and assessed through multiple lenses. Use of an ecological systems lens allows for researchers to attend to different societal and community level factors, as well as interpersonal relationships that influence both physical and social environments (Kloos & Shah, 2009). An intersectional focus promotes better conceptualization of diversity factors and allows researchers to consider not just individual facets of identity, but also multiple combined facets of identity, and how they are perceived to contribute to teacher-directed violence. This also allows for the recognition of participants who may possess multiple marginalized identities to be better identified and understood in research (Cole, 2009; García et al., 2012). By approaching research on teacher-directed violence with an ecological and intersectional approach simultaneously, researchers are better able to understand the ways in which individuals' multiple shared identities, as well as contextual systems interact to contribute to their experiences with violence (Seng et al., 2012; Winker & Degele, 2011). In special education, this approach may be particularly useful to explore the ways in which societal context, and complex identities of victim and aggressor affect the classroom, and impact teaching and learning (García & Ortiz, 2013; Moreno Sandoval et al., 2017). By contextualizing teachers' experiences with violence in terms of intersecting identities as well influence of ecological systems, more nuanced contributing factors to teacher-directed violence may emerge.

Ecological Systems and School Violence

To address aggressive behavior holistically, it is necessary to approach violence from every ecological level (McMahon et al., 2017; McMahon et al., 2009). The

influence of macro level factors such as cultural values and community settings have been strongly linked to poor developmental outcomes and increases in violence (Overstreet et al. 2003). Sundaram (2016) posits that violence in schools is significantly related to gender norms indicating harmful cultural norms to be predictors of violence. In areas where there are growing socio-economic inequalities, acts of violence are increasing and infiltrating school settings (Werthein, 2003). Urban neighborhoods are characterized by higher rates of community violence, exposure to which leads to increased aggressive behavior in children (e.g., Overstreet et al, 2003; Salzinger et al. 2008). Student aggression resulting from community issues impacts educators (Bester & du Plessis, 2010), placing teachers in urban schools at greater risk of experiencing student aggression (Gerberich et al., 2014).

Identity and School Violence

Extant literature has noted that individual characteristics of victim and aggressor such as sexuality, gender, age, years of experience and race have been linked in certain studies to perpetration of teacher-directed violence (e.g. Bounds & Jenkins, 2016; Kauppi & Pörhölä 2012; McMahon et al., 2014; Mooij, 2011). Victimization in special education settings may be intensified by individual characteristics (Rose et al., 2011). Teachers who experience victimization often feel it is due to personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, or physical appearance), as opposed to their effectiveness as educators or any other factors within their control (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). To further explore this phenomena, this study uses an intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1991) to evaluate how identity factors (individual, and intersecting) influence proximal, reciprocal interactions (Bronfenbrenner,1989) between aggressors and teachers during participants'

most upsetting experiences with violence. According to Crenshaw (1991), persons holding multiple marginalized identities are more likely to experience violence. In utilizing an intersectional focus to approach school violence research, this study will both explore the experiences of those holding multiple marginalized identities, as well as build upon the current literature that primarily focuses individual facets of identity, and the extent to which these factors contribute to violence in school settings.

Gender. One intrinsic factor found to be intertwined with teacher-victimization is gender, both of the aggressor and the teacher (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). Gender (i.e., biological sex assigned at birth, expression, identity, and attraction) has been linked to increased victimization for teachers who deviate from cis-gender heterosexual norms (Mooij, 2011). Chen and Astor (2009) found that male students in their sample were more likely to perpetrate teacher-directed violence than female students. Wilson and colleagues (2011) found that in Canada, 83% of male teachers randomly surveyed in a geographically stratified sample and 78% of female teachers reported experiencing violence, with higher percentages of female teachers citing adverse impacts across the board (e.g., physical symptoms, emotional impact, teaching impact). McMahon and colleagues (2014) also found that male teachers reported higher overall rates of victimization by students, although female teachers reported higher rates of verbal aggression. Contrarily, in a study completed in the Netherlands in 2006 surveying 88,296 secondary school students and staff Mooij (2011) found that female teachers reported more violence than male educators. Most studies indicate that gender is related to victimization; however, research is needed to assess the role of gender in relation to specific contexts and teacher experiences.

Age or Years of Experience. Teacher age and years of experience are highly correlated variables. Bounds and Jenkins (2016) found that in a Midwest sample of teachers in the United States, years of experience was not significantly related to violence experience. However, Mooij (2011) found that among educators reporting their experiences over the past six months, the older the teacher, the higher likelihood of experiencing victimization. Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012) also found older teachers to be at higher risk for victimization. Wei and colleagues (2013) found years of experience to be a protective factor for violence experience. Exploring age and/or years of experience may help shed light on factors contributing to teacher-directed violence.

Race. Wei et al., (2013) found that educators of color are more likely to experience victimization than White educators. McMahon and colleagues (2014) found that in urban settings, being a teacher of color is a protective factor for experiencing violence perpetration; whereas, White teachers experienced higher rates of victimization. There are several potential reasons for these varied findings, but it may be due to setting. The study conducted by Wei and colleagues was done in Minnesota, a state with a demographic breakdown of predominantly White residents; therefore, teachers of color in that situation were most likely of the minority. Often conflict arises between persons who perceive different physical and cultural characteristics between themselves and someone else (Gwernen-Jones et al., 2015; Lasky, 2000; Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012). The demographic breakdown of race in the US is less homogenous than in Minnesota, and teachers of color may be in schools where they are the majority or the minority in a national sample, which may influence teachers' experience of school violence. Students of color are disproportionately represented in special education settings (Salend &

Garrick Duhaney, 2005), therefore it is likely that race and culture could play a role in teacher-violence experiences in these settings (Gwernen-Jones et al., 2015; Lasky, 2000; Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012).

To date, very little exploration has been done on the topic of teacher-directed violence in special education settings, and no studies have used an ecological lens attending to intersectional identity of aggressor and victim. Examining intersectionality may allow for better exploration of nuanced issues specific to special education teachers' experiences (García et al., 2012; García & Ortiz, 2013; Gillborn, 2015; Grant & Zwier, 2011).

Current Study

This study examines quantitative differences between general and special educators in rates of violence across a range of aggressors as well as students and parents specifically. Additionally, reasons special education teachers perceive violence occurs, related to ecological systems and intersectional identity were explored qualitatively. By using an ecological lens with a focus on intersectionality (Winker & Degele, 2011) to study the experiences of special education teachers, the more nuanced aspects of their experiences with violence in school settings, as well as influence of contextual factors at each ecological systems level became evident. In order to do this, an embedded mixed-methods design was implemented (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007) to build upon previous research findings.

Rationale

While there is an emergent and growing body of literature regarding teacher directed violence generally (e.g., de Vos & Kirsten, 2015; McMahon et al., 2014; Reddy

et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2011; Woudstra & Jordaan, 2018), and several studies examine special education teachers' experiences with violence (Broomhead, 2013; Gerberich 2014; Gwernan-Jones, 2015), no studies have examined the differences between the experiences of teachers in general education settings and special education settings. As these environments vary (Billingsley, 2004; Boe et al, 2008; Brunsting et al., 2014; Stempien & Loeb, 2002; Westling & Whitten, 1996), it is prudent when studying teacher directed violence, to assess whether or not violence experienced by these two groups also differs. This information can be utilized to inform future research and policy targeting reduction of school violence. Thus, this study will examine quantitative differences between general and special educators in rates of violence across a range of aggressors, as well as students and parents specifically.

In addition to looking at differences between special education teachers and general education teachers' lived experiences with violence quantitatively, this study explores the influence of ecological systems and identity factors on the experiences of special education teachers in our sample, and reasons they believe aggression was perpetrated against them qualitatively. While previous studies indicate that special-education teachers are experiencing victimization and high rates of conflict (Broomhead, 2013; Gerberich 2014; Gwernan-Jones, 2015; McMahon et al, 2014); to date, no studies have specifically examined special education teachers' experiences with violence and the context surrounding these experiences. Further, the significant dearth of literature on the subject highlights a gap and need for in-depth exploration of the reasons why violence toward teachers occurs in special education settings.

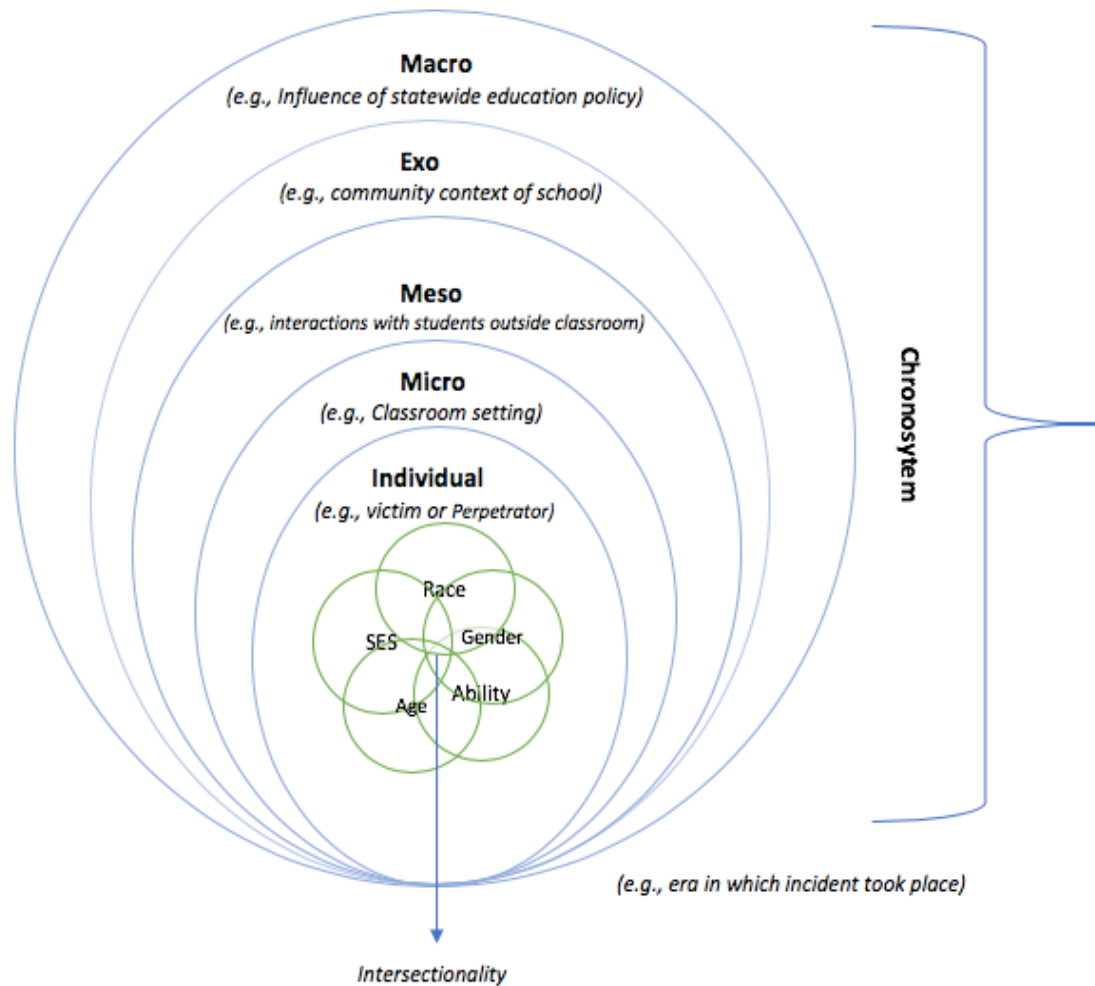


Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Teachers' Ecological Systems and Intersectionality.

Quantitative Hypotheses

Hypothesis I

Special education teachers are more likely than general education teachers to report having experienced some form of violence in the current or past year (across student, parent, colleague, and other aggressors), after controlling for teacher demographic variables (gender, race, age, years of teaching experience and community setting).

Hypothesis II

Special education teachers are more likely to report experiencing student-perpetrated violence than general education teachers, after controlling for teacher demographic variables (gender, race, age, years of teaching experience and community setting).

Hypothesis III

Special education teachers are more likely to report experiencing parent-perpetrated violence than general education teachers, after controlling for teacher demographic variables (gender, race, age, years of teaching experience and community setting).

Hypothesis IV

Teacher demographic variables (race, gender, age, teaching experience and community setting) will moderate the relationship between special educators and violence experience from all aggressors.

Qualitative Research Questions

Research Question I

What factors within each ecological system (Macro-, Exo-, Meso-, Micro-, Chrono-systems) influence teacher-directed violence in special education, according to special education teachers?

Research Question II

In what ways do race, gender, class, age, and/or ability status of the **educator** influence the violent experiences of special educators?

Research Question III

In what ways do race, gender, class, age and/or ability status of the **aggressor** influence the violent experiences of special educators?

Method

Participants

There were 3403 online surveys submitted at the end of the study. Roughly four percent of the participants (3.7%, $n = 126$) did not respond to any survey questions beyond demographic variables, and were eliminated from the study sample. Of the 3277 remaining participants, approximately eight percent (7.5 %, $n = 245$) did not respond to the survey question “what is your primary role at your school?” and are omitted from this study. This question ascertained whether the participant was a “general education” or “special education” teacher. Two response options were combined to create the special educator category: “Special Education: Resource”, and “Special Education: Self-Contained/Special Day”. Fourteen percent ($n = 459$) selected the response choice “Other” for their role, which resulted in their omission, as the purpose of this study is to look specifically at general and special education teachers. After omitting participants who were not categorized as either general education teachers or special education teachers, 2573 participants remained to be examined for the quantitative and qualitative portions of this study.

Quantitative Sample Characteristics

Of the 2573 participants with mostly completed surveys, (6.4%, $n = 210$) did not respond to the question asking whether or not they had experienced violence in the current or past year, and were omitted from this sample for incomplete data. This left 2363 total participants for this study. Of the sample, 80.8% ($n = 1910$) identified

themselves as general education teachers, and 19.2% ($n = 453$) self-identified as special education professionals.

Preliminary descriptive frequency analyses and crosstabs were used to examine the demographic breakdown and overall characteristics of general and special education teachers. Of the 1910 general education teachers in the sample, the majority were female, and identified as Caucasian/White. The average age of participants was 45 years of age. Years of experience ranged from 0-49 years, with an average of 16.31 years. (See Table 1). Of the 453 special education teachers in the sample, the majority of the participants were White, and self-identified as female. Of the special educators in the sample, 447 of 453 participants divulged the number of years they had been teaching. Years of experience ranged from 1 to 44 years teaching, with an average of 16.2 years. The average age of teachers in the sample was 47 years old (See Table 1). Any participant who did not respond to a variable utilized in analyses was automatically not included in analyses and subsequent results run using IBM SPSS software, version 26. This resulted in a total sample size of 2270 for hypotheses one, two, and four; and 2253 for hypothesis three.

Table 1*Quantitative Sample Characteristics*

Characteristic	General Education Teachers (N = 1910)		Special Education Teachers (N = 453)	
	M(SD)	n (%)	M(SD)	n (%)
		Years of Experience		
Years of Experience	16.3 (10.4)		16.2 (10.1)	
Did not respond		20 (1.0)		6 (1.3)
		Teacher Age		
Teacher Age	45.4 (11.3)		47.4 (10.9)	
Did not respond		27 (1.4)		6 (1.3)
		Gender		
Male		342 (17.9)		53 (11.7)
Female		1563 (82.1)		400 (88.3)
		Race/Ethnicity		
White		1514 (79.3)		356 (78.6)
Black		170 (8.9)		40 (8.8)
Latinx/Hispanic		83 (4.3)		17 (3.8)
Other/Multi-racial		94 (4.9)		24 (5.3)
Did not respond		49 (2.6)		16 (3.5)
		Setting		
Urban		833 (43.6)		228 (50.3)
Suburban		705 (36.9)		163 (36.0)
Rural		369 (19.3)		61 (13.5)
Did not respond		3 (0.2)		1 (0.2)

Qualitative Sample Characteristics

Of the 3277 participants who responded to survey questions, 524 identified as special education professionals. Of the 524 special education teachers, 430 (13.1% of the overall sample; 82.1% of the special education teachers) filled out the qualitative portion and will serve as the sample to examine the research questions.

Preliminary descriptive frequency analyses and crosstabs were used to examine the demographic breakdown of the qualitative sample. Average participant age was approximately 47 years old. Teaching years of experienced ranged from 1-44 years with an average of nearly 16 years teaching (See Table 2). The majority of the qualitative sample indicated that they were White, and reported that their gender was female. Most teachers reported that they taught in an Urban setting (See Table 2).

Table 2*Qualitative Sample Characteristics*

Characteristic	Qualitative Sample (N = 430)	
	M(SD)	n (%) Percentage
	Years of Experience	
Years of Experience	16.0 (10.0)	
Did not respond		4 (0.9)
	Teacher Age	
Teacher Age	47.0 (11.3)	
Did not respond		5 (1.2)
	Gender	
Male		55 (12.8)
Female		375 (87.2)
	Race/Ethnicity	
White		351 (81.6)
Black		28 (6.5)
Latinx/Hispanic		14 (3.3)
Other/Multiracial		24 (5.6)
Did not respond		13 (3.0)
	Setting	
Urban		228 (53.0)
Suburban		140 (32.6)
Rural		61 (14.2)

Qualitative and quantitative special educator data are reported separately, as some participants in the study opted to only fill out quantitative questions ($n = 94$), while some responded to only qualitative questions ($n = 71$), and others responded to both types of survey questions ($n = 359$). As such, while there is overlap between the two samples, there are participants in the quantitative sample who are not present in the qualitative sample, and there are participants in the qualitative sample who are not captured in the quantitative sample.

Materials

Of the items on the survey (Appendix A) used in this study, some were utilized from prior evaluations on violence directed toward teachers (Gottfredson et al., 2005), and this study draws from a larger study on violence against teachers (e.g., McMahon et al., 2014; McMahon et al., 2017; McMahon et al., 2019).

Quantitative

Participant demographics are used as predictor variables in this study. These demographic variables are gender, race, years of teaching experience and community setting (Appendix A). The gender variable is dichotomous (male/female), and race/ethnicity is categorical (“Black/African-American”, “Caucasian”, “Hispanic/Latinx” or “Other/Multiracial”). Due to small sample sizes, participants who identified as Asian, Hawaiian/Native Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaskan Native, and Other/Multiracial were combined into one larger category of “Other/Multiracial” in order to conduct logistic regression analyses. Years of teaching experience and age are continuous variables. On the survey, there were four options for school-community setting which were “Urban”, “Small Urban”, “Suburban” and “Rural”. Urban and Small Urban have been combined for this study due to few participants indicating Small Urban settings.

