Crime, Violence, and Suspensions in Traditional Versus Public Charter Schools: Large Scale Evidence From One U.S. State

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We compared the student, school-related crime and violence in all the traditional public versus public charter schools in the state of North Carolina during school year 2015-2016. Results showed that traditional public schools demonstrated higher crime and violence rates than did public charter schools. Risk ratios related to lower rates of crime and violence in school greatly favored students attending public charter schools. Implications concerning the school-related crime and violence characteristics of two different types of schools, on a large scale, are provided.

Keywords: school crime, school violence, school suspensions, charter schools, risk ratios

INTRODUCTION

Violence and crime committed at school are important issues for parents of students, those who operate schools, as well as the students who attend K-12 schools. Without violence- and crime-free school

environments students may have difficulty in learning and their teachers may be diverted from providing efficacious and evidence-based instruction—their primary duty (Sabornie & Pennington, 2015; Sabornie et al., 2019). Teachers observe some students' lack of self-control and witness their defiance of authority at times, and such behavior has influenced educators' early departure from the teaching profession (Regan & Michaud, 2011). Moreover, "We have plenty of evidence to confirm that learners who are exposed to violence and trauma perform less well in school" (Harper, 2020, p. 1). In today's schools, therefore, effective student protection provisions have never been more important and they are assumed to be the basis of school success (Hamlin, 2017; Lacoe, 2015).

In light of the increased media exposure that school violence and crime yield, some argue that school environments have become progressively more dangerous, and worthy of serious measures to protect all in attendance (e.g., arming teachers in classrooms; police resource officers stationed at each school; teaching "lock-down" procedures as frequently as fire drills; limiting entrance and exit doors to schools; see Montgomery & Fernandez, 2018). In 2006, for example, the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) found that approximately 20% of U.S. schools were involved with serious crime and violence incidents (Good & Lavigne, 2018). In other, more recent NCES reports (i.e., 2016), however, violent student victimization actually decreased from 1999 to 2013, but student school suspension rates showed little change over time (Good & Lavigne). While U.S. schools appear to demonstrate less violence and crime in the 21st century than previously, suspensions continue unabated oftentimes due to teachers' subjective misinterpretations of student non-threatening and non-disrespectful behavior (Skiba et al., 2016).

Arguably, one method of changing the ethos of schooling is for states and districts to implement public charter schools. President Barack Obama advocated for such action in proclaiming a "National Charter Schools Week" (Presidential Proclamation, 2016), and his Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, also stated: "I want to see charters leading the way in reducing their own rates of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions...I want charters to show the way in implementing alternative discipline methods that keep students in school" (cited in Rausch, 2014, p. 1). Since their launch in Minnesota and California in the early 1990s (Finn et al., 2017), numerous charter schools have been guided by the philosophy that reducing crime and violence in schools is necessary to improve students' academic achievement and social-emotional growth (Christensen, 2007). The formation of public charter schools has been one of the fastest growing phenomena addressing school reform in the country (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014).

Review of the Literature

Two of the largest studies concerning charter school practices are Losen et al. (2016), and Rausch (2014). Losen et al. examined nationwide data from 2011-2012 related to discipline practices in traditional public schools (TPS) versus public charter schools. Rausch examined differences in the out-of-school suspension and expulsion rates of students of Color during school year 2011-2012 in TPS versus public charter schools in one Midwestern state. In each of these studies significant racial discipline disproportionality was found to be greater in public charter schools; that is, students of Color were disciplined far more frequently in charter schools in comparison to White students. Neither of the above studies examined student violence and crime incidents (e.g., robbery with a dangerous weapon, assault resulting in serious injury) in TPS versus public charter schools. In order to be completely informative of an individual school's characteristics it is necessary to inspect essential benchmarks such as student violence and crime tendencies. To be remiss in examining such issues is to ignore essential variables that brand every school setting.