The dependent variables about teachers’ experiences across aggressors and types of violence were created based on the following question: “Have any of the following happened to you personally this year or last year at your school? If yes, please check all of the individuals that may have been involved.” The teachers were presented with eleven types of victimization options (Appendix A). These options were: obscene remarks, obscene gestures, verbal threats, intimidation, cyber/Internet violence, theft of personal property, damage to personal property, objects thrown, physical attack not resulting in a visit to physician, physical attack resulting in a visit to a physician, and weapon pulled. Participants were asked to specify the aggressor of each type of victimization. They had the options of: Did not happen, Student, Parent, Colleague, Stranger or Other. Each type

of victimization was dichotomous (0= did not occur; 1= yes). There is no reason to believe based on data or literature that special education teachers and general education teachers would interpret this question differently. The participants' yes or no responses to various perpetrations will be utilized to ascertain whether or not the participant experienced any form of violence, which will be a dichotomous "yes" or "no" variable (0 = no, 1 = yes) and represents the dependent variable for the first hypothesis in the quantitative portion of this study. Thus, if a study participant indicated they had experienced any form of violence, from any aggressor, they were categorized as "yes" for having experienced any type of violence in the current or past year. If they selected "did not happen" for all forms of violence, from all aggressor types they were categorized as "no" for not having experienced any type of violence in the current or past year. For the second hypothesis, the participants' yes or no responses to any form of student-perpetrated victimization will be utilized to create a dichotomous variable indicating "yes" or "no" (0 = no, 1 = yes) for experience of violence perpetrated by a student. For the third hypothesis, the participants' yes or no responses to any form of parent-perpetrated victimization will be utilized to create a dichotomous variable indicating "yes" or "no" (0 = no, 1 = yes) for experience of violence perpetrated by a parent. These questions were constructed specifically for this study, and were based on areas of violence commonly reported in the literature.

Qualitative

Four open-ended questions were asked of participants in the survey and these will be utilized for answering the qualitative research questions in this study (Appendix A). These questions were 1) "Please think about all of the times when you were the target

of verbal or physical aggression or intimidation in your school. Can you describe what was the most upsetting incident that happened to you in your role as a teacher?" 2) "In your own words, please explain why you think this incident happened." 3) "How did this incident impact your view of your current teaching position?" 4) "Please provide any other information that may be important to note in the incident described."

Procedure

The survey developed for data collection in this study was a product of the APA Classroom Violence Directed Against Teachers Task Force (McMahon et al., 2014). Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) authorization from the University of Illinois, survey data were gathered by the American Psychological Association (APA) Center for Psychology in Schools and Education (CPSE). CPSE worked together with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), The National Education Association (NEA), as well as the state's association of education for each state involved in the survey (McMahon et al., 2014). The NEA encouraged survey involvement via newsletter, the AFT circulated survey weblinks to educators, and CPSE communicated via mail to the presidents of these organizations, requesting them to disseminate material to teachers in schools. Directions indicated the research was approved by an IRB and that completion of the anonymous survey signified assent to participate in this study (McMahon et al., 2014). Eligibility criteria for participating in the study were that participants were teachers above the age of 18.

The survey was distributed to teachers K-12 across the United States. West Virginia and South Carolina were the only two states not represented in this sample of educators (McMahon et al., 2014). Recruitment for survey completion by teachers took

place between January and May of 2010. The first dispersal of the solicitation letter generated 600 responses. In April of 2010, APA dispensed a subsequent solicitation letter, which resulted in 2,422 completed surveys. May of 2010 resulted in the distribution of a last solicitation letter which resulted in total sample from which this study was drawn (McMahon et al., 2014).

Results

This study utilized an embedded mixed-methods study design to analyze the experiences of special education teachers with violence perpetration in their workplace. An embedded design was selected because the use of one data set (quantitative or qualitative) does not fully explore all aspects of the research questions being asked (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Quantitative data were explored, examining the differences in rates of violence experienced between special and general education teachers. Qualitative data were utilized to analyze contextual factors contributing to the experiences of special education teachers with violence. Qualitative analysis will expand on the difference in rates explored in quantitative hypotheses, providing more depth to our understanding of violence experienced specifically by special educators. Together, the findings of both sets of analyses are interpreted below.

Quantitative

Preliminary Analyses

Gender, age, race/ethnicity, years of teaching experience and school-community setting were utilized as predictor variables in multiple logistic regression for all hypotheses testing. This was done to assess for any between-group variability that may exist as a result of these factors. The reference groups for the categorical demographic

variables are the groups with the largest number of participants (i.e., Gender: Female, Race: Caucasian, Setting: Urban).

Diagnostics. Logistic regression does not require independent variables to have equivalent variance in each group, be normally distributed, or be linear (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Prior to running analyses for all hypotheses, linear variables were assessed for multi-collinearity. A variance inflation factor (VIF) test was run to assess for multi-collinearity, specifically between age and years of experience as it relates to the dependent variable (experienced any violence) (O'Brien, 2007). For all hypotheses, all tolerance values were greater than .1 for each variable and ranged from .45-.46. Similarly, VIF values for each variable across hypotheses were less than 10, and ranged from 2.12-2.2, indicating goodness of fit and no problem with any of the models. According to the collinearity diagnostics table, no predictor variables had simultaneous high variance proportions for the same eigen-value, indicating no multi-collinearity between variables.

Following analysis DFBetas, Cook's distance, and Leverage scores were assessed for potential outliers for each hypothesis, and all values were within normal range (i.e., less than 1), indicating goodness of fit (Field, 2018). In regression, the residuals (i.e., observations, less modeled values) need to have a constant variance, be normally distributed, and independent to ensure the analysis resulted in valid confidence intervals, and p-values (Barker & Shaw, 2015). As such, the researcher evaluated all studentized and standardized residuals for each hypothesis. For studentized residuals, each hypothesis had cases with values greater than +/-1.96 (ranging from 15-44 cases depending on hypothesis), however no cases were higher than +/-2.58, and in each instance it was

within the acceptable standard of five percent of total cases (Field, 2018); this indicates the assumptions of normal distribution, independence, and constant variance were met and within acceptable limits. Examination of standardized residuals for each analysis also yielded between 15-44 cases with values greater than $+1.96$ (but within the acceptable standard of five percent). Additionally, cases with standardized residual values greater than ± 2.58 ranged from 11-38 cases depending on hypothesis, and ranged from zero to four cases with values greater than ± 3.00 . As 38 cases had values slightly higher than the acceptable one percent of total cases (Field, 2018) all outliers with values greater than 2.58 were examined by the researcher for any peculiarities in the data. None were found, so these cases were included in analysis, and it was determined that all assumptions for logistic regression were met (Barker & Shaw, 2015; Field, 2018).

Hypothesis I

Hypothesis one posits that special education teachers are more likely than general education teachers to report having experienced any form of violence in the current or past year. To examine whether violence experience across all aggressors is predicted by teacher role, multiple logistic regression analyses were utilized due to the binary nature of the outcome variable (i.e., experienced any type of violence by any aggressor in the current or previous year or did not experience violence) (Peng et al., 2002). Teacher role (regular versus special educator) and demographic variables (gender, race, years of experience, urbanicity) served as predictors to assess the odds of a participant experiencing some form of violence (across any aggressor).

Results for the logistic regression model testing hypothesis one are significant, ($\chi^2(8) = 45.569, p = .000$; See Table 3). Specifically, the model indicates that, even after

controlling for demographic variables, the odds of special educators reporting experiencing any form of violence is significantly greater than that of general educators. Special educators, according to this model have 1.44 times greater odds of experiencing violence from any aggressor (See Table 3).

While gender, and years of experience do not appear to significantly impact teachers' experiences with violence, the demographic variables of race and school setting do significantly affect whether an educator has reported experiencing any form of violence in the current or past year, from any type of aggressor. According to the model, participants who identified as Black or African American, when compared to participants who identified as White were significantly less likely to report an experience of violence. Specifically, White educators had 2.13 times greater odds than educators who identified as Black/African American educators of reporting any form of teacher-directed violence from any type of aggressor in the current or past year. Additionally, educators in suburban and rural settings, when compared to those in urban settings have significantly lower odds of reporting experiencing violence overall. According to the model, educators in urban settings have 2.17 times greater odds than suburban educators, and 1.45 times greater odds than rural educators of reporting aggression from any type of aggressor (See Table 3).

Table 3*Overall Violence Experience by Teacher Role*

Independent Variables	Results			
	B	S.E	Significance	Odds Ratios
Constant	1.240	.293	.000**	3.456
Teacher Age	.010	.008	.189	1.010
Role: Special Educator	.363	.153	.018*	1.438
Teacher Gender: Male	.233	.156	.134	1.263
Years Teaching	-.015	.008	.067	.985
Teacher Race/Ethnicity				
Black/African American	-.395	.186	.034*	.467
Hispanic/Latinx	-.302	.263	.250	.442
Other/Multi-Racial	-.069	.258	.788	.563
School Setting				
Suburban Setting	-.772	.146	.000***	.462
Rural Setting	-.378	.127	.003**	.685

Note. $R^2 = .729$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), $.020$ (Cox-Snell), $.032$ (Nagelkerke). Model $\chi^2(9) = 45.569$.

^aReference categories: (Gender, Female; Race: White; Setting: Urban).

* *Probability note.* $P = .000$ ***. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis II

Hypothesis two predicted special education teachers are more likely than general education teachers to report having experienced student-perpetrated violence in the current or past year. To determine whether or not teachers experience of student-perpetrated aggression is predicted by teacher role, multiple logistic regression analysis was used (Peng et al., 2002). The predictor variables in this analysis were teacher role (regular versus special educator), as well as demographic variables of gender, race, years of experience and urbanicity.

Results for the logistic regression model testing hypothesis two are significant, ($\chi^2(9) = 59.337, p = .000$; See Table 4). Specifically, the model indicates that, even after controlling for demographic variables the odds of special educators experiencing student-

perpetrated violence is significantly greater than that of general educators. Special educators, according to this model had 1.59 times the odds of experiencing student perpetrated violence in the current or past year than general educators (See Table 4).

According to the model, age did not appear to significantly impact teachers' experiences with student-perpetrated violence. However, the variables of gender, race/ethnicity, years of experience, and school setting did significantly affect the odds of whether an educator has experienced any student aggression in the current or past year. According to the model, male teachers in the sample had significantly greater odds than female participants to report student-perpetrated aggression. Male teachers in this sample had 1.45 times greater odds of reporting experiences of student-perpetrated violence in the current or past year (See Table 4). Participants who identified as White had 2.56 times the odds of Latinx/Hispanic participants of reporting experiences of student violence. Additionally, teachers with more experience had significantly lower odds than newer teachers for reporting student aggression. For every one-year decrease in experience, educators had 1.02 times greater odds of reporting experiences of student violence. Further, participants in suburban and rural settings, when compared to those in urban settings are had significantly lower odds of reporting student aggression. According to the model, educators in urban settings had 2.08 times greater odds than suburban, and 1.41 times greater odds than those in rural settings of reporting experiences with student aggression (See Table 4).

Table 4*Student-Perpetrated Violence Experience by Teacher Role*

Independent Variables	Results			
	B	S.E	Significance	Odds Ratios
Constant	1.084	.274	.000**	2.956
Teacher Role: Special Educator	.462	.144	.001**	1.587
Teacher Gender: Male	.368	.148	.013*	1.445
Teacher Age	.011	.007	.130	1.011
Years Teaching	-.017	.008	.025*	.983
	Teacher Race/Ethnicity			
African American/Black	-.216	.180	.229	.805
Hispanic/Latinx	-.471	.236	.046*	.624
Other/Multi-Racial	.074	.249	.766	1.077
	School Setting			
Suburban Setting	-.735	.136	.000***	.479
Rural Setting	-.328	.118	.004**	.713

Note. $R^2 = .960$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), $.026$ (Cox-Snell), $.039$ (Nagelkerke). Model $\chi^2(9)$

= 59.337

^aReference categories: (Gender, Female; Race: White; Setting: Urban).

*Probability Note. $p = .000$ ***. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis III

Hypothesis three proposes that special education teachers are more likely than general education teachers to report experiencing parent-perpetrated violence in the current or past year. To examine whether parent-perpetrated violence experience is predicted by teacher role, multiple logistic regression analysis was used. Teacher role, gender, race, years of experience and urbanicity served as the independent variables predicting the odds of whether teachers reported parent-perpetrated violence.

Results for the logistic regression model testing hypothesis three are significant, ($\chi^2(9) = 36.065$, $p = .000$; See Table 5). More precisely, the model indicates that, controlling for demographic variables the odds of special educators in this sample experiencing parent-perpetrated violence were significantly less than that of general

educators. According to this model the odds of general education teachers reporting experiencing parent aggression in the current or past year was 1.30 times greater than that of special educators (See Table 5).

The demographic variables of teacher age, years of experience, and race/ethnicity were found to significantly affect the odds of parent-perpetrated violence, while the variables of gender and setting were not found to impact the odds of participants experiencing parent-perpetrated violence. According to the model, teacher age was a protective factor, and for every one-year increase in teacher age, the odds of experiencing parent-violence decreased. For every one year decrease in teacher age, their odds of having reported experiences of parent aggression were 1.02 times greater. Interestingly, years of experience was also found to significantly impact the odds of teachers reporting experiences of parent violence in the current or past year, with every one-year increase in experience, the odds increase by 1.021. The odds of White participants having reported experiences of parent aggression were 1.03 times greater than the odds of African American/Black educators (See Table 5).

Table 5*Parent-Perpetrated Violence Experience by Teacher Role*

Independent Variables	Results			
	B	S.E	Significance	Odds Ratios
Constant	-.264	.245	.281	.768
Teacher Role: Special Educator	-.270	.124	.029*	.763
Teacher Gender: Male	-.030	.125	.810	.970
Teacher Age	-.022	.006	.000***	.978
Years Teaching	.020	.007	.003**	1.021
Teacher Race/Ethnicity				
African American/Black	-.571	.185	.002**	.970
Hispanic/Latinx	-.004	.225	.955	.958
Other/Multi-Racial	.354	.197	.111	1.322
School Setting				
Suburban Setting	-.031	.127	.810	.970
Rural Setting	-.170	.105	.104	.843

Note. $R^2 = .440$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), $.016$ (Cox-Snell), $.022$ (Nagelkerke). Model $\chi^2 (9)$

= 36.065

^aReference categories: (Gender, Female; Race: White; Setting: Urban).

Probability Note.* $p = .000*$. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $*** p < .001$.

Hypothesis IV

Hypothesis four proposes that teacher demographic characteristics will moderate the relationship between teacher role (general educator vs. special educator) and whether or not they experienced violence in the current or past year and was assessed using multiple logistic regression analyses were utilized. Teacher role served as the independent variable in the model, while gender, race, years of experience and urbanicity served as moderating predictors, to ascertain the odds of whether or not teachers reported experiencing violence was moderated by demographic variables. Results for the logistic regression model testing hypothesis four are not significant (See Table 6).

Table 6*Moderation Results*

Independent Variables	Results			
	B	S.E	Significance	Odds Ratios
Constant	1.240	.293	.000***	3.456
Teacher Role: Special Educator	.363	.153	.018*	1.438
Teacher Gender: Male	.233	.156	.134	1.263
Teacher Age	.010	.008	.189	1.010
Years Teaching	-.015	.008	.067	.985
Teacher Race/Ethnicity				
African American/Black	-.395	.186	.034*	.442
Hispanic/Latinx	-.302	.263	.250	.740
Other/Multi-Racial	-.069	.258	.788	.933
School Setting				
Suburban Setting	-.772	.146	.000***	.462
Rural Setting	-.378	.127	.003**	.685
Interactions				
Teacher Role: Special Educator *	.568	.575	.323	1.765
Teacher Gender: Male				
Teacher Role: Special Education *	.008	.020	.675	1.008
Teacher Age				
Teacher Role: Special Educator *	-.006	.015	.693	.994
Years Teaching				
Teacher Role * Race/Ethnicity				
Special Educator * African American/Black	.173	.519	.739	1.189
Special Educator * Hispanic/Latinx	-.292	.731	.689	.747
Special Educator * Other/Multi-Racial	-.326	.650	.616	.722
Teacher Role * School Setting				
Special Educator *Suburban	.804	.482	.096	2.233
Special Educator * Rural	-.136	.330	.676	.871

Note. $R^2 = .729$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), $.020$ (Cox-Snell), $.032$ (Nagelkerke). Model $\chi^2(9)$

= 45.569

^aReference categories: (Gender, Female; Race: White; Setting: Urban).

*Probability Note. $p = .000$ ***. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Moderation Results. When assessing the interaction between role and race, the model was significant ($\chi^2(16) = 50.836, p = .000, R^2 = .651$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), $.022$ (Cox-Snell), $.036$ (Nagelkerke), however no interaction effects were significant. When assessing the interaction between role and gender, and whether gender moderates the relationship between role and violence experience in the current or past year, the model

was significant, ($\chi^2(17) = 51.921, p = .000, R^2 = .788$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), .023 (Cox-Snell), .037 (Nagelkerke); however, the interaction between gender and role was not significant. When assessing the interaction between role and setting, and whether setting moderates whether a teacher experiences violence in the current or past year, the model was significant, ($\chi^2(12) = 50.121, p = .000, R^2 = .459$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), .022 (Cox-Snell), .036 (Nagelkerke); however, the interactions between role and setting were not. When assessing the interaction between role and age, and whether the relationship between primary role and violence experience is moderated by age, the model was significant, ($\chi^2(13) = 50.297, p = .000, R^2 = .480$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), .022 (Cox-Snell), .036 (Nagelkerke); however, the interaction between role and age was not. When assessing whether the relationship between primary role and violence experience is moderated by years of experience, the model was found to be significant, ($\chi^2(10) = 45.725, p = .000, R^2 = .880$ (Hosmer-Lemeshow), .020 (Cox-Snell), .032 (Nagelkerke); See Table 6) however, the interaction between role and years of experience was not.

Qualitative

Coding

Coding was completed by two doctoral students utilizing directed content analysis in NVivo, version 12. For this study, directed content analysis was utilized in order to analyze textual data while attending to the context surrounding the text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Directed content analysis was used to identify key emergent themes and categories that relate to teachers' lived experiences with violence using the ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Bronfenbrenner, 1994) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) frameworks that informed

the study's research questions (Dent, 2011). Deductive reasoning, paying special attention to existing research regarding intersectional and ecological systems were used to inform the extraction of emergent themes and categories from the data. It is important to note that the questions asked in the survey were not designed to ask participants about their experiences in relation to ecological systems theory or intersectionality. Thus, all codes established and captured appeared organically in the dataset, without specific query from the data collection tool.

A preliminary working codebook was created by the coding team based on their understanding of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Bronfenbrenner, 1994) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Codes were defined, inclusion and exclusion criteria were clarified, and examples were identified. Once a draft of the codebook was created, the coding team iteratively worked together coding subsets of the data (ten percent) as recommended by the literature (Lacy & Riffe, 1996), establishing consensus, and refining all categories and subcategories in the codebook to reflect the dataset. Overall, the codebook created had 21 codes, and the Kappa score for each code was calculated, with the average of .91 across Kappa scores for each of the codes; a Kappa score of .91 reflects strong reliability (McHugh, 2012). Following achievement of Kappa, the codebook was finalized, and the coding team proceeded to code the dataset in its entirety. Coding was completed, and Kappa was calculated in NVivo version 12.

Analysis

Research Question I. Of the 430 special education teachers that comprise the qualitative sample in this study, approximately 18% ($n = 77$) did not discuss any

ecological systems level factors in their recount of their most upsetting experience of violence, while 82% ($n = 353$) referred to at least one systemic factor. Just one of any of the five different ecological systems was mentioned by about 40% ($n = 173$) of the participants in the sample. Special education teachers in our sample who cited two different ecological systems as contributing factors to their most upsetting experiences made up approximately 27% ($n = 115$) of the overall sample. Three ecological systems levels were discussed across 13% ($n = 55$) of participants. Two percent ($n = 9$) of the special education teachers indicated four ecological systems at play during their most upsetting experience, with one participant citing all five (See Table 7).

Across the entire sample, 42% ($n = 180$) of participants cited multiple ecological systems at play in relation to their experiences of violence. When breaking this down by system, 80% ($n = 37$) of participants who indicated the chrono-system impacted their violence experience also discussed the presence of one or more other systems; 94% ($n = 16$) of participants who cited exo-system factors also discussed other systems; 82% ($n = 108$) of participants who mentioned issues at the macro-systemic level indicated other systems at play; 77% ($n = 108$) of participants who discussed the meso-system also felt that other systemic levels were involved; and 57% ($n = 155$) of participants who attributed their experience to micro-systemic level issues also felt other systems were at play. This indicates that participants in the study often attributed multiple factors, at various ecological levels as responsible for their experience with violence. Quite strikingly, micro-system was coded more often than any other ecological system. It was also the system most likely to be cited as a sole reported ecological influence, with the lowest percentage of co-coded systems. When examining systems that were co-coded

(i.e., when a participant mentioned multiple ecological levels in relation or contributing to their most upsetting experience) for every other ecological system level, micro-system was the most frequently co-coded system.

As 82% of teachers in the sample referred to at least one ecological system, it is clear that participants recognized that their experiences were often not due solely to the actions of their aggressor; but that other, wider and more systemic issues were prevalent and contributed to participants' experiences with violence. On the next page, (Table 8) is an overview of the conceptualization and frequency of occurrence of each ecological system for this study.

Table 7

Ecological System Frequencies

Eco-logical System	Number of Systems Co-Coded								
	1		2		3		4		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Chrono	46	11	23.9	18	39.1	8	17.4	1	2.2
Exo	17	6	35.3	5	29.4	4	23.5	1	5.8
Macro	131	54	41.2	44	33.6	9	6.9	1	1.0
Meso	141	61	43.2	40	28.3	6	4.2	1	<1.0
Micro	274	96	35.0	49	17.9	9	3.3	1	<1.0

Table 8

Overview of Ecological Systems Results

System	Definition	Frequency		Secondary Codes	Theme(s)
		<i>n</i>	%		
Chrono-system	Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific events or the time period	46	11	Time Period	1) Violence worsening over time 2) Violence byproduct of the times
				Specific life event in teacher's life	1) New to environment 2) Teacher medical conditions
				Specific life event in aggressor's life	1) Setting change 2) Events outside of school 3) Medical issues
				Event or natural disaster in the community	n/a
Macro-system	factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of district, state, or federal policy, cultural influences, or overarching societal influences	131	30	Systemic Educational Issues	1) Issues with district or state level administration 2) Lack of resources or services for schools or teachers 3) Issues with services available to students 4) Lack of approved disciplinary action
				Cultural and Societal Factors	1) Lack of societal or cultural respect for teaching profession 2) Student issues 3) Parent issues 4) Lack of societal supports
				Policy Related Factors	1) State or federal level policies or mandates 2) Legal issues 3) Authority involvement 4) District policies
Exo-system	factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of indirect contexts such as community level influences	17	4	n/a	1) Lack of community infrastructure 2) Urbanicity 3) Issues affecting people in the community 4) Community violence
Meso-system	factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of the combination of two or more microsystems, including physical spaces and relationships, and across time	141	33	Student meso-system	1) Parental involvement in school/classroom 2) Student home-life affecting school/classroom
				Teacher meso-system	1) Teacher home-life and school 2) Online community and school
Micro-system	contexts in which an individual interacts that directly affects teachers' violence experience(s). These are specifically school-level microsystems that the participant attributes for why the violent incident occurred (indicative of issues within the school environment in which they work)	274	65	Classroom level	1) Issues with grading, schoolwork or teacher responses, non-compliance 2) Aggressor upset over disciplinary action 3) Acting out due to feelings toward participant
				Environment	1) Physical environment 2) Relational environment
				School level: Administrators	1) lack of enforcement of school rules or sufficient response by administrators. 2) administrator was the aggressor, or the administrators' reaction the incident made it significantly worse. 3) administrator decision negatively impacted the teacher
				School level: Policy	1) Insufficient teacher preparation, supports/structure, or school security 2) Issues with student placement in particular classrooms 3) Lack of compliance with school rules by the aggressor

It is important to note in the following sections when each ecological system is discussed in detail, participants may have discussed multiple codes or themes, so percentages reported in several of these sections add to over one hundred. Additionally, themes were only incorporated in the results if they were described by 10% or more of participants captured in each overarching category.

Chrono-system. Chrono-system was defined as “Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific events or the time period.” Of the 430 participants, 11% ($n = 46$) attributed their experience with violence to a time-related factor. This ecological level included four secondary codes: 1) *Time Period*, 2) *Specific Life Event in the Teacher's Life*, 3) *Specific Life Event in the Aggressor's Life* and 4) *Event or Natural Disaster in the Community* (See Table 9).

Table 9*Chrono-system*

Secondary Code	Definition	Theme(s)	Example(s)
Time Period	Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of the time period in which the participant and aggressor live and interact	Violence worsening over time	I was hit, kicked, spit on, had chairs, pencils, books, desks, and other objects thrown at me. They all hit me. I was out on workmens comp for injuries two times in two years. The violence is progressing in intensity each school year by grade. Parental interventions are non-existing or ineffective. School discipline is also not effective in reducing violence.
		Violence byproduct of the time	he was having one of his mood swings that day. Also, back then, I did not have enough knowledge on how to confront or manage such behavior.
Specific Life Event in Life of Aggressor	Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event occurring in the life of the aggressor	Setting change	The little 3rd grade child who is in my RSP program...was placed at a more restrictive school site for elem aged students with behavior problems. He recently returned to a regular elementary school and he HATES it. He wants to go back to the other school because they had fun field trips and rewards.
		Events outside of school	I enjoy working with students. I have come to realize it is not the kids - it is the adults that have the issues... This situation happened because a particular individual felt nasty about her life- she was recently divorced, over weight, spoiled and used to getting everything her own way. She did not feel good about herself and thus had to bring someone else down and make their life miserable.
		Medical issues	At the time I had no idea. 4-5 months later I found out he had problems with his teeth and his behaviors may have been related to his pain.
Specific Life Event in Life of Teacher	Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event occurring in the life of the participant	New to environment	...in my position as a new teacher...events of abuse occur all of the time. I have been biten, hit, pushed, kicked etc in my position and no one cares and nothing ever happens.
		Teacher medical conditions	I was out on medical leave and I believe that this person was upset that they thought that I was not at home resting 24 hours a day.
Event or Natural Disaster	Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event that affected the entire community	None reported	None reported

Time Period. Time period was defined as factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of the time period in which the participant and aggressor live and interact (Table 9). Of the 46 participants who suggest chrono-system level factors influenced their most upsetting experience of violence, approximately 22% ($n = 10$) cite violence to be a result of the time period. The most salient theme identified in this code is that *violence is getting worse over time*. One participant with 20 years of experience mused that “Things have been getting worse each year. More and more violence is

tolerated and excused”, while another female special education teacher from Louisiana echoes these sentiments, lamenting that “I have seen the behavior of students deteriorate over the past 20 years. I feel less and less like a teacher each year that I am in the profession and more like a guard in a prison.” In addition to violence progressively worsening, nearly a third of participants who reported issues they attributed to the time period indicated that their experience was simply a *byproduct of the time* in which it occurred. One southern suburban teacher shared that their experience with aggression was not unique, reporting that “It happens everywhere. Not just in schools. Thats life now a days.”, while another high school teacher with 17 years of experience attributed their experience to “how hopeless this generation of parents is.” Considerably less salient, with only one participant indicating this was a cause for violence, was that teachers were getting worse over time. This early career teacher from Michigan shared that they were attacked because their aggressor was frustrated that “teachers these days don’t give a damn and don’t work as hard as they used to.”

Specific Event in the Life of the Aggressor. This was the most prevalent of the chronosystem secondary codes, with 67% ($n = 31$) of participants attributing their most upsetting experience to something specific that happened in the life of the aggressor. Participants who discussed factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event occurring in the life of the aggressor were captured here (Table 9). From this sub-category, three emergent themes arose: *setting change*, *external events in aggressors' life*, and *medical concerns*.

Setting change was the most striking life event, cited by nearly half of special education teachers who attributed their most upsetting experience with violence to an

event in their aggressor's life. This encompassed a range of potential causes such as changes in the classroom, an introduction to the school environment, or setting changes in their home life. Reflecting on their experience, one early-career special education teacher from the Midwest lamented that "...The student came from a different country in which he was treated like an animal...He had never gone to school and never had any females in his life..." Another participant with over twenty years of experience felt they were victimized because "...A student that had been home schooled was put in my class even though he did not qualify... He had been shifted from the moderate class after being violent [in]to my class."

Events outside of the school setting were mentioned by just over a third of these participants as factor in their assault. This theme encapsulates events such as aggressor interactions with the juvenile justice system, and drastic changes in the home life of the aggressor. For example, a female special educator from California with 33 years of experience attributed their experience to the home life of the aggressor, indicating that the "family lived in a di[s]functional situation with 12 people in one home. Father was very ill and mother couldn't cope..."

The third prevalent theme that emerged during analysis is aggressors' *medical issues*. This captures an array of medical related attributions ranging from medicine changes, to psychotic breaks, and was discussed by ten participants in the sample. Medication concerns were often cited, with one participant specifying "This student was a special needs student with violent outbursts and anger issues. His change in medication made him unstable. He was violent toward other students and myself. The worst of it being the attempted assault..." These themes highlight different ways in which external

factors in the life of the aggressor, can be brought into the school environment, and negatively impact the life of the teacher.

Specific Event in the Life of the Teacher. Although this secondary code was significantly less prevalent than aggressor life event, *specific event in the life of the teacher* highlights important factors in the teachers' lives, that contributed to their most upsetting experience (Table 9). Fifteen percent ($n = 7$) of participants coded for chronosystem influences discuss, as defined by the coding team, factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event occurring in the life of the participant. Two salient themes emerged, during analyses, with one participant falling outside these categories- attributing their experience to their love life.

The first nascent theme was *new to environment*, reflecting lack of participant familiarity or preparedness for their role. One special educator from Florida identified how ill-equipped they were for the situation in which they were placed, stating:

I am currently filling in for a teacher of severely special needs children. While trying to help one of the lowest students, he bit me. It was only my 6th day of being placed in this classroom. I have a degree in Special Ed, but am not truly qualified to be working with students of this caliber.

The second prevalent theme that emerged was *teacher medical condition*. Often, participants' experiences were worsened or only occurred due to a medical state. One female participant, when describing their most upsetting experience reflected that "a student threatened to cut my baby out of my stomach when I was pregnant." This highlights the way in which a variety of circumstances contribute to and shape special education teachers' violence experiences.

Event or Natural Disaster. This secondary code captured factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event that affected the entire community (Table 9). However, less than one percent of participants attributed their experiences a large-scale natural disaster or community impacting event, so this code was omitted from further analyses.

Macro-system. Macro-system influences on violence were defined as factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of district, state, or federal policy, cultural influences, or overarching societal influences. Nearly one third of participants (30%; $n = 131$) referred to macro-system influences, leading to the emergence of three secondary categories: 1) Systemic educational issues, 2) Cultural and societal factors, and 3) Policy related factors (See Table 10).

Table 10*Macro-system*

Secondary Code	Definition	Theme(s)	Example(s)
Systemic Educational Issues	District, state and federal level factors affecting the education system at large that teachers feel contribute or play a role in their violence experiences	Issues with district or state level administration	The special education directors are misplacing dangerous students into resource rooms immediately from lock up facilities and moving the problem from school to school rather than pay for an appropriate setting.
		Lack of resources or services for schools or teachers	I felt powerless to be able to stop the act of violence from happening because I had no training on how to prevent this behavior...I would like to see children properly placed and staff allowed to be trained to help prevent violent acts from happening.
		Issues with services available to students	When there are multiple service providers, if they all do not follow the behavior plan, the student will fail.
Cultural and Societal Factors	macrosystem factors that teachers attribute to affecting their violence experiences. Specifically related to cultural norms/dominant group perspectives, religious beliefs, societal influence	Lack of societal or cultural respect for teaching profession	LACK OR RESPECT FOR TEACHERS
		Student issues	students in general do not find anything wrong with the way they speak to teachers.
		Parent issues	The parents who are behaving inappropriately have a sense of entitlement that they do not have to follow the rules that everyone else has to follow.
Policy Related Factors	Macrosystem factors that teachers attribute to affecting their violence experiences. Specifically related to district, state, or federal policy or law related to education or that affect participants	State or federal level policies or mandates	I have been had parents verbally try to intimidate me when their student fails driver education. They get upset with me when I hold them and their student to the state rules that guide the program.
		Legal issues	Teachers do not have a sufficient support system and backup help. Need more laws and regulations for teachers to defend themselves when students attack them.
		Authority involvement	When I had to call in to the state abuse line on a student who was sexually abusing other students and adults in my class. The next day I was verbally attacked by the parent and the principal...
		District policies	Student got angry when he refused to follow District Behavior Rules!

Systemic Educational Issues. Systemic education issues refer to district, state and federal level factors affecting the education system at large that teachers feel contribute

or play a role in their violence experiences (See Table 10). These factors appeared in data from 57% ($n = 75$) of participants describing macro-system level issues. Discussion of systemic education issues was further broken down into five emergent themes. Systemic education issue themes were 1) issues with district or state level administration, 2) lack of resources or services provided for schools and teachers, 3) lack of approved disciplinary action, and 4) issues with services available to students. These themes are further examined and discussed below.

Issues with district or state level administration were the most prevalent systemic educational issues among teachers. Participants who described problems with district or state level administrative decisions that resulted in violence made up nearly three quarters of the systemic educational issues subset. These issues with state and district level administration included problems with improper student placement in the district, lack of communication or support between district or state level administrators and the school that ultimately put the teacher in danger, and an overall perception that the education system does not work for students or teachers. One female high school teacher in an urban setting indicated the student aggressor should have been in a more appropriate environment to begin with, but the schooling options in the area were not conducive placement settings. The teacher stated that “the student ... should not have been in the public school setting but placed in a home for violent mentally challenged young adults, which KY does not have much available in this area.” Another special educator in a suburban elementary school related “...the school district was very slow in approving my request for additional personnel in my room (assistant) to help me with my student who has behavior [sic] problems.” When asked why this incident occurred, one middle

school special educator from Texas blamed a dysfunctional education system, bemoaning,

Very angry young people with no coping skills, very low academic skills, little parental support, and the school system continues to pass them along every year until they eventually drop out OR figure life out with the help of that rare thing we call mentors!

Lack of administrative guidance or support at the district or state level that negatively impacts teachers and endangers them is a very serious concern that should be further explored.

Also discussed, but slightly less prevailing were *lack of resources or services for schools and teachers*, which a third of teachers in this subset attributed to their experience. This theme encompassed issues with training opportunities, lack of appropriate staffing, and lack of resources and supports for special educators or special education classrooms necessary for teachers to do their jobs effectively. One female participant with 15 years of experience who taught in suburban Florida discusses issues with training as well as staffing, stating that:

We are trained in CPI for crisis situations, but unfortunately, this crisis procedure does not fully mee [sic] the needs of the students I serve. Other crisis trainings are offered to teachers at alternative schools for students with behaviors disorders, but not offered to me, even upon request.

Other systemic issues in education discussed by participants that influenced educators' most upsetting experiences in this sample were *lack of approved disciplinary action*. These were circumstances where teachers felt that they were not given the

authority to handle issues, students generally do not receive appropriate consequences, or that the district or state are afraid of repercussions for handling issues with school stakeholders. One male special educator from Missouri posits:

What is upsetting is that there are no consequences for students that are violent. The teachers and principals receive no support for discipline from the central office. The central office blames everything on the teacher. Our students have NO RESPECT for anything or anyone (including themselves). The students curse, threaten, and totally refuse to follow directions. This is a daily occurrence throughout the school

Also discussed by participants were *issues with services available for students*. This theme encapsulates participants who discussed problems with student care teams (systems of care), lack of service provision and issues with lack of necessary student supports. One urban middle school teacher with 32 years of experience, when reflecting on her most upsetting experience shared the following:

Other information that may be important to note in the incident described is that there is a state wide goal which is fueled by federal efforts to reduce the number of students receiving special education services, reduce the amount of time the students who receive special education services are served in small classes (i.e. students are to be included in the general education classes more of the time), and there is an effort to block, prevent, or discourage the identification of any new students for special education services. This includes not informing parents that they have the option of requesting evaluation for special education services.

Cultural and Societal Factors. Nearly 36% ($n = 47$) of participants who described macro-system level influences identified *cultural and societal factors* as reasons for violence. These were macrosystem factors that teachers attribute to affecting their violence experiences specifically related to cultural norms/dominant group perspectives, religious beliefs, and societal influence. Salient themes that arose from teacher responses were: 1) lack of societal or cultural respect for teaching profession, 2) student issues 3) parent issues and 4) lack of societal supports (See Table 10). These themes are further explored and expanded upon below.

Lack of respect for teachers or the teaching profession was discussed by nearly two thirds of participants who cited *cultural and societal factors*. This theme covered contributing issues such as lack of respect for teachers, cultural differences between teachers and aggressors, poor public perceptions of teachers or the education system, and the negative impacts of a deteriorating society on education. When sharing their most upsetting experience, one female teacher out of California reflected:

I see this as a lack of respect for adults and teachers. Government and the press also seem to have less respect for the education field. Teachers get blamed for low test scores, children not learning, students dropping out of school and a whole variety of social problems. Parents and neighborhoods play a vital role in a child's life.

The theme *student issues* encompassed problems with lack of student responsibility, lack of consequences for students, and poor student attitudes. These issues were reported by nearly 30% of educators who discussed societal and cultural issues. One urban educator stressed that it was a problem that “Students are not required to contain

their emotions or actions. Few and small ramifications [sic] are instituted for bad behavior. Teachers are expected to diffuse situations without show of force..." Parent issues emerged in responses from over a quarter of this subset of participants. These issues discussed by teachers were problems with lack of parent responsibility, and lack of parental support for teachers. One African American/Black special educator from Louisiana stated that "It seems that all responsibility is placed on teachers and parents are not held accountable for their children's behaviors or education. Instead of placing the burden on us start placing it back on the parents;" while another middle school special educator with 28 years of teaching experience supported this notion, going even further to express concerns that:

We need to target the home life of students. So many people are having children and they have no idea of how to be a parent. We have had such a breakdown in society, children do not know their limits, do not take responsibility [sic] for their actions and do not want to be reprimanded. So many parents don't really want to be bothered with their children and it certainly shows in the school setting.

Lack of societal supports were also attributed by special educators as reasons for their most upsetting experience with violence. Participants who reported poor societal support brought up issues such as little community support, poor mental health services, and an obvious lack of systems in place to support students' unique needs. One midwestern educator laments the fact that "Students that get very little help from family, community, mental health services. I feel like the schools have the burden fo [sic] helping very ill/violent kids with no support."

Policy Related Factors. The third macro-system secondary code captured in this dataset was *Policy Related Factors*, present across responses from 29% ($n = 38$) of participants coded for this ecological system. *Policy Related Factors* were macrosystem factors that teachers attribute to affecting their violence experiences specifically related to district, state, or federal policy or law related to education or that affect participants. Four themes arose from this code. These were 1) state or federal level policies or mandates, 2) legal issues, 3) authority involvement, and 4) district policies (See Table 10).

The first theme of *state or federal level policies or mandates* included budget related issues, testing mandates, bills or legal policies pertaining to education or special education, and failure to comply with the law. This theme was captured across just over half of participants coded for *Policy Related Factors*. In sharing their most upsetting experience, one 60 year old educator with 38 years of experience attributed the violence perpetrated against them to issues regarding testing mandates and special education students. This participant stated that the incident occurred because “Parents do not understand Fl. state requirements for progress and testing. Parents do not understand why their [sic] child can not [sic] be exempt from state testing.” Another male teacher with 20 years of experience blamed the legal system for their aggressors’ behavior, and reported that “...Federal law prevents appropriate action by school administrators. Federal laws need to be changed to allow appropriate and immediate action to prevent and modify behavior.”

The theme of *legal issues* captured responses where participants discussed threat of legal action against them, an aggressor attempting to circum-navigate the law, aggressor involvement in the court system, as well as lack of legal protections afforded

educators. One female educator from Louisiana attributed their experience to the fact that “Teachers do not have a sufficient support system and backup help. Need more laws and regulations for teachers to defend themselves when students attack them.” *Authority involvement* arose in responses from over a quarter of participants who reported policy related factors. Participants who discussed authority involvement relayed situations where child protective services (CPS) were involved, there was police involvement, and/or their assailant had a history of criminal activity. One urban educator with 36 years of experience reported their most upsetting incident was a situation where they filed a report, and were subsequently attacked for this action. Recollecting, this teacher states:

When I had to call in to the state abuse line on a student who was sexually abusing other students and adults in my class. The next day I was verbally attacked by the parent and the principal. The principal had been told before I made the call, but when the parent arrived cussing she began verbally attacking me as well and did not support me against this parent. Now the parent filed an abuse complaint against me with the sheriff.

This example highlights a situation where, in doing their job, a teacher was punished and had legal charges filed against them in retaliation. Also discussed, but less prevalent were *district level policy issues*. Problems such as there were brought up by a few participants ($n = 3$) and encompassed situations when policies were ineffective, or not followed, leading to detrimental effects on the special educator.

Exo-system. In this study, exo-system level influences refer to factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of indirect contexts such as community level influences. Teachers describing exo-system factors often felt that the reason for the

violence that was perpetrated against them was not the fault of the aggressor, but rather a product of the neighborhood and region where the school was located. The exo-system was the least salient of all the ecological systems cited by participants, with only 4% ($n = 17$) of the participants speaking organically to issues at the community level. Four emergent themes arose in this system. These themes were: 1) lack of community-level infrastructure 2) urbanicity, 3) Issues affecting people in the community, and 4) community violence (See Table 11).

Table 11

Exo-system

Primary Code	Definition	Theme(s)	Example(s)
Exo-System	factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of indirect contexts such as community level influences	Lack of community infrastructure	Students that get very little help from family, community, mental health services. I feel like the schools have the burden of helping very ill/violent kids with no support.
		Urbanicity	I know things like this happen in inner-city settings and for the most part is out of the student's control.
		Issues affecting people in the community	I see this as a lack of respect for adults and teachers. Government and the press also seem to have less respect for the education field . Teachers get blamed for low test scores, children not learning, students dropping out of school and a whole variety of social problems. Parents and neighborhoods play a vital role in a child's life.
		Community violence	I am not surprised that these incidents happen. I am not naive about the population I work with (poor, gangs)...

The most frequently described theme was *lack of community-level infrastructure*, which was discussed by 41% ($n = 7$) of special education teachers coded for exo-system as a reason for their most upsetting incident. This theme incorporated issues such as socio-economic status of the region, to lack of community level supports. One participant from rural North Carolina indicated that “All of these people were frustrated with their lives outside the school. They were often hungry and tired. They needed help and attention. They lived in a poor neighborhood in a prison community.” The second most

salient theme was *urbanicity*, with 35% ($n = 6$) of participants who discussed community level factors attributing their most upsetting experience to fact that the school was located in an inner-city neighborhood. One early childhood special educator from Iowa reflected on their experience, stating that “I know things like this happen in inner-city settings and for the most part is out of the student's control.” *Issues affecting people in the community* were discussed by nearly 24% ($n = 4$) of participants. One female educator with 33 years of experience lamented that “students... get very little help from family, community, mental health services. I feel like the schools have the burden fo [sic] helping very ill/violent kids with no support.” *Community violence* was also discussed by four of the 17 participants who described exo-system factors. Violence in the neighborhood and gangs were discussed by these participants. A special education teacher with two decades of experience discussed the difficulties in trying to combat the influence that gang affiliation had on their aggressor stating:

My perpetrator is an 8th Grader, Hispanic, handsome, overweight...and street smart... I do not blame him... He has watched his family and neighbors struggle, and has been forced to spend his days trying to learn in ways that do not fit his needs, to pass tests that do not really show what he is capable of, and receive grades back on these tests that rub his nose in the fact that he is not up to par with the test-maker's expectations... Gangs in his neighborhood provide the safest, securest and most supportive group he can belong to...What can I do in 20 hours a year to bring him into my world if he sees no way to succeed with the information I am teaching in the context of textbooks, board and seatwork, standardized testing and no technology?

In this instance, the participant attributed their violence experience to their aggressor's gang affiliation. The teacher indicated they felt powerless as an educator to curb this violent behavior with their current materials, and understood the appeal that gangs offered this student, particularly as they were not receiving an education that fit their needs.

Meso-system. Meso-system appeared across responses from 33% ($n = 141$) of participants in the study sample. Participants who discussed factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of the combination of two or more microsystems, including physical spaces and relationships, and across time were captured here. Meso-system was further broken down into *teacher meso-system*, and *student meso-system* (See Table 12).

Table 12

Meso-system

Secondary Code	Definition	Theme(s)	Example
Student Meso-system	factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of the combination of two or more student microsystems, including physical spaces and relationships, and across time	Parental involvement in school/classroom	The most upsetting incident was a parent who came in and was upset about her child being held after school to complete work. She came into my classroom and was very verbal about her anger and threatened my job, me told me that I had better think twice the next time I wanted to keep her child after school.
		Student home-life affecting school/classroom	This student has violent tendencies. He is a foster child who has been in several homes. The home he is in now is not taking proper care of him. He was hospitalized and came back more violent then when he went in. He is not receiving his medicine and he told me he takes it by himself while his foster mother sleeps in the morning before he comes to school. He belongs in a different school (more restrictive) setting - this school is not equipped to handle this type of student.
Teacher meso-system	factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of the combination of two or more teacher microsystems, including physical spaces and relationships, and across time	Teacher home-life and school	When they said they had my address and that they would come to my house to hurt me...
		Online community and school	A colleague took it upon herself to take a personal page (Facebook page) and report it to the Superintendent out of context.

Student Meso-system. Of these categories, *Student Meso-system* was the most represented in our sample, with 89% ($n = 126$) of the participants included indicating that the incident they experienced occurred when two or more of a student's microsystems (e.g., home life and school life) interact during or contributed to the violence (See Table 12).

The majority of cases coded for *student meso-system* discussed *parental involvement or interaction with participants*. This included harassment or verbal threats from parents. One older teacher working in an urban setting reflected back on their early years of teaching, reminiscing

When I was a very young teacher, I had to call CPS to report abuse of a student. The father came to school and tried to see me and the office turned him away. He called me on the phone and he told me that if I did not lay off on the CPS calls he would find me and kill me...

Another prevalent *parental involvement* issue noted in the sample was in-person altercation between teacher and parent. One teacher from California shared an incident where "Parents who didn't send their kid to school 2/3rd of the school time, were found finally after a long search. They came to school the last week of the school screamed, called names and threatened me ..." Also present in the data were issues such as lack of parental engagement or involvement. One participant with 27 years of teaching experience expressed that their incident could have been avoided if the parent had been interested in working with them, stating that:

What I find most upsetting is when a parent threatens to go to the School Board for perceived grievances by a student without trying to understand the teacher's

perception of the child's behavior and unwillingness to work together with the teacher.

In addition to lack of involvement, teachers in our sample discussed circumstances when a parent makes malicious accusations and/or job threats against teacher. One rural educator disclosed that their most upsetting experience was when “A step-parent tried to say that I had caused physical bruising on a child and threatened a lawsuit. Evidence eventually indicated the step-parent himself had inflicted the bruises.” Other issues that arose between parents and teachers were disagreement between parents and teachers over teaching style, placement or education plan. One female teacher with 38 years of experience describes an incident when the

Parent [was] angry at [an] IEP meeting because standard test scores were used for progress and report cards. Felt becuse[sic] child was SLD the child should not be held to on grade level standards. Parent vebally[sic] agresive[sic], threatened lawsuit, and would report to DOE, etc in a very loud voice and then walked out of IEP.

Another occurrence in the dataset captured under student meso-system and *parental involvement*, although less prevalent were instances where students threatened parental harm against the teacher. In addition to issues between parents and teachers, also widely represented were instances when the *home-life of the student infiltrated the learning environment* and led to the special educator’s most upsetting violent experience. These were incidents when students were not given their medications at home, had family issues or an unstable home situation, or were not supported by their parents according to the teacher, among other things. Less prevalent, but still mentioned were incidents where

students' social lives interacted with the school setting (n = 4), or when student's brought weapons or other items from outside of school into the classroom (n = 3).

Teacher Meso-system. Participants captured under *Teacher Meso-system* shared when two or more of the teacher's microsystems interact during or contribute to a participant's experience with violence. This occurred across 18% ($n = 23$) of the participants who described meso-system level factors. Two sub-themes comprised *teacher meso-system*: 1) teacher home life and school and 2) online community and school (See Table 12).

An overwhelming majority of participants captured under teacher meso-system described their experiences with violence as a result of an overlap between *teacher home life and school*. These participants discussed issues such as aggressors coming to a teacher's home, threatening their family, or vandalization or breaking into cars and stealing personal property. Reflecting on their most upsetting experience, one male special educator from Florida with 35 years of experience recalled a time when "A parent put a bullet through my living room window because her son failed my science class and he had to repeat 8th grade." Teachers also occasionally relayed incidents where their *online community and school life* intersected, and they were victims of internet victimization from co-workers or students. One early career teacher from rural New York discussed how their coworker harassed them on a popular social networking site, sharing that "a teacher posting unprofessional things about me on myspace and telling staff that she and another teacher were trying to get me fired." These instances highlight the way in which teacher's work life, home, and online community interacted during their most upsetting experiences of aggression.

Micro-system. Sixty-four percent ($n = 274$) of all participants in the study's qualitative sample were coded for micro-system level factors, making this the most often coded ecological system in this study. Micro-system level influences were contexts in which an individual interacted that directly affected teachers' violence experience(s). These were specifically school-level microsystems that the participant attributed for why the violent incident occurred (indicative of issues within the school environment in which they work). This code had four secondary codes comprising factors at the 1) Classroom level, 2) Environment, 3) School Level Administrators, and 4) School level Policy (See Table 13).

Table 13

Micro-system

Secondary Code	Definition	Theme(s)	Example(s)
Classroom Level	any time a participant mentions enforcing classroom rules or policies, giving students/aggressors a directive, or a situation that occurs in the classroom that contributes to or results in teachers experiencing violence.	Issues with grading, schoolwork or teacher responses -non-compliance	The students do not value academic learning. They get angry if pushed to participate.
		Aggressor upset over disciplinary action	The students I teach have never heard the word "no" when I told this student he could not have my lunch he got upset and started threatening me.
		Acting out due to feelings toward participant	Student was angry with me
Environment	Any time a participant mentions classroom, hallway, or physical spaces or objects and their contribution to violence experience, or the relational environment of the school	Physical environment	A student, much larger than I, came at me with a clipboard, acting like he was going to hit me with it. There was noone else in the room. A behavior specialist came and distracted him so I could go into another locked room. He ended up kicking repeatedly and very forcefully at the door to that room. I was afraid the door would give way, and there was no other exit.
		Relational environment	A co worker harassing me about job duties.
School level: Administration	administrator rule enforcement or lack thereof that teacher attributes to their experience with violence	lack of enforcement of school rules or sufficient response by administrators.	I call for assistance to break-up a fight between two male students and my call was ignored by delaying the response. I received a blow to my chin and an administrator made a joke of it.
		administrator was the aggressor, or the administrators' reaction the incident made it significantly worse.	I have been attacked by principals for 11 years. I am an exemplary teacher with excellent evaluations. But, if I step on the wrong stone, I will be reprimanded. Lots of teachers are being harrassed by administrators and other staff members. The moral is horrible.
		administrator decision negatively impacted the teacher	It would be great to not have aggressive students or if administrators were quicker to help. This student has been attacking teachers for years.
School level: Policy	inherent issues in the way the school is organized and school level policies or lack thereof that contribute to teacher violent experiences. These can be things like security, special education student placement, or relational environment in the school.	Insufficient teacher preparation, supports/structure, or school security	There were not adequate supports in place to assist this student with his behavior and episodes of physical aggression.
		Lack of school policies or consequences	This happened because we work with students who have behavior disorders and they are aggressive out of habit or because they see it modeled in their own family environments. Students also know they can get by with it with little to no consequence (other than some loss of privilege.) We've filed charges before but there is no follow up except to receive a victim's brochure in the mail.
		Lack of compliance with school rules by the aggressor	He thought rules did not apply to him, and knowing he was "out of days", he did whatever he pleased on a daily basis.
		Issues with student placement in particular classrooms	The students that I teach are sped students but I strongly believe that they should be placed in a different type of classroom.

Classroom Level. Participants captured under *classroom level* mentioned situations where they enforced classroom rules or policies, gave students/aggressors a directive, or an issue arose over something that occurred in the classroom, which contributed to or resulted in teachers experiencing violence. This was the most frequently occurring secondary micro-system level factor, cited in responses from 47% ($n = 128$) of participants in this subset. Themes that arose in this category were: aggressor upset over disciplinary action; issues with grading, schoolwork or teacher responses; non-compliance; and acting out due to intense feelings toward participant (See Table 13).

Upset over disciplinary action encompassed issues where students were unhappy with being reprimanded or corrected when a teacher attempted to enforce a school or classroom rule; or when parents were unhappy with discipline implemented in the classroom. One female teacher, when asked why this incident occurred stated “He was upset about an occurrence [sic] on the playground. When I held him to the school's established procedures/ expectations, he was already 'keyed up' and reacted far more strongly than ever before.” *Issues with grading, schoolwork or teacher responses* covered incidents where participants reported that parents or students were upset about a grade received, a student was upset about being asked to do schoolwork or classwork, or a student became agitated with teacher responses in the classroom. When describing their most upsetting incident, one urban educator from Michigan shared that the “Student was angry about a grade. He cam [sic] across my desk to take a swing at me and my co teacher. Parent threatened us when we met about her son.” Further, the theme of *non-compliance* comprised teachers in the sample who shared instances where victimization occurred due to students’ or parents’ refusal to comply with teacher requests. One teacher

from Tennessee described the way in which a child reacted in an aggressive manner when they were unhappy with requests, and reported that “The child had autism and pinched when uncomfortable with requests made of her...” Significantly less present in this dataset, were instances when aggressors had *issues with the teacher* themselves and serious feelings regarding the teacher, which caused them to act out. This encapsulated situations when a participant reported that a student felt they needed the teacher’s attention and did not know how to get it aside from violence, the aggressor was very angry with the participant, the aggressor did not respect the participant, or the aggressor generally did not like the participant.

Environment. In this study *environment* was comprised of two secondary codes, *physical* and *relational environments*. Participants captured under *physical environment* mention physical spaces (e.g., classroom, hallway) or physical objects and their contribution to violence experience. Participants who discussed this phenomena noted how the physical space was set up or structured in a way facilitated or led to the victimization (e.g., aggressor felt trapped due to their location in the classroom) or was used during the victimization (e.g., aggressor slammed participant in a door). This is different from the previous classroom level code, as those were instances where classroom level rules or disciplinary actions were reasons mentioned for the aggression, but not the actual classroom’s structural organization. Participants captured under *relational environment* shared how the interpersonal relationships in the school affected teachers’ violence experiences. *Environment* was present in responses from 37% ($n = 102$) of participants who reported microsystem level factors (See Table 13).

Participants who reported violent incidents where the physical environment contributed to their assault were captured under two distinct themes. The first encompassed when the *physical environment was involved* in the actual assault or incident, and the second was when the *physical space led to* the assault or incident (See Table 13). Cases where the *physical environment was involved in the assault* comprised participants who discussed classroom items used during the assault, walls, doors or other school structures utilized in perpetration of the participant's most upsetting experience. To highlight what this looks like in the data, one participant from rural Michigan reflected on their most upsetting experience, and shared that "When I was pregnant, a 200 pound 10th grader shoved me against a wall." When participants mentioned instances where *physical space led to the assault* it was often because the aggressor was unhappy with the space they were in, the teacher felt unsafe, the incident occurred because of the teacher's location, or the teacher felt that their aggressor was in a place that they should not have been. One high school teacher from Maine with over a decade of experience recalled,

A violent student came at me with a screwdriver in an enclosed space. He was supposed to be in a time out area and he panicked. I was able to get out of the area and call for help. He dropped the screwdriver for the principal. As a team we thought the area would be a quiet place to go to when he becomes over loaded and needs to cool out. The area proved to be too confined and the student felt trapped. I had no way to get help easily as it was around the corner from my room and ed techs.

These incidents highlight the ways in which the physical school setting can be unsafe and contribute to violence perpetrated against special educators.

When participants reflected on issues around the school's *relational environment*, teachers cited issues with co-workers, or indicated they felt that their administration fostered an environment conducive to hostility, tension or competition. One white, female high school teacher from Washington state reflected on an instance where they were:

... intimidated by a supervisor on several occasions, once in front of my staff. We were going through restructuring of our resource program, and even though I was following protocol, what I was doing was never right. I was told to redo what I was doing several times (not always in a respectful manner). Of course, we were all learning - trainers and teachers. I felt like a prisoner being interrogated during a phone conversation.

This incident highlights the way in which this participant experienced verbal aggression from their supervisor and felt the relational environment in their school negatively impacted them; indicating it was their most upsetting experience.

School Level: Administration. Factors at the administration level of the school micro-system emerged in responses from just over 30% ($n = 84$) of the participants that shared micro-system related issues. These participants discussed administrator rule enforcement or lack thereof, or other administrator activities that teachers attributed to their experience with violence (See Table 13). Teachers in this subset fell into three distinct themes. The first is lack of enforcement of school rules or sufficient response by administrators. The second theme is instances when the administrator was the aggressor,

or the administrators' reaction the incident made it significantly worse. The third and final emergent theme is when an administrator decision negatively impacted the teacher.

Lack of administrative rule enforcement and response was prevalent in responses from over half of participants who reported issues with *school level administration*. This theme encapsulated issues of administrators not enforcing school rules, not supporting teachers when they enforced school rules, or when the administrator or school opted not to provide further necessary supports or respond appropriately when other school stakeholders act out. In the data, examples of this were when participants said they felt that there was a "Lack of willingness on the part of administrators to deal with the issue" (56 year old, White, female, urban, 5th grade special educator in Iowa), and "I had a student throw objects at me and threaten me stating that he knew what car I drove and where I lived...the administration did not take any action in regards to this incident"(45 year old, white, female, urban middle school educator in Louisiana). These incidents highlighted an administrative disinterest in dealing with problem behaviors in their school.

Following in prevalence was the theme of *administrator perpetration*. Special education teachers who discussed issues around administrator aggression either indicated that their administrator engaged in victimizing behavior, or the lack of supportive reaction for the participant on behalf of the administrator led to the incident being their most upsetting experience. One female special educator with six years of experience shared that:

I had a student who repeatedly threw things at teachers and other students, and would climb up onto window sills or on top of desks. We would have to clear the

other students from the room at least 3 times per week to keep them safe. The most upsetting thing about it was my administrator continued to allow him to come back to school. The administrator repeatedly told us we needed to try different things to "not set him off." He did not support us at all.

Another participant from Wyoming recalled being bullied by their administrator, and reported that:

... an administrator tried to have another staff member charge me with false allegations, but the other staff member refused since nothing had happened... The incident with my administrator happened because I refused to follow what she wanted because it was against the law... The person who did this was my administrator. I couldn't go to the administration for help.

These issues reported by participants around poor administrative support or aggression highlight serious areas of concern where teachers did not feel comfortable or able to go to supervisors for assistance.

Instances where *administrative decision-making* had a negative impact on the participant encompassed situations where principal or administrator involvement and decisions put the teacher at further risk or they ignored teachers' concerns around safety, which allowed the incident to happen. In one instance where a 5th grade teacher from Missouri shared concerns with their administration that were ignored, the participant reported:

I was taking a student to a PTA bake sale, he had money and did what was asked of him, as a reward. When I went to walk around the table the student bunched [sic] me in the face, left side and eye area, breaking my glasses. I just returned to

work from a major accident, reconstruction of my face, and feared this would happen. The administration knew this and knew this student was prone to hitting staff, but felt it appropriate to put this student in my class regardless of my thoughts and concerns.

In this case, the administration's decision to ignore teacher concerns ended catastrophically, with the teacher being physically attacked by a student who was placed inappropriately. Contention between teachers' and administrators' actions or policy were key aspects in the violent experiences relayed by special educators in this subset.

School Level: Policy. Factors at the school policy were captured when participants described inherent issues in the way the school operates, and school level policies or lack thereof that contribute to teacher violent experiences. This subcode captured participants who discussed four distinct themes. Participants in this subset reported: 1) Instances where teachers in the sample had insufficient training, resources or supports provided by their school; 2) Lack of existing school policies around consequences or structure to mitigate inappropriate behavior; 3) Aggressors' lack of compliance with school policy; and 4) Issues with school decisions regarding special education student placement (See Table 13). While *school level: policy* was the least salient of micro-system factors, it still reflected the experiences of over 22% ($n = 61$) of the participants who discussed this ecological system.

Participants who reported their experience was related to *insufficient teacher resources or supports* discussed issues around staff to student ratios, lack of training for teachers, inadequate response from school safety personnel, and lack of supports in place

for students. One middle school teacher with 36 years of experience, on why their incident occurred disclosed that:

The types and severity of my students multiple disabilities [sic] may include severe self-injurious behavior as well as aggressive and assaultive behaviors. There may not be adequate numbers of staff and or adequately trained staff to provide safe interventions and instruction. I have been bitten, hit, kicked, scratched, head-butted, etc. I have a partial tear in my rotator cuff. I have had surgeries to repair a deviated septum and a hand injury. I have worn a cast for 12 weeks to repair a torn Achilles tendon.

In addition to lack of training or staff, other teachers mentioned that their incident escalated to violence because of the school's poor response to their call for assistance. One K-12 special educator from Florida, when reporting why the incident occurred shared that it was due to the "Amount of time it took to get an officer to the classroom/inability to locate help in a timely manner." While most teachers who discussed insufficient resources and training typically discussed this in relation to supports in place for teachers, others noted that their schools were not providing students with disabilities or behavior issues the necessary resources or supports for them to succeed.

Other participants who reported *school level policy* issues in relation to their most upsetting experience with violence discussed instances where *limited structure or school rules and policies* around behavior consequences contributed to teacher-directed aggression. Teachers that shared issues around structure, school rules and policies reported that these aggressive incidents happened because: "School discipline does not

address the issue in a timely matter” or “students did not have structure and consistency [sic]. They were to be self-contained and instead they went to two different classrooms and two different teachers students were out of control.” Additionally, one high school teacher from Texas reported that after experiencing an incident with a knife, they realized “that there are other students carrying weapons” and that their school had “no provision for preventing it.”

Also present were instances where students or other school stakeholders *refused to comply with school rules*, or when a teacher attempted to enforce school policy and was assaulted. One participant from Rhode Island who had been teaching for ten years reflected on a time when they attempted to enforce an administrative policy and were subsequently harassed. This special educator stated that:

Administration was attempting to curb students being tardy to class by having teachers lock classroom doors when the bell rang. All late students were to report to the cafeteria for disciplinary action. When I asked a group of students to go to the cafeteria as they were late for class, they all began yelling and were very upset. One in particular called me some explicit obscenities and then walked away...

Another special education teacher from rural Louisiana shared that the aggression they experienced was because the aggressor “thought rules did not apply to him.” While a different female educator from Illinois with over a decade of experience shared an instance when a parent “became verbally abusive” and began “trying to intimidate” them because they felt the teacher was targeting their child when they got in trouble for not following school rules.

Issues around student placement in classrooms that do not sufficiently meet their needs or support them were also discussed by participants in this subset. One special educator from an urban setting on the west coast shared that their most upsetting experience with violence was:

Having a student that everyone said was inappropriately placed in my M/S classroom, but not having support from my administration and the SPED department to move the student and/or get more personnel to work with her. For eight weeks this student pushed me around, pulled on my neck, spit at me and in my face, and pulled my hair (taken 4 adults at times to get her hands out of my hair).

While another elementary special education teacher shared that students with emotional and behavior disorders were placed in their special education class, however they were not equipped to teach an emotionally handicapped class. The students were placed inaccurately, and as such the teacher reported that “living with this daily is mentally, emotionally, and physically draining.” Issues with *school level policy* in this sample highlighted areas where schools are sometimes unable to properly train teachers and staff to engage with students, place them properly, have sufficient policies around behavior, or offer adequate resources and supports for students and staff. As such, multiple school stakeholders suffered negative consequences as a result.

Various ecological systems were intimated by participants, exposing a range of issues that contribute to special educators’ experiences with violence. The way in which different systems play a role in and affect the lives of special educators is highlighted in

this study, indicating that these professionals are impacted by issues far outside their realm of control.

Research Question II. To further understand special education teachers' experiences with violence at the individual level, the researcher explored the question: "In what ways do race, gender, class, age, ability status, and/or other intersecting facets of identity (e.g., years of experience, religion size etc.) of the educator influence the violent experiences of special educators?" Few participants, when relaying their most upsetting experience of teacher-directed violence, discussed personal facets of their own identities in relation to the aggression they experienced.

Race. Less than one percent ($n = 4$) of the qualitative sample mentioned the way in which their race or ethnicity was incorporated in, or a factor contributing to their most upsetting experience of violence. Of this subset, 75% cited that their attack happened because they were of a different race or color than their aggressor, and 25% said they were hurt during an attempted de-escalation of a racially motivated fight between students. One middle school teacher relayed that their most upsetting experience involved being continually disrupted by a student who called them "racist" and threatened to have them fired.

Gender. Nearly two percent ($n = 7$) of participants in the sample believed that their gender identity was incorporated in, or a factor contributing to their most upsetting experiences with violence. Of this subset, 71% felt their aggressor had an issue with females in positions of authority, or a general disrespect for women, while the other 29% of the subset described their attack as inappropriate sexual behavior or sexual aggression directed toward the participant as a result of their gender identity. One female participant

from Wisconsin, who described their most upsetting experience, lamented that “it happened because I did not stop is subtle attempts at coercion and sexual innuendos... they were usually done subtly in front of other staff or students. I would have looked ‘crazy’ making an accusation in public.”

Class. While class and socioeconomic status of participants was incorporated in the coding and analysis processes, only one participant in the qualitative sample attributed their most upsetting experience of violence partially to their socioeconomic status. However, they also relayed multiple other reasons for the aggression they faced. This participant is further explored in “Intersection of Facets of Identity”.

Age and/or Years of Experience. Approximately two percent ($n = 8$) of participants in this study mentioned the way in which their age or newness to their role was a factor contributing to their most upsetting experience of violence. Participants attributed their experiences to their youth, lack of experience, or being new to the setting with one exception (where the teacher was insulted due to their advanced age). One high school teacher who discussed their newness to the role, indicated their aggressor was challenging them, stating “When I first came to this school to teach I had a young man who was larger than me try to push pass me to get out of the room...I viewed it as a test to see what I would do,” while another elementary school teacher shared they were ill-prepared due to their youth and relative lack of experience, and reflected that “back then, I did not have enough knowledge on how to confront or manage such behavior.”

Ability Status. While participant ability status was incorporated in the coding and analysis processes, no participants in the qualitative sample were found to have attributed their most upsetting experience to their personal ability status.

Size. Less than 1% ($n = 4$) of the qualitative sample discussed the way in which their size was incorporated in, or a factor contributing to their most upsetting experience of violence. 100% of these participants attributed their experience to the fact that they were smaller than their aggressor, making them increasingly vulnerable. One White/Caucasian female teacher with nearly three decades of experience shared that their most upsetting incident of violence involved an aggressor who was much larger than them, and reflected that they were “Physically assaulted by a student... during passing time...He grabbed my arm and hyperextended it at the elbow. I required physical therapy. This was a 16 year old who is at least six feet tall. I am 5'4".”

Intersection of Facets of Identity. Just over two percent ($n = 10$) of the overall sample population mentioned the way in which multiple facets of their identity were incorporated in or a factor contributing to their most upsetting experience of violence. While the original intent was to explore the specific facets of race, gender, class, age, ability status- during the coding and analysis processes, this was expanded to include any intersecting facets of identity that participants discussed or mentioned. Participants in this subset discussed different intersecting identity aspects such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, class, years of experience, and size.

Sixty percent of the subset mentioned two facets of their identity in relation to their attack. One middle school teacher, who shared her most upsetting experience relayed that after being shoved by a student so hard they had to go to the hospital for x-rays, the student “...called me a fat bitch and told me that I was in her way!” This exemplifies an instance where the aggressor’s upsetting behavior, when directed at the participant was interpreted as a personal attack against the participant related to their

intersectional identity (e.g., gender and size). Another male second grade special education teacher from Louisiana, when asked the reason violence was perpetrated against shared: “because I am Asian and I am a new teacher to the school.” This teacher believed the reason for the violence they were subjected to was due to both their race, and their level of experience combined.

An additional 20% of participants in this subset mentioned three facets of their identity in relation to their attack, with the remaining 20% discussing four aspects of their identity. One middle school educator from Florida relayed an experience where their gender, race, and socioeconomic status were brought up during a threatening tirade, and reported that they experienced: “Racial Remarks being called a white cracker¹ dirty A\$\$ b*tch. I am going to break your face and then your car....things like that. Also demoralizing comments like you are paid to deal with kids like that.” Further, another teacher from rural Minnesota shared that after their aggressor (a co-worker) found out that the participants’ spouse was receiving gender-affirming surgery, they were bullied. They reported that this co-worker who after making this discovery related to their personal sex/love life, “made it a point to make my life miserable” was aggressive because “I am of a different race and color. I stood my ground without aggression. I asked the principal for help. I am not a Christian [sic].” These participants felt their unique, multiply marginalized identities were contributing factors to their most upsetting experiences with violence.

Research Question III. Following examination of participant identity, the research team used teachers’ descriptions of their most upsetting experience with

¹ Cracker is a derogatory term used specifically to denote that an individual is poor and white typically in rural, southern regions of the U.S.

violence to ascertain facets of the aggressors' identity that participants felt important to note while sharing what happened to them. Responses were analyzed for what ways race, gender, class, age and/or ability status and/or other intersecting facets of identity (e.g., years of experience, religion size etc.) of the aggressor influence the violent experiences of special educators.

Race. Less than one percent ($n = 3$) of participants in this study mentioned the way in which the race/ethnicity of their aggressor was incorporated in or a factor contributing to their most upsetting experience of violence. For example, one participant was injured while breaking up a racially motivated fight between students, while the other two participants felt disempowered to act, due to the difference in race between themselves and their aggressors.

Gender. Nearly two percent ($n = 8$) of special education teachers surveyed mentioned the way in which the difference between their gender identity and the gender identity of their aggressor was incorporated in or a factor contributing to their most upsetting violence experience. The majority of participants ($n = 5$) in this subset discussed that their male aggressor felt disrespect toward them or attempted to intimidate them because they were female. One middle school teacher who discussed this shared: "I was holding student accountable for his actions and would not tolerate his disrespect. He retaliated because he had previously been able to control and intimidate females in the building with little to no repercussions." Further, an additional 25% of these participants' most upsetting experience involved inappropriate sexual advances from their aggressor. The remaining participant felt their experience happened because their student aggressor

was uncomfortable and frustrated and perhaps the student's monthly cycle was a contributing factor.

Class. Less than one percent ($n = 2$) of participants in study mentioned aggressor class/poverty level as a contributing condition to their most upsetting experience with violence. These participants attributed their experience to the fact that their aggressor and their family were poor or living off of government assistance. One participant felt they were subject to student aggression because of a "completely unstable home life; parent encouraged this type of behavior from the child so that she could receive funds from the government, the 'crazy check.'"

Age and/or Years of Experience. Just over 12% ($n = 52$) of participants discussed their aggressors age or grade level when relaying their most upsetting experience with violence. Of the subset of participants who discussed their aggressor's age, multiple themes arose.

Nearly 31% ($n = 16$) indicated their aggressor was an elementary or pre-k aged student.

One participant shared an incident where they:

had a student pull a pair of adult scissors... and tell me that she was going to stab me in the neck because she wanted to drink my blood. The student was very violent. The worst part about it was that she was only 3 years old and I was leaning over to put down the mats for quiet time so my neck was an easy target....Schools systems need to beware that children are learning to be more violent [sic]...

Just over 19% ($n = 10$) of participants described their aggressor as a middle or junior high school aggressor, and 17% ($n = 9$) indicated that their aggressor was a high school age

student. Nearly eight percent of special education teachers in the subset shared that their aggressor was a teen ($n = 4$).

Some participants felt their aggressor was too old for the grade, or should not be in that setting due to their age and size ($n = 6$), while others felt their aggressor was developmentally behind, or unable to process emotions or feeling adequately due to their age ($n = 4$). The remaining participants felt that their most upsetting experience was due to the age or size of the aggressor, and opted to switch to teaching younger children, because they are easier to handle/manage ($n = 2$).

Ability Status. Nearly seven percent of sample ($n = 29$) participants felt their aggressors' ability status was the reason for their experience. Emergent themes that arose related to the role of the aggressors' ability status were: 1) Incident was a byproduct of aggressors' classification; 2) Issues related to inappropriate student placement; and 3) Proper disciplinary actions were never enforced due to the students' ability status, resulting in a pattern of aggressive behavior. Participants who shared instances where their experience was a *byproduct of the aggressors' classification* tended to view the incident(s) as part of their job, and accidents rather than purposeful attacks aimed to hurt them. For example, one third grade teacher relayed that the reason for their experiences was "...because of the student's disability. He did not fully understand that he was not doing the appropriate thing." Participants who felt that that students *were not appropriately placed* shared incidents similar to the following: "The special education directors are misplacing dangerous students into resource rooms immediately from lock up facilities and moving the problem from school to school rather than pay for an appropriate setting." One early career Caucasian special educator who felt their school

struggled in relation to *discipline for special education* students noted that they felt their incident could have been avoided, but:

... Administration is reluctant to discipline special education students, despite my children having learning disabilities, not emotional disturbance or behavior disorders. If he [the student] had been allowed to cool down more in the office, or disciplined he would not have choked the other student.

Size. Just over four percent ($n = 18$) of the special education teacher sample discussed their aggressor's size as a key contributing factor to their violence experience. Three themes emerged in this subset, 1) the aggressor was larger than the participant; 2) the aggressor was large or strong for their grade; and 3) the aggressor was large or strong enough to potentially overtake the teacher. One female participant from Missouri with 14 years of experience reflected on the fact that the student was large enough to inflict harm shared that a student with autism, who got "...very upset...thrashed about and though I was using appropriate technique he was large enough to get me off balance and he head butted me and gave me a concussion."

Intersection of Facets of Identity. Slightly greater than 28% ($n = 121$) of the qualitative sample, when describing who perpetrated their most upsetting experience of violence, noted multiple facets of their aggressors' identity in their description (See Table 14). Also, while the original intent was to explore the specific facets of race, gender, class, age, and ability status, this was expanded to include any intersecting facets of identity that participants discussed or mentioned. Participants in this subset discussed different intersecting identity aspects such race/ethnicity, gender, age or grade level, class, and size.

Table 14*Multiple Facets of Aggressor Identity*

Number of Facets	Multiple Facets of Aggressor Identity ($n = 121$)				
	n	%	Most Frequently Intersecting Facets		
			Identity Facets		
				n	%
<i>Two</i>	100	82.6	Ability Status & Gender	78	77.2
<i>Three</i>	18	15.7	Ability Status, Age, & Gender	11	57.9
Four	4	2.5	Ability Status, Age, Gender & Size	4	100
Five	1	1>	Age, Class, Gender, Race & Size	1	100

Note. Several participants shared multiple incidents and described multiple aggressors,

so numbers exceed the total number of participants in this subset.

Of the subset of participants who described multiple aspects of their aggressors' identity, 83% ($n = 100$) mentioned two facets of their identity. The most commonly occurring identity facets shared by participants were ability status and gender of their aggressor ($n = 78$). Most often, these participants did not attribute the experience to these facets exclusively, but felt that they were important enough to share when relaying the incident. One male high school special education teacher, when asked why this incident occurred shared that the "Student is learning disabled and is from a dysfunctional home. He has a tendency to dominate others and insists on others obeying his direction." Also frequently mentioned were *age and gender* ($n = 10$), and *ability status and age* ($n = 7$), with *gender and size*, *age and size*, and *gender and race* also present, but not widely prevalent in the data.

When sharing their most upsetting experience, 19% ($n = 23$) of participants mentioned three or more facets of aggressor identity. Of the subset, 18 participants discussed three facets of their aggressors' identity. The most common facets described together were *ability status, age, and gender* ($n = 10$). One special educator who felt it pertinent to describe these facets of their aggressor's identity shared:

We have an autistic student who is 16 or 17 and very aggressive sexually. A few months ago he went into a 6th grade classroom and exposed himself. Everyone is afraid of him and what he could do. He has pushed and injured several teachers on staff.

Four participants shared four facets of their aggressors' identity. All participants who shared four facets of aggressor identity described their aggressor in relation to their *ability status, age, gender and size*. with a remaining one participant discussing five facets of their aggressor's identity when recalling their experience with violence.

Discussion

Special Education Teacher's Experience with Violence

This study reveals that overall, special education teachers in this U.S. sample have significantly higher odds than general educators of experiencing teacher-directed violence from any aggressor. To date, no studies have compared the experiences between general education and special education teachers' experiences with violence, so this finding provides further insight into the variation in teacher experiences across different roles. This study reveals that special educators have significantly higher odds of having experienced student-perpetrated aggression over general educators; whereas, they were significantly less likely compared to general educators to experience parent-perpetrated aggression. This study also delves into the "why" behind these particular experiences as told by the special education teachers in this sample. This is particularly important, given few studies on teacher-directed violence have examined special educators. Gerberich and colleagues (2014) found that special education teachers are at heightened risk for student-perpetrated aggression; however, they were unable to ascertain a reason for this greater

risk status. Novel insights revealed in this study informed by ecological systems and intersectional lenses will help inform policy and practice to mitigate harm experienced by special educator.

Influence of Context

Community Setting. In this study, macro- and exo-systemic factors at the community level influenced whether teachers experienced violence. Quantitatively, when examining special educator and general educator experiences with aggression over the current or past year, this study found that school setting significantly affected violence experience for all teachers in the sample. Across the entire study sample, teachers in urban settings were more likely to experience violence overall as well as student-perpetrated aggression compared to teachers in suburban and rural settings. This is congruent with previous literature that suggests teachers and students in high-crime, or impoverished urban settings experience or are exposed to violence at higher rates than those in middle class neighborhoods or more rural areas (e.g., Guterman et al., 2000; Overstreet et al., 2003; Mooij, 2011; Salzinger et al., 2008).

Upon examining special education teachers specifically, some teachers in the sample reported urbanicity, community violence, lack of community infrastructure, and inadequate societal supports played important roles in their experiences with aggression. These factors at the macro- and exo-systemic levels highlight the way in which communities and neighborhoods influence school systems, student behavior, and teacher perceptions of their experiences with violence. They further emphasize the multitude of external factors that impact the educational environment that stakeholders have little or no immediate control over. According to Benbenistî and Astor (2005), to understand and

address violence within school settings, the impact of external factors on schools is a key aspect that needs to be accounted for when employing policy, practice and procedures aimed to mitigate violence against any stakeholder. These results support this claim, and speak to the necessity of fostering community relationships, and addressing structural disadvantage and concerns in order to improve the school environment (Espelage et al., 2013).

Home Life. Upon further exploration of the experiences of special educators, often issues external to the school setting that participants had little control over were discussed as directly influencing their most upsetting experiences with violence. These external factors spanned the meso- and chrono-systems and included specific events that happened over the course of time in the educator or aggressor's personal lives (chrono), student or aggressor home life (meso), or family dynamics of the aggressor that infiltrated the school setting (meso). Bronfenbrenner (1986) posits that family and home life have a significant impact on child development, and according to developmental-ecological theory, these influences can manifest in the ways children behave in and/or interact with their education system (Epstein, 1995; Fantuzzo et al., 2000).

Participants in this study suggested that aggressors had chrono-system level events at home (e.g., undergoing a period of difficult setting change, family illness, or criminal justice system involvement) that caused them to act out, and/or meso-system level issues where the aggressor's home life had a more direct impact on the teacher (e.g., parent aggression). When this occurred, participants indicated that aggressors either used them as a scapegoat, or took out their frustrations on the educator. Further, in relation to student-perpetrated aggression, teachers shared instances when students were being

denied or had not taken their necessary medication at home, which led to the violent behavior. These issues span the chrono- and meso-systems, as they took place external to the school environment, and are reflective of circumstances where the students' home life ended up either directly or indirectly impacting the teacher. Instances like family illness, disruptive setting change, child neglect, criminal justice system involvement, and students' denied medication from caretakers emphasize the way in which the education system, and teachers are expected to deal with circumstances and issues in the classroom that have nothing to do with educating students.

Previous research on special educator responsibilities suggests that teachers spend a great deal of time engaging in activities other than teaching (e.g., Ansley et al., 2016; Wasburn-Moses, 2005). This overburdens teachers and expands their responsibilities, without increasing their access to resources, or training to properly identify and handle external issues their students are faced with, or that challenge their ability to teach in a safe environment (Bettini et al., 2015; Boardman et al., 2005). This study also reveals teachers attribute external factors to problematic student behavior in the classroom (e.g., child home life, denial of medications) that lead to violence and disruption during class-time. As schools and teachers are already overburdened, this study adds to literature that indicates implementation of classroom interventions is not always feasible (Bettini et al., 2015) by noting that classroom level interventions may not always address the issues teachers and students are actually dealing with. The data suggests it is also essential to bring behavior focused interventions to the source, which is quite often the homelife of the aggressor (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

School Environment. School climate and context are factors that greatly impact teacher-directed aggression (Gregory et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2017). Special education teachers in this study cited placement issues, for themselves and for students as contributory to their experiences with violence. In addition to structural concerns regarding environment and administrator decision making, teachers discussed issues related to disciplinary and academic policies, and administrator-perpetrated aggression which all contribute to overall school climate. It is not surprising that both chrono- and micro system school level factors played a significant role in special education teachers' experiences with aggression in this study, as previous research by Bettini and colleagues (2015) has emphasized the importance of school context and the impact it has on special education teachers in schools.

Placement issues and setting change for both students and teachers were discussed in this sample as precursors to violent events. Changes in classroom, new school environments, or student homelife were all issues that came up in this study. Previous literature indicates that setting change can often be a cause of distress or problematic for students' with autism spectrum disorder (Mandy et al., 2015), as well as students with special needs more broadly (Pihl et al., 2018). Further, when stressed, students with sensory processing difficulties report increased difficulty concentrating, and physical discomfort or pain (Howe & Stagg, 2016). When students with special needs are distressed or in physical discomfort or pain, they may sometimes react in expressive, violent, or unpredictable ways, and it falls on teachers to anticipate, prevent and manage this behavior (Pihl et al., 2018). These findings are supported and expanded upon, when teachers in this sample found that their special education students acted out in a violent

manner following a change in setting. Pihl and colleagues (2018) found that a structured and predictable daily routine is essential for student well-being, and as such- is preventative of violent behavior. Special education students are not always adequately prepared for schools altering their norms, and rules do not always account for specific needs related to structure and sensory concerns. Additionally, research has shown that multiple transitions and placement issues can have negative impacts on school adjustment and student engagement among special education students (Brown, 2011).

Further, while teachers in this sample shared experiences with students new to the environment, or who were experiencing alteration to their routine or medication and subsequently acting out in a violent manner, it was also obvious that teachers reported they were often not sufficiently prepared or trained for the range of student behavior and student needs in their classrooms. Special education teachers in this sample discussed being placed in environments where they are not prepared, or having students placed in their classroom they did not have the proper training or expertise to teach and accommodate properly. Teachers often reported that not only were they physically and/or emotionally victimized following these changes in setting or inappropriate placement, they also felt students were done a large disservice and their learning was negatively impacted as a result.

Participants in this sample also discussed a disconnect between disciplinary school policy and/or school policy implementation in relation to student issues that surrounded or contributed to their experiences with aggression. Some special education teachers in this sample felt that while schools had a hard line or a zero tolerance policy regarding violence, their students were given exceptions and allowed to get away with

things others would not be, often resulting in escalating behavior that eventually culminated in their experience. These teachers felt they got little support from their principals and administrators, and were often unsure how to proceed with disciplinary practices due to the difference between rules and actions. These frustrations noted in this sample and issues around disciplinary policy have been explored in previous research, where findings indicate that a ‘hard line’ or uni-dimensional approach regarding discipline in special education is ineffective. These studies have found that when schools and teachers employ strategies that are multi-directional and utilize ecological perspectives focused on interpersonal relationships, conflict is mitigated and student and teacher well-being increases (Pihl et al., 2018; Tsang et al., 2016). Other teachers in the sample noted that their schools’ discipline and policies were not aligned with the needs of their students. Previous research has shown that disciplinary policies have often been used as a way to remove troublesome students in need of extra supports. However, schools that rely on such strict and exclusionary discipline policies show no marked increases in school safety (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2009; Brown, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2000; Skiba, 2001; Skiba & Noam, 2002) indicating that these extreme measures do little to combat issues surrounding school or teacher safety or violence. While some teachers in this sample discussed interests in stricter disciplinary policies, many suggested special education teachers and students would benefit from increased supervisory support and clearer expectations (strict or not) for both teachers and students around disciplinary action and policies.

In addition to disciplinary school policy concerns, participants in this sample discussed the ways in which student issues with academic policies or expectations were

influential in relation to teacher-directed aggression. Teachers in the sample often discussed student frustration with their work as a reason for student aggression. Further, they reported frustration around academic standards or policies they were required to implement or teach to, that negatively impacted themselves and their students. Issues among academic expectations are not new, and previous research has noted that students in special education often lag behind general education peers, and are held to lower expectations by school staff. Currently, the federal policy of No Child Left Behind is a measure of academic progress of special education students, but debate is ongoing regarding the appropriateness of the tool and using the same tests and standards for students with disabilities without proper accommodations (Aron & Loprest, 2012).

Beyond problems with discipline and academic policies, teachers in the sample also highlighted issues with lack of administrative support, or administrative perpetrated aggression. These issues with administrative support or aggression highlight serious areas of concern where teachers did not feel comfortable or able to go to supervisors for assistance. Previous research has found the necessity of supervisor support in relation to teacher satisfaction (Peist, 2018) and decrease in work-related violence among special educators (Pihl et al., 2018). Special education teachers in this sample were often frustrated or upset with lack of resources to support students, lack of support from administration, and the subsequent impact this had in relation to violence and workload. Special education teachers have been noted to experience exceptionally high levels of stress (Ansley et al., 2016; Billingsly, 2004; Stempien & Loeb, 2002), often due to workload and limited support (Bettini et al., 2015; Boardman, et al 2005; Franz et al., 2008). Extant literature has found that when teachers are stressed (Ansley et al., 2016) or

victimized (Peist, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) their efficacy and job performance suffer, which in turn has negative impacts and repercussion for students (Koth et al., 2008) and may result in violent outcomes (Pihl et al., 2018). This indicates that stress and violence between teachers and specifically student aggressors may potentially be cyclical, without disruption at different ecological levels to offer further supports, either within the school (e.g., administrative intervention), or outside of it (e.g., state or federal policy). Further, McMahon and colleagues (2017) found that lack of administrative support, particularly around teacher-directed violence can lead to problematic interactions between teachers and other school stakeholders.

Influence of Individual Factors

Educator. Individual level characteristics or facets of identity of the educator were found in this study to have influence over whether or not participants experienced teacher-directed aggression. While these factors were not found to significantly influence whether or not a special education teacher was more likely to experience violence than a general education teacher, some individual level influences did play a role in aggression experiences. When looking at student-perpetrated aggression, male teachers were more likely than female teachers in this sample to report an experience of student aggression. However, gender was not found to significantly impact reports of parent-perpetrated aggression, or violence from any type of aggressor. Previous studies have yielded mixed results regarding the role of gender in teacher-directed violence. Mooij's (2011) Netherlands study found that teachers who identified as female reported more experiences with violence than males; Fisher and Kettl (2003) reported similar findings with Pennsylvania educators. In contrast, U.S. studies by Anderman and colleagues

(2018) and Gerberich and colleagues (2014), found no differences in types of violent incidents or cases of student-perpetrated aggression reported, respectively in relation to participant gender. These results add to existing literature, and suggest that gender may be an influential factor for teacher-directed violence. Future studies may get a clearer picture of the impact of gender on teacher-directed violence if studies conceptualize gender beyond the “male” “female” binary and incorporate gender identity. Indeed, Mooij (2011) found that sexual orientation (a facet of overall gender-identity) significantly impacted violence experience, and teachers who identified as gay or lesbian were more likely to report violence.

While in this study years of experience did not affect violence experience by type of aggressor overall, experience did relate to specific types of aggressors. More years of experience was associated with less likelihood of reporting student aggression and greater likelihood of reporting parent aggression. Our study findings are consistent with previous research that has found that teachers with less experience are more likely to experience student aggression (Bounds & Jenkins, 2016; Gerberich et al., 2014). Further, we found that years of experience was protective in relation to student aggression, building on previous findings. Interestingly, to date little extant literature has explored predictive or influential factors for parent aggression against teachers, with none examining years of experience in relation to parent perpetrated violence. Thus, this data reveals novel findings that years of experience may be a factor that affects teachers’ experiences with aggression specifically in relation to parents. Future research conducted on teacher-directed violence should specifically examine parent aggression, and contributing conditions to further explore this finding.

In this study, identifying racially or ethnically as Latinx/Hispanic was found to be a protective factor when compared to Caucasian educators for student-perpetrated aggression. Additionally, participants in the sample who identified racially or ethnically as African American/Black were less likely to report parent aggression or aggression by any type of aggressor overall when compared to the referent group of Caucasian participants. As most educators in our sample were white (nearly 80%), it is perhaps unsurprising based on extant literature that that being Black or Latinx was a protective factor for educators against violence in some situations. In this sample and in the U.S more broadly, there is a disproportionately high ratio of white teachers to students of color, so often teacher demographics are not reflective of the wider community which their school serves. Indeed, Gerberich and colleagues (2014) found that Minnesota teachers were at increased risk of violence perpetrated by students if they had a different race or ethnicity from their students (aggressors). Further, conflicts arise between parents and teachers around perceptions of otherness (e.g., differences in appearance, culture etc.) (Gwernen-Jones et al., 2015; Lasky, 2000; Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012). Results from this study, as well as extant literature suggests that it may be beneficial for schools to engage in hiring practices that ensure teachers are more reflective of the populations with whom they work. By increasing teacher diversity racially and ethnically, conflict between teachers and other school stakeholders may be mitigated (Fisher et al., 2015). Students may be more likely to identify more with their teachers as mentors, and there may be less differentiation between cultural beliefs and perceptions between teachers and external stakeholders, such as parents.

Teacher age was a protective factor in this study for parent-perpetrated aggression. Existing studies that have examined teacher age in relation to whether or not they experience violence, typically do so in relation to student aggression, which makes this finding novel. Of the studies that have examined teacher age in relation to student aggression, Gerberich and colleagues (2014) did not find age to be a significant factor, while Mooij (2011) reported that younger teachers were more likely to witness or experience student aggression than their older counterparts. Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012) found that participants in their study conducted in Finland attributed their experiences of student aggression to their younger age. These data suggest that age does indeed play a role in teacher-directed aggression. As extant literature has not examined parent-aggression toward teachers in relation to protective and contributing factors, future research should focus specifically on aspects parent-perpetrated aggression, to further explore the findings outlined in this study.

Special Educators. Upon examination of specific experiences of special educators, few teachers relayed that their most upsetting experiences were perceived to be exacerbated by individual or multiple intersecting facets of their identity. Those who did indicate that their experiences were related to different facets of their identity discussed race, class, gender, size, age and years of experience either individually or combined as contributing to their experience. Results from this study denoting few teachers reporting on individual or intersecting facets of violence were surprising, as extant violence focused intersectionality literature suggests that intersecting facets such as ethnicity, diversity, gender and poverty lead to experiencing structural (Crenshaw, 1991; Geordan et al., 2017; Logie et al., 2017) and interpersonal violence (Crenshaw,

1991; Logie et al., 2017) in the United States (Crenshaw, 1991; Fisher et al., 2015) as well as other countries throughout the world (Geordan et al., 2017; Logie et al., 2017; Mangiarotti, 2019). Of the limited existing literature on special educators and violence that exists, results indicate that demographic identity of special educators may be significantly linked to violence experiences (Rose, 2011). While in this study, experiences of violence that involved identity facets or intersectional identity were infrequently reported, those who did comment on issues often reported their most upsetting experiences to be on-going or chronic perpetrations of aggression, as opposed to singular events. Given teachers were not specifically asked about individual identity and intersectionality, and these themes did not spontaneously emerge from the data, it is difficult to assess their importance and connection to the literature. As such while this study presents novel findings, studies of teacher-directed violence in special education that probe special educators specifically about intersectionality or the way in which identity played a role in their experience may yield different, and more accurate results.

In addition to particular facets of identity, special educators in this study reported that specific events in teachers' lives also influenced their experiences with violence. These events or circumstances included teacher medical conditions (e.g., pregnancy or returning from surgery), and newness to their environment at the time of their most upsetting experience with violence. To date, no studies have qualitatively examined specific factors that contribute to special education teachers' experiences with aggression in the workplace. As such, these findings present new information relating to experiences of special educators. Specifically, special education teachers with medical conditions that make them more susceptible to injury may benefit from extended leave, or more

classroom assistance due to the physical nature of their job. Further, given teachers' newness to their environment is a factor they attribute to their most upsetting experience, additional supports are needed for new educators. While extant literature has quantitatively explored experience in relation to teacher-directed violence, this data provides depth and context to better understand new teachers' interpretation and experiences of violence. These study findings can be utilized to inform future research design that delves deeper into the subject of violence towards teachers in special education, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Aggressor. Teachers in this sample rarely discussed only one facet of aggressor identity such as race, gender, age, class, size and ability status when listing reasons or contributing conditions leading towards their experiences with violence. Of these demographics, only aggressor age was discussed by more than 10% of participants in the sample. Interestingly, nearly a third of participants, when describing their most upsetting experience of violence felt it pertinent to list multiple facets of their aggressor's identity, indicating their perceived importance in describing the event and why it occurred. In this sample, ability status and gender of aggressor were most often discussed by participants in tandem with other identifying traits of aggressors. While these participants did not state explicitly that the violent incidents perpetrated against them were due to these facets specifically, they recognized that these aspects of aggressor identity were key components of their experience.

While many teacher-directed violence studies have collected teacher demographic information, considerably less is known about aggressor identity, and most extant literature has focused on student aggressor developmental level (e.g., Alter et al., 2013;

Chen & Astor, 2009; Gerberich et al., 2014; Gerberich et al., 2011; McMahon et al., under review). This data provides the basis for future research to consider aspects of aggressor identity that may be particularly salient, such as age, gender, and ability status when examining teacher-directed violence in regular and special education settings. Extant literature (Gillborn, 2015) stresses the centering of intersectionality (e.g., race, class, gender, and dis/ability) when exploring issues in education and special education settings. The centering of intersectionality allows individuals to focus attention on how complex identities contribute to experience (African American Policy Forum, n.d), and further understand the root of systemic, social inequities, as well as what perpetuates them, which may be missed otherwise (Gillborn, 2015). This is particularly important, as male students of color are often disproportionately represented in special education (Gillborn, 2015). Findings from this study also suggest that age should be considered in relation to research that takes place in special education settings, particularly research that focuses on teacher-directed violence. While there is a dearth of literature exploring intersectional identities of perpetrators of violence or acts of aggression, Bell (2018) found that minority females in prison settings are more likely to commit acts of aggression than white women. The authors suggests this aggression is engaged in as a way to counter experiences of discrimination. Fisher and colleagues (2015) found that among middle school students (grades 6-8) in the Midwestern U.S. race and school racial diversity are linked when exploring rates of bullying, and race-based aggression. Results from Fisher and colleagues (2015) report that across schools in the study, when controlling for school's racial/ethnic diversity, African American students experienced more bullying and victimization. However, examining the interaction between student

race and school racial diversity, results indicated that White students who were in the minority race in their school, were bullied more than their majority counterparts. Fisher and colleagues (2015) suggest this may be due in part to differences in cultural perceptions of bullying behavior between Caucasian and African American youth. As extant literature has drawn attention to aggressor race (Fisher et al., 2015), race and gender (Bell, 2018), ability status (Lai et al., 2016), and race, gender and ability status (Gillborn, 2015) this study argues that gender and ability status, as well as age should also be explored when examining aggressors who victimize special educators. A systematic assessment of aggressor characteristics and how they may contribute to violence is warranted, as these findings are puzzling, and what they mean is not entirely clear.

Limitations

While this study explores teacher-directed aggression in special education revealing novel information, and adding to the relative dearth in existing literature, it is not without limitations. It is important to note that all data analyzed is subject to both self-report and retrospective biases as participants were asked about past experiences. Participants were also not specifically asked specifically and systematically about the influence of context or individual level factors on their most upsetting experience with violence. All qualitative data analyzed reflected when participants organically brought up the subject, so readers should be cautious about any shared frequencies. Further, it should be noted that data collected for this study were cross-sectional in nature; as such, patterns in victimization in this sample across time could not be tracked. Additionally, teachers who did not respond to questions regarding their experiences with violence may not be

missing at random and due to this, measures of the outcome may be biased.

Quantitatively, When asked their gender, teachers were only offer the options of “Male/Female” which may limit how to interpret the impact of teacher gender identity on violence experience. Further, the distribution between special education teachers and general education teachers is uneven, which is worth noting as sometimes this can result in misleading outcomes (Nemes et al., 2009). However, the sample size for both general education teachers and special education teachers were large enough (e.g., greater than 100) that this was most likely not an issue in this study (Long, 1997). While the sample size was large and similar to national U.S. teacher demographics (Boser, 2014), the sample was fairly homogenous demographically which limited examination of teacher intersectionality. Lastly, age of student perpetrators may be salient information for understanding the developmental context of teacher-directed violence; however, this data was not collected. Students in special education classrooms with developmental disabilities may behave differently than their general education counterparts (e.g., less aggressive or more aggressive). As such, examining the interaction between student aggressor age or developmental level when comparing general and special educators may have yielded novel insights on the way teachers’ experiences student aggression.

Implications

Prevention and Intervention

Engaging in teacher-directed violence prevention and intervention efforts need to take place at multiple ecological levels in order to be effective (McMahon et al., 2017). This may indeed be particularly salient for special education teachers, who typically engage with students and parents working with and interacting with different systems,

both within and outside of school settings that can influence school environment and aggression. To understand issues affecting individuals within educational systems, it is necessary to explore factors of influence from an ecological perspective (Astor et al., 2005; Kloos & Shah, 2009).

Community. Data from this study suggests implementing prevention or intervention efforts focused on systemic inequities across communities may disrupt teacher-directed violence. This study reported that factors such as: 1) poverty, 2) lack of infrastructure, 3) community violence, 4) urbanicity, and 5) lack of societal supports negatively impacted special educator's experiences. Community intervention strategies such as providing universal basic incomes, free school lunches, affordable or free physical and mental healthcare, and universal pre-k implemented in targeted urban areas may address lack of infrastructure, societal supports, high rates of community violence, and poverty. Community level interventions such as those aimed to promote equity across groups and ensure proper societal support, development of infrastructure, and to reduce poverty and neighborhood violence have been found to have a myriad of positive outcomes (Astor et al., 2005; Espelage et al., 2013; Massey et al., 2007). Findings from this study suggest reduction in school violence directed towards special educators is another potential outcome of such efforts. Both extant literature and findings from this study indicate that teacher-directed violence, and school violence are most prevalent in urban settings, thus special attention should be given to these geographical locations when engaging in prevention and intervention efforts (Astor et al., 2005; Bester & du Plessis, 2010; Gerberich et al., 2014). Efforts are also needed to reduce harmful societal

norms referenced in this study, such as lack of respect for teachers or gender-based aggression (Sundaram, 2016).

Home. Results from this study indicate the necessity of family-focused intervention and/or prevention efforts. Participants noted issues such as lack of familial support, improper or inadequate medication distribution at home, and student home life issues negatively impacting the teacher and the classroom environment. Teachers in this sample discussed issues with lack of parental involvement in their children's learning or behavior, as well as issues in student home life that led to teacher directed aggression.

One intervention program that has been developed to incorporate children and families in school and community-based service provision and intervention in the U.S. are systems of care (SOCs) (Stroul et al., 1988). As teachers in this study attribute their experiences with violence to lack of parent or family involvement, a program designed to integrate students, their families, schools and other social supports together may reduce teacher-directed violence. Systems of care are designed to serve children who often fall in special education settings (e.g., students with emotional or behavior disorders). These coordinated, community-based, and family focused intervention efforts encourage collaboration across and between service providers (e.g., mental health, family service agencies) schools, and families. They are designed to improve service provision, family and child outcomes, and school performance and functioning using wraparound principles (Cook & Kilmer, 2012; January et al., 2018; Stroul, 2008). While success rates of SOC's vary based on fidelity and implementation practices, studies have shown that systems of care intervention efforts that implement wraparound practices well have proven successful (Bruns et al., 2005; Bruns et al., 2008; Bruns & Walker 2011; Cook &

Kilmer, 2012). As interventions with SOC components have proven beneficial for student behavioral outcomes, they may mitigate student-perpetrated aggression towards special education teachers. They may also work to foster relationships between teachers and parents, potentially reducing prevalence of parent-perpetrated aggression. Extant literature suggests that family involvement in schools is associated with positive student and parent behavior (Fantuzzo et al., 2000) and fosters positive teacher-parent relationships (Lawson, 2003). Thus engaging and involving families in school may reduce the potential for violent interactions between teachers and parents.

School. Results from this study yield several areas for prevention and intervention efforts at the school-level aimed to address teacher-directed violence in special education to focus their attention. Teachers in this sample indicated they would benefit from alteration and/or clarification of school-level disciplinary and academic policies to be more inclusive of special education student needs and expectations. They also indicated a need to improve resource provisions for students and teachers, as well as administrative support of special education teachers. Extant research on special education student outcomes has come to similar conclusions (e.g., American Academy of Pediatrics, 2009; Aron & Loprest, 2012; Tsang et al., 2016). Implementing disciplinary policies that match practice and employ multi-faceted, inclusionary, well-being oriented goals has the potential to significantly improve student outcomes, teacher stress, and student-teacher relationships, further reducing aggression. There is a need to examine the effectiveness of disciplinary policies and utilize input from school stakeholders on whether or how to restructure them.

Grades in special education settings can become high stress points due to academic pressures and impractical standards of measurement (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Teachers in this sample reported experiencing victimization, particularly if students were not able to meet standardized scoring measures. Standardized grading and testing requirements in the U.S. often disproportionately negatively misrepresent students who learn differently, incentivize schools to focus less on those deemed “low achieving”, and more on students in the middle of the distribution (Lauen & Gaddis, 2016) as well as are often created with inherent sociodemographic biases (Price, 2010). As such, they are poor tools for accurately assessing student learning. Reevaluating academic policies and standards in relation to learning may improve student outcomes, as well as minimize teacher-directed violence that is directly tied to students grades, work and academic progress.

Mitigating school violence and improving special education settings requires addressing issues specific to the needs of special education students, teachers and their classrooms (Pihl et al., 2018). Issues around placement, setting change, lack of resources for students, and lack of resources for teachers, and teacher training were all factors cited by study participants as contributing to their experiences with aggression. Extant literature suggests the necessity of accurate student placement, as disruption in setting and routine can lead to poor student adjustment and negative outcomes (Brown, 2011). This study highlights the importance of ensuring accurate student placement and the needs for proper training and resources for special educators regarding student placement, educational strategies, and preventing and addressing violence and aggression. Teachers need to understand students and their disabilities so that they can successfully mitigate

student aggression, and provide education based on student specific needs (Pihl et al., 2018). Improving resources available to students, as well as teachers' skills in working with students with varied needs (e.g., trained to work with students with emotional and behavioral disorders in addition to students with autism) may significantly reduce violence in special education settings.

Further, in this study, specific physical spaces and settings were discussed in relation to teacher-directed violence. Astor and Meyer (2001) found that certain school sub-contexts and physical spaces were more prone to violent episodes. Pihl and colleagues (2018) note that with special education students, it may be necessary or helpful for some students to have an extra room or space for students to go when they are feeling distressed or overwhelmed by their current environment. This additional room or space may be helpful for students to process and decompress in a less threatening environment, on their own terms rather than being forced to continue with a lesson or remain in a situation they perceive as distressing, which may contribute to violent outbursts.

Special education teachers often reported feeling unsupported by administrators in decision making or in relation to violence. These teachers indicated that administration's response, or perpetration of aggression were the most egregious aspects of their most upsetting incident. Previous research has found that supervisory support increases teacher satisfaction and efficacy (Peist, 2018). Support has also been associated with a decrease in work-related violence among special educators (Pihl et al., 2018), as well as job satisfaction and reduced attrition (Cancio et al., 2013). McMahon and colleagues (2017) suggest that in order to improve school climate and mitigate teacher-directed aggression,

principals should be supportive, communicative, offer assistance to teachers as well as constructive feedback in order to bolster administrators' provision of emotional and instrumental support. Results from the current study indicate that these efforts on behalf of administrators would be well received and have the potential to mitigate impact of harm and prevalence of teacher-directed violence. Extant literature indicates that special educators may need additional, effective supports from administration (McMahon et al., 2017; Schaefer et al., 2012). Special education teachers have been found to have a history disconnect with administrators (Bettini et al., 2015; Franz et al., 2008), so improving communication, connections, and support may be especially helpful in fostering successful working relationships and reducing aggression toward special educators.

Research

This study suggests that the safety and well-being of special education teachers is determined not just by individual-level choices, but by factors across social-ecological systems. Research is needed on the safety of special education teachers and students in the United States to account for and explore the depth of the impact across these varying levels. Extant research that has utilized an ecological systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Bronfenbrenner, 1994) when examining teacher-directed violence has illustrated the context and factors that contribute to school violence, and suggest future research also incorporate this encompassing framework (e.g., e.g., Astor et al., 2005; Espelage et al., 2013; McMahon et al., 2017). Results from this study indicate that assessing and analyzing chrono, macro, meso, and micro-systemic levels may yield helpful information and guide intervention development that incorporates all stakeholders, including special educators.

Further, to date, no studies on teacher-directed violence or special education teachers' experiences with violence have utilized an intersectional lens to understand the phenomena. While this study lays the groundwork for this approach by examining participant responses around victim and aggressor's identity, there is significantly more work to be done. Research will benefit from incorporating a working understanding of intersectionality and intersectional identity from the onset of study conceptualization. Study questions are needed that attend to the fact that we do not hold one uni-faceted identity (e.g., Black or cisgender or woman), but have many intersectional aspects to our identity (e.g., Black, cisgender woman) that affect and comprise our positionality (Crenshaw, 1991). It may also reveal layers and aspects to a problem (e.g., teacher-directed violence), that has yet to be identified, because thus far, these questions have not been asked. The current study found that both individual and multiple/intersecting victim and aggressor identity facets were discussed by participants organically in relation to their experiences with violence. These organic responses preliminarily indicate a need to further explore multi-faceted identities of both educators and aggressors, the match between the two, as well as specific types of intersectionality to better understand violence in educational settings.

Future research studies examining educator-directed violence should include questions that ask specifically about contextual factors (e.g., community, culture, organization, family etc.), as well as intrinsic factors (e.g., gender identity, race, class, sexuality, ability etc.) (Hancock, 2007; Rice et al., 2019). By attending to intersectionality in research and focusing on multiple facets of identity together with environmental influences, findings will better conceptualize diverse experience

(Crenshaw, 1991; Rice et al., 2019). Research needs to assess societal and organizational elements that encourage harmful cultural norms and structures of privilege and oppression, (García et al., 2012), that may negatively impact special education settings. Quantitative longitudinal measurement of context and intersectionality are needed. Qualitative findings from this study illustrate why previous quantitative studies on teacher-directed violence yielded mixed findings related to gender and age. If teachers are victimized for being pregnant, or re-injured after a medical procedure (as these are not permanent conditions), cross-sectional studies may reveal different rates of victimization for certain demographic populations (e.g., teachers with uteruses, or older educators) depending on the time. Longitudinal data is needed to measure the long-term impact of demographics on teacher-directed aggression.

While refining quantitative measurement will aid in moving the field forward, rich data with novel and important insights were yielded examining teacher-directed violence in special education qualitatively. As such, future measures should consider inclusion of qualitative questions, and/or researchers should consider employing mixed-methods approaches to study design. Given this field is new, there is a dearth of established, valid and reliable measures. This is an important next step, and future researchers should consider construction of a valid, and reliable measure to assess teacher directed violence a top priority. During measurement development, researchers would do well to consider including and seek out data from special education settings and stakeholders in their studies.

Policy

Policy implemented at the federal, state and district levels needs to be better attuned to and inclusive of the needs of students with emotional and behavior difficulties (Pihl et al., 2018), as well as their teachers. This study reveals that teachers surveyed struggled with decisions and policies implemented at the federal, state, district and administrative levels related to resource allocation, student placement, and discipline. In this study, these problematic policies appear to be doing a disservice to both special education teachers and students and potentially contribute to unsafe work environments. At the federal and state level, more resources need to be provided to schools and teachers explicitly to establish acceptable student to staff ratios in special education classrooms. Policies implemented at these levels should expand education budgets to allow for hiring and an increase in school staff. They should also cap the number of students per adult in the classroom. Further, budgets should allocate funding specifically to ensure that teachers are properly trained to provide the necessary education and care for students with whom they work. Teachers in this sample who were victimized shared their experiences with limited or inadequate training to work with the students in their class, or the fact that they did not have aides or sufficient in-classroom supports for the number of students they worked with.

In addition to resource allocation at the federal and state levels, the creation and incorporation of policies that account for the different needs of students with behavior and emotional issues at the federal, state, district and administrative levels should focus specifically on ensuring students are placed appropriately in classrooms equipped for handling their particular needs. According this study, as well as past research (e.g., Brown, 2011), special education students are particularly sensitive to changes in setting,

placement, and routine which, as made evident by this data, can often lead to aggression or other negative outcomes for both teachers and students. Students' needs and teachers' expertise are currently not fully being incorporated or factored into decision making in this area. Teachers in this study often revealed experiencing frustration with the way policies and decision making around student placement were implemented in their schools and districts. Further, they suggested aggression could have been avoided had their concerns or their students' needs regarding placement been properly addressed. Law makers should consult with and seek out teachers, teaching assistants, students, parents and administrators around refining special education placement policies. Additionally, at the school level all involved parties (e.g., student, parent, school staff) should be incorporated when a placement decision is made for a specific child to ensure they have what they need to thrive and be successful. It is necessary for the success of students and teachers that the classroom environment in which they learn and educate is properly equipped to support all those involved.

Special education teachers in this study also revealed issues around school and district level disciplinary policies. Often, teachers noted that their special education students were not subject to the same disciplinary policies as general education students; however the rules for special education students were less clear, leaving teachers to attempt to follow general school guidelines in relation to aggressors, with limited results or support from administration. Teachers reported frustration with lack of guidance and support from administrators, and although there were many protections for students, they reported there was insufficient protection for teachers. This lack of administrative guidance and support at the school, district and/or state levels negatively impacts

teachers, endangers them, and is a very serious concern that should be addressed in both policy and practice at both the micro- and macro-systemic levels. Teachers in the current study suggested the creation and implementation of guidelines to protect teachers from aggression from parents and students. Additionally, results indicate policies specifically designed to address special education student behavioral issues would be beneficial, as a “one size fits all” disciplinary policy is related to confusion, lack of support, and isolation. Students would also most likely benefit from policies aimed to meet them where they are, rather than every student in a school being subjected to the exact same expectations around behavior and academic performance without acknowledgement of contextual or demographic factors that influence behavior.

In order to accomplish the above outlined policy-related implications, both school policy-makers as well as state and federal legislators should incorporate and consult with teachers, teaching assistants, students, administrators and parents when making decisions about resource allocation, placement, disciplinary policies in school settings. Doing so is necessary to ensure all school stakeholders are heard and represented. This is particularly salient for laws that directly affect stakeholders in special education settings.

Conclusion

Teachers regularly work in high-stress, high-expectation environments with few resources or tools to do their jobs effectively. Inevitably, this affects their job performance and satisfaction, attrition rates, student outcomes, and school environment. Often, these teachers are subject to violence and aggression from a myriad of different aggressors. Special education teachers’ experiences with stress and limited resources are often compounded by differentiated student needs, inappropriate placements, and

insufficient resources and training to engage with their students and their families effectively. Negative effects as a result of these systemic and contextual factors are associated with lack of resources and disproportionately impact special education teachers and their classrooms. According to this study, special education teachers experience workplace violence and aggression at higher rates than their general education counterparts, particularly in relation to student-perpetrated aggression. This is due, in part, to factors across each ecological level, as well as interpersonal and individual differences that negatively impact the school environment, classroom, and ultimately whether or not a special education teacher is threatened, assaulted or injured while doing their job. While teacher directed violence in special education is a very real concern, results from this study identify ways to curb this aggression at every ecological level, and reveal novel insights around how teachers conceptualize their most upsetting experiences with aggression. Findings from this study improved our understanding of teacher-directed violence in special education, and identified potential research, intervention, and policies to reduce prevalence and support teachers and students.

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Appendix A: Measures

Independent Variables

- 1) “What is your primary role at your school?” with response options of “General Education”, “Special Education: Resource”, “Special Education: Self-Contained/Special Day”, “Special Education: Other” or “Other”.
- 2) “Which setting best describes the community in which your school is located?” with response options of “Urban”, “Small Urban”, “Suburban” and “Rural”.
- 3) “What is your gender?” with response options of: “Male” or “Female”.
- 4) “What is your ethnicity/race?” with response options of “Asian”, “Hawaiian/Native Pacific Islander”, “Black/African American”, “Caucasian”, “Hispanic”, “Native American/Alaska Native”, “Other/Multi-Racial” or “Decline to Respond”.
- 5) “How many years have you been teaching?” with an open response option.
- 6) “What is your age?” with an open response option.

Dependent Variable(s)

15. Have the following happened to you personally this year or last year at your school? If yes, please check ALL the individuals that may have been involved. (Required)

	Did not happen	Student	Parent	Colleague	Stranger	Other
Damage to my personal property	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Theft of my personal property	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was physically attacked and had to see a doctor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was physically attacked, but not seriously enough to see a doctor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I received obscene remarks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I received obscene gestures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was verbally threatened	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had a weapon pulled on me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had objects thrown at me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was intimidated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was a victim of cyber/internet violence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Qualitative Prompts

- 1) “Please think about all of the times when you were the target of verbal or physical aggression or intimidation in your school. Can you describe what was the most upsetting incident that happened to you in your role as a teacher?” With an open response option.
- 2) “In your own words, please explain why you think this incident happened.” With an open response option.
- 3) “How did this incident impact your view of your current teaching position?”
With an open response option.
- 4) “Please provide any other information that may be important to note in the incident described.” With an open response option.

Appendix B: Qualitative Codebook Created for Study

Ecological Systems Theory Codes

Microsystem

Definition: Contexts in which an individual interacts that directly affects teachers' violence experience(s). These are specifically school-level microsystems that the participant attributes to reason violent incident occurred (indicative of issues within the school environment in which they work).

Notes:

Any kind of antecedent to an incident that occurs at the school or classroom level (directives, discipline, policy, etc.)

School Physical Microsystem

Definition: Any time a participant mentions classroom, hallway, or physical spaces or objects and their contribution to violence experience.

Notes:

Includes physical objects and spaces, including threats and references to physical spaces that should exist

Excludes discussion of physical space, but not how it affected the violence experience. "The incident took place in the hallway". (Excluded because the hallway doesn't explicitly contribute to the experience".)

Example(s):

Part ID 29: "A chair was thrown at me and I have been kicked numerous times"

Teacher rules, directives, grades or classroom level Microsystem

Definition: Any time a participant mentions enforcing classroom rules or policies, giving students/aggressors a directive, or a situation that occurs in the classroom that contributes to or results in teachers experiencing violence.

Notes:

Excludes administrator rule enforcement or directives, overarching school policies or district or state or federal level policies, covered in macrosystem

default to teacher rule over admin rule if it is not clearly an admin rule (if teacher is enforcing it); code both teacher directive and admin if it is clearly both an admin and teacher rule

Example(s):

Part ID 2383: “The student refused to log off the computer. The rest of the resource students were ready to work. I turned off the computer and he struck me.”

Administrator or School level Microsystem

Definition: Administrator rule enforcement or lack thereof and school level policies or lack thereof that teacher attributes to their experience with violence.

Notes:

Excludes Individual classroom level rules/teacher directives, or district/state/federal policies.

Administrative support - do not code if it is after the incident or generally about school administration, only if prior to incident or continuously occurring indicating that it was a factor in this incident as well

Includes parents following or not following rules

includes any administrative action or lack of action by administrator

If the teacher is enforcing a school level rule, code both. (teacher directive, and school level rule)

Example(s):

Part ID 2370: “This happened & continues to happen because the Administrators refuse to be supportive of staff. They don't suspend , nor do they set clear expectations or consistant rules. There is no hierarchy of consequences.”

PART ID 2167: “It is frightening, because the discipline and security in the school is sadly lacking. We have had intruders come into the school and attack teachers.”

School Systemic Microsystem

Definition: Inherent issues in the way the school is organized that contribute to teacher violent experiences. These can be things like: security, special education student placement, or relational environment in the school.

Notes:

Excludes express mention of school policy, administrators’ rules

Excludes classroom level factors

Excludes physical factors

Excludes higher level systemic issues beyond the scope of the participant’s school

Include administrator if it says “my principal fosters x type of environment” but doesn’t indicate it’s related to school policy or rules.

Includes school level special ed placement issues unless specific physical placement (e.g.,my classroom environment is not a good fit, they should be in the EBD classroom) is indicated, in which case it would be school physical microsystem

Excludes higher level federal/state/district level issues with placement, these should be captured under MACRO systemic

Example(s):

Part ID 2167: “The student had been reprimanded numerous times and should not have been allowed in school. However, we are forced to try to educate all of them, even the unwilling and the criminal.”

PART ID 2167: “It is frightening, because the discipline and security in the school is sadly lacking. We have had intruders come into the school and attack teachers.”

Mesosystem

Definition: Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of the combination of two or more microsystems, including physical spaces and relationships, and across time.

Teacher Mesosystem

Definition: When two or more of teacher microsystems interact during or contribute to a participant’s experience with violence. This is not only inclusive of previously coded microsystems, but any environment the teacher lives and interacts in (i.e., teacher’s home would not be coded in microsystem, but would be coded in mesosystem if student attacks teacher at their home).

Notes:

Excludes aggressor interacting mesosystem

Do NOT code same “teacher mesosystem level” incident twice for the same participant (because will see entire participant response from first code), it is redundant to code both times. DO code if they refer to another incident, or a different interacting

mesosystem.

Do NOT code Q21 example:

Quest 16 Response: A student threatened my family with a knife.

Quest 21 Response: The student threatened my family because they were failing my class.

Do code both Q16 and Q21 example:

Quest 16 Response: A student threatened my family with a knife

Quest 21 Response: The student showed up at my church and threatened to harm myself and my family because they were failing my class.

Example(s):

Part ID 2335: “A colleague took it upon herself to take a personal page (Facebook page) and report it to the Superintendent out of context. Superintendent has made me look bad in front of other colleagues with verbal confrontations.”

Part ID 2350: “A parent put a bullet through my living room window because her son failed my science class and he had to repeat 8th grade.”

Student Mesosystem

Definition: When two or more of a student’s microsystems interact during or contribute to a participant’s experience with violence. This is not only inclusive of previously coded microsystems, but any environment the student lives and interacts in (e.g., student’s home would not be coded in microsystem, but would be coded in mesosystem if student’s parents show up at school).

Notes:

Excludes exclusively participant interacting microsystems (teacher home life &

teacher church, teacher home life & teacher school etc.)

Must be related to THE specific or particular student/aggressor microsystems that interact, leading to violent incident teacher experiences (e.g., student's parents are abusive which causes student to hit teacher because they are modeling parent behavior).

Do not code if the teacher says the school is in a community where parent abuse of students is prevalent, without referring to a specific incident, or specific case.

Include meetings when parents are invited to school as well as when they come uninvited

Do not code peer pressure as mesosystem if it is internal to the school

Include anytime parents interact with a teacher and it is related to a violent incident.

Automatically coded because the student's home microsystem AND student's school microsystem is interacting.

Note, any microsystem in which a student interacts counts, not specifically the ones coded above in the microsystem codes.

Example(s):

Part ID 2203: "A step-parent tried to say that I had caused physical bruising on a child and threatened a lawsuit. Evidence eventually indicated the step-parent himself had inflicted the bruises."

Part ID 629: "Student threatening to have family members come to school and take care of me."

Exosystem

Definition: Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of

indirect contexts such as community level influences.

Notes:

Excludes individual level factors or microsystems or mesosystems. E.g., “The student comes from a violent home.”

Example(s):

Part ID 2207: “All of these people were frustrated with their lives outside the school. They were often hungry and tired. They needed help and attention. They lived in a poor neighborhood in a prison community.”

Macrosystem

Definition: Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of district, state, or federal policy, cultural influences, or overarching societal influences

Notes:

Default to macro if an issue is prevalent within a school and outside the school

This is because if it is not solely a school level issue, it is indicative of it being a prevalent concern in more than one area, and we are aiming to capture broader issues that go beyond one particular school in this category (those are what are captured in the microsystem codes).

Ex: Part ID 1762: “Our classroom was in a trailer located at the end of a parking lot. Too many sped classes are held in substandard facilities which adds to the children's sense of feeling not as good as someone else.”

Can be a single occurrence at a higher level, does not have to happen consistently

For example if a district level ruling regarding placement of a specific student is discussed, this would be coded because it is higher-level than school rule, but may not be

consistently occurring all the time.

Policy-Related factors

Definition: Macrosystem factors that teachers attribute to affecting their violence experiences. Specifically related to district, state, or federal policy or law related to education or that affect participants.

Notes:

Excludes school-specific policy related factors or rules, this is covered under microsystem.

includes issues with funding, budgets, and test score mandates

Includes: Laws that affect education/violence experienced by teachers but may not be directly an education law.

Example(s):

Part ID XXXX: “There is a bill going through congress right now on restraint and seclusion of students [with] special education needs. I do not believe in restraint nor do I believe in seclusion, but I do believe in the need for physically environmentally efficient and appropriate classroom settings, the staffing assistance and training needed to work with our students, the resources and support from the school, district, state, and national level. I believe it is critical to recognize that we have very dangerous students in our programs that do not always understand the consequences of what they do. I believe that evacuating a room over and over as a student attacks others is not the solution, and the appropriateness of the placement needs to be discussed and implemented without teachers being made to feel that 1. They are failing, 2. they are expected in their job to be hurt. and 3. it costs too much money to increase staffing or move students out of

placements that are not appropriate for them - such as non - public school. I truly believe there is a feeling in the field that because we are special education teachers it is part of our job to be hurt and to be attacked and that we need to toughen up and deal with it as part of what we do. I don't agree. It is unfair to the other students, unfair to the student involved and unfair to the staff that are getting hurt. I listed three different incidences - 1. parent, 2. student and 3 ongoing. It was hard to fill out the survey in response to the incidences as opposed to one. But I believe all three are significant and should be a part of what I sent to you in this survey. Thank you for taking the time to look into this. I am pleased that there is beginning to be some recognition to this very important issue we as special education teachers working with students with the most severe disabilities experience day in and day out with no solutions except "put your big girl panties on and learn to deal with it"

Part ID 665: "Teachers do not have a sufficient support system and backup help. Need more laws and regulations for teachers to defend themselves when students attack them."

Systemic Educational Issues

Definition: District, state and federal level factors affecting the education system at large that teachers feel contribute or play a role in their violence experiences.

Notes:

Excludes anything directly associated with policy.

Teacher Unions are systemic-educational

Issues with special education placement not exclusively related to policy are

systemic-educational (e.g., not enough special education training; we don't have any schools in our school system equipped to handle XX behavior)

Example(s):

Part ID 2295: "Students are coming to school with more and more problems and our schools are afraid to handle situations properly"

Cultural/societal influences

Definition: Macrosystem factors that teachers attribute to affecting their violence experiences. Specifically related to cultural norms/dominant group perspectives, religious beliefs, societal influence.

Notes:

Excludes governmental or policy related laws or factors.

Includes any racism/sexism etc. influences in either direction

parents not controlling or disciplining students as a whole, but not individual cases or examples; Widespread parental issues (including with parental discipline) are coded here

Example(s):

Part ID XXXX: "I see this as a lack of respect for adults and teachers. Government and the press also seem to have less respect for the education field. Teachers get blamed for low test scores, children not learning, students dropping out of school and a whole variety of social problems. Parents and neighborhoods play a vital role in a child's life."

PART ID 2171: "It seems that all responsibility is placed on teachers and parents are not held accountable for their children's behaviors or education. Instead of placing the

burden on up start placing it back on the parents.”

Chronosystem

Definition: Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific life events or time period

Notes:

Includes temporary physical and mental health conditions (e.g. pregnancy, distinct episode of mental illness); doesn't have to occur within a specific time period before violent event

Specific Life Event in Teacher's life

Definition: Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event occurring in the life of the participant

Notes:

Excludes day to day events e.g., “The child hit me because I refused to accept their late work”

Does not have to occur within a specific time frame

Includes physical and mental health

Only code once unless another answer provides more info

Example(s):

PART ID 2099: “A student threatened to cut my baby out of my stomach when I was pregnant.”

Specific Life Event in Aggressor's life

Definition: Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event occurring in the life of the aggressor

Notes:

Excludes day to day events “The child hit me because I refused to accept their late work”

Does not have to occur within a specific time frame

Includes physical and mental health

Only code once unless another answer provides more info

Example(s):

PART ID 2402: “#1 This year I received a note from a former student delivered ,apparently by coercion, from a current student. It was obscene and threatening. He was just out of juvenile hall from an incident at his current school since he is now in middle school. I reported it but was told I was making a big deal of it. #2 In a previous year I had a student threaten to kill me. He was very angry and I was particularly upset because he was raised by his dad and their hobby was hunting. I knew he had access to guns and knew how to use them. The principal told me that I should know he wouldn't ever do that...but I don't know that. I am disappointed that in each case, with a different principal I felt that I wasn't supposed to take this stuff seriously - that it just "came with the job". That is wrong. Their response was as upsetting as the original incident. I see now that I should have put just one answer here.”

Event or natural disaster in the Community

Definition: Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of specific event that affected the entire community

Notes:

Excludes Long-term or non-specific issues, such as references to generational characteristics or a president's entire term length

Example(s):

"... 5 years ago ,after hurricane, Katrina I was teaching two severely violent twins with Autism whose mother took them off of their medicine and I was kicked when I tried to stop him from hurting himself. I was the third teacher of these twins to have to take a medical leave. In all three cases, the Crisis Prevention Intervention team could not be reached or did not respond in time to stop physical abuse of a student to himself, another student or to me or other adults...."

Time Period

Definition: Factors related to participants' violence experiences that are a result of the time period in which the participant and aggressor live and interact

Notes:

Excludes specific events in that time period, e.g.: 911

Example(s):

Participant ID 2424: "I have seen the behavior of students deteriorate over the past 20 years. I feel less and less like a teacher each year that I am in the profession and more like a guard in a prison."

Intersectionality Codes**Intersectionality**

Definition: When a participant discusses 2 or more aspects of either their identity

or the aggressor's identity

Notes:

no need to code extra response if you've already coded intersectionality within one response. For example, if age/race exist in one answer, no need to code gender if it pops up in another answer

Teacher Intersectionality

Definition: When a participant discusses 2 or more aspects of their identity, such as ethnicity, age, gender, SES, ability status, or size.

Notes:

Excludes discussion of only one facet of identity OR discussion of only one facet of aggressor and only one facet of participant identity.

Code if mentioned across questions responses: I.e: says race in response to question 16 and age in response to question 21

Example(s):

Part ID 537 : because I am Asian and I am a new teacher to the school

Aggressor Intersectionality

Definition: When a participant discusses 2 or more aspects of the aggressor's Identity, such as ethnicity, age, gender, SES, ability status, or size.

Notes:

Excludes discussion of only one facet of identity OR discussion of only one facet of aggressor and only one facet of participant identity. I.e: "I am a female teacher who was attacked by a female parent"

Code if mentioned across questions responses: I.e: says race in response to

question 16 and ability status in response to question 21

Student being in a special ed class or having a behavioral goal/IEP indicates a facet of identity; If specific diagnosis is mentioned in another answer, code that instead of general statements about IEP/special ed placement

If Male & IEP is in one response, and then autism diagnosis is in second response, CODE BOTH HERE because autism diagnosis trumps general IEP statement

If it is not clear that a student is in teacher's class and participant states I teach an EBD class, DO NOT code for ability status (only worry about this if other facet of identity is present)

If it IS clear that student is in teacher's class, and teacher explicitly states that they teach EBD, then can code for ability status (only worry about this if other facet of identity is present)

Example(s):

Part ID 498: "It was because of the student's disability. He did not fully understand that he was not doing the appropriate thing."

Aggressor Age

Definition: Any time a participant discusses aggressor's age or grade level in relation to violence experience

Notes:

Excludes when it does not specifically refer to aggressor age; "I teach 5th grade, a student in my SCHOOL attacked me" (excluded because not specifically their student).
OR "I am a 5th grade teacher, a parent of one of my students attacked me" (excluded because talks about age of students, but not aggressor).

Stating that they were attacked by a parent of a student is too broad of an age range, same with grandparent or colleague.

Sibling counts if they explicitly say sibling is a student/in school (does not need to say exact grade level)

Examples:

Part ID 1762: “Early in my teaching career, a junior high student with learning disabilities threw a chair at me. I stepped out of the way.”

Teacher Age

Definition: Any time a participant discusses their own age or years of experience in relation to violence experience.

Notes:

Excludes discussing ages or years of teaching if only talking about it generally e.g., “ I have been teaching for 30 years and this happens all the time”, without discussing it as a reason for the violent incident(s) occurring.

Exclude this because they are not saying this happened because I have been teaching for 30 years.

Do code for years of experience if saying it is related to why incident occurred

E.g., I have only been teaching for 6 months and the students felt they could bully me.

Examples:

Part ID 537: “Because I am Asian and I am a new teacher to the school”

Teacher Socioeconomic Status

Definition: Whenever participant mentions their SES in relation to experience of violence

Notes:

Excludes discussion of anything SES related for after the incident. Also excludes discussion of neighborhood SES, that is coded in EXOSYSTEM.

Includes discussion of individual SES

Examples:

Fake Part ID xxx: “I stay in this school system because it pays better than the other ones within driving distance, however if money was not an issue I would move and work in a district where students are less aggressive and I am not subject to daily violence.”

Aggressor Socioeconomic Status

Definition: Whenever participant mentions SES of aggressor in relation to violence experience

Notes:

Excludes discussion of anything SES related for after the incident. Also excludes discussion of neighborhood SES, that is coded in EXOSYSTEM.

Includes discussion of individual SES.

Examples:

Fake Part ID xxx: “The student comes from a low-income family and has to sell drugs, when I got him in trouble for possession, he decided he needed to come after me”

Aggressor Size

Definition: Any time a aggressor’s size was discussed in relation to experiencing

violence.

Notes:

Excludes discussion of aggressor's size NOT related to the incident, or size of students but not specifically aggressor. E.g., I have a student who is 6'4 and 250 pounds. I was assaulted after school." (Excluded because it does not specifically say the person who assaulted them is the student).

Examples:

Part ID 1789: "Frequently, several times a week, students that are disruptive get threatening. When asked to be quiet, get back on task, or otherwise desist from disruptive behavior, they get verbally abusive by telling me to "back off", "I'm not their boss", "I don't like or want to", "get out of my face", "I'm done with you", "I'm so through with you", etc or physically pulling shoulders back and stepping into my space, physically pulling a fist back as if to strike, etc. I'm act as both an RSP teacher and an SDC teacher at my high school. I go into a regular ed freshman English class 2 periods a day to assist. To keep the confidentiality of the RSP kids, the RSP teacher is to help all students in class as needed to to focus on the RSP students. At times I will ask a regular ed student to be quiet during a silent reading time or during the teacher's lecture. One example was asking a feamble to quit talking to another student about off task subjects and to get back on task. She became very aggressive and told me to "back off and get out of her face". My response was "Excuse me?" I don't remeber the exact words she used but basically that I couldn't tell her what to do and that she could talk to me anyway she wanted. As she began walking away from me her comment was that she "was so done " with me. When I called her back after class to talk to her about it she was rolling her

eyes and would not look at me. I told her how disrespectful she was speaking to me and that it was uncalled for. She made no reply other than to ask, "Can I go now?" My reply was not until I got an apology. The classroom teacher allowed this behavior to occur and still does. This is not an uncommon occurrence in this class. I also push into another teacher's class and that environment is completely different. I don't face that attitude at all. In my own SDC classes (I teach 3 a day) that environment does not exist either. 3 years ago I had a student get up out of his seat, put his hand out towards my chest, step towards me and invaded my "space" and told me to "back down". He was wandering around the room bothering other students and I asked him to return to his seat. He had been tagging on the furniture earlier in the month, had been flying colors all over campus, had been intimidating other students, and constantly swearing and back talking in class. I was frightened that day since he was 6'2 and over 200lbs. He ended up in jail shortly thereafter due to gang related violence in a huge gang fight on campus. It had been well choreographed to happen during passing period at 5 different places on campus simultaneously. 12 students were arrested and many were hurt. He was one of the parties that planned the multiple fights."

Teacher Size

Definition: Any time a participant's size was discussed in relation to experiencing violence.

Notes:

Excludes discussion of participant's size NOT related to the incident. "I am a 6'4 male, but I still get attacked" (excluded because it wasn't explicitly a cause or related to the particular incident being described).

Examples:

Part ID 2116: “A student started to act out in the classroom after recess. He had an altercation with another student on the playground so when he came into the classroom he was already upset. I asked him to calm down or he would have to see the counselor. He started to throw his papers and then tried throwing his pencil at me I told him to come with me to the counselors office. He started to hit himself then started to swing my way. I braced him by his shoulders but he was the same height as myself so I was scared he was going to turn around and hit me. He eventually went to the office but the behavior escalated each time he had a melt down. I did not feel like I received support from other staff members with this student.”