Hamlin (2017) examined school-related violence and crime in Detroit, Michigan in an effort to determine whether students viewed charter schools as less crime laden than TPS. Of special interest in the Hamlin study was whether a "deindustrialized" city such as Detroit could resist crime better in traditional versus public charter schools. Unlike most other studies, however, Hamlin used *perceived student views* to measure violence and crime in schools. Survey questions included how secure students felt in and around a school, moving from home to school, and in the various school environments (e.g., classrooms,

hallways, bathrooms). Results showed that students in TPS reported higher violence and crime and significantly lower perceived safety than students in the comparison public charter schools of Detroit. Hamlin's seminal study showed that school choice in an urban area can lead to feelings of security by students.

Other studies show the multifactored relationship that exists between schools, crime, and violence. Murray and Swatt (2013), for example, assessed how schools in a neighborhood affect the crime rate of the geographical area nearby. They found that neighborhoods surrounding high schools (vs. those not near high schools) experienced higher rates of aggregated assault but not higher rates of burglary. Murray and Swatt also found that neighborhoods near middle schools had higher rates of aggravated assaults and auto thefts in comparison to schools situated far from such schools. Lastly, they also found that neighborhoods with nearby elementary and private schools did not have higher levels of crime of any type in comparison to locations far from schools.

In a similar study examining the relationship between crime and violence rates in areas near and far from schools, Willits et al. (2013) showed that city blocks with middle and high schools in the vicinity faced higher levels of narcotics, property, and violent crime than did communities geographically separated from comparable schools.

MacDonald et al. (2018) examined whether new school openings in Philadelphia were related to violence and crime in nearby locations. Interestingly, MacDonald et al. did not find evidence of increased rates of crime in nearby areas with new school openings in comparison to areas where schools were located over time, or never operated. They did find, however, some support for charter school openings and a reduction in violent crimes within a certain distance from the school building. In other words, and contrary to the results of Murray and Swatt (2013), and Willits et al. (2013), MacDonald et al. showed that the prevalence rate of violence and crime—and school location—are not strongly correlated.

Brinig and Garnett (2012) examined whether the closing of Catholic schools in Chicago led to increased crime and violence in the surrounding neighborhoods post-school closure. The researchers compared the crime rate in neighborhoods pre- and post-Catholic school closures from 1990 to 2005, and found that serious crime rate decline was faster in neighborhoods where Catholic schools remained open versus neighborhoods where such schools were closed.

Other studies show compelling crime- and violence-related results when public charter schools versus TPS are compared. McEachin et al. (2019), for example, found that students who transferred to charter schools in the ninth grade showed less crime and suspensions throughout high school than their peers who remained in TPS. However, McEachin et al. concluded that the "effect of charter schools on crime is thin" (p. 7). DeAngelis and Lueken (2019) showed that charter schools in Indiana displayed "safety advantages" in comparison to TPS related to fewer physical threats toward teachers by students, less student gang activities at school, and a lack of racial tension. The survey data analyzed in the DeAngelis and Lueken study originated with 618 school leaders (e.g., Principals and Assistant Principals), so direct student feelings of safety advantages in charter schools were not assessed.

The above studies examined the effect that schools and school type had on the crime and violence rates of students in attendance and, notably, in the neighborhoods where the schools were located. What has not been examined, however, is the effect that school type (i.e., TPS vs. public charter) has on student school-related violence and crime *in an entire state*. In the present study, *student school-related* violence and crime incidents are those that occur under the following circumstances: "(1) on school property, defined as any public school building, bus, public school campus, grounds, recreational area, or athletic field in the charge of the principal, or (2) off school property on a school-sponsored field trip" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2012). The opportunity to examine the actual incidence rate of student acts of violence and crime at school in an entire U.S. state, for an entire school year, provides a unique opportunity to explore this critical variable on a large scale.

The current study is an improvement on the available research that examined the differences between public charter schools and TPS related to school violence and crime. For example, in the present research we included the entire state population (not a sample) of TPS and public charter schools in North Carolina, the ninth largest state in terms of population in the U.S. We also examined the rates of actual

occurrences (not estimates) of violence and crime in the state's schools rather than relying on perceptions of these actions provided by parents (cf. Dynarski et al., 2018), administrators (cf. DeAngelis & Lueken, 2019), and students (cf. Hamlin, 2017). Lastly, we analyzed the correlations between student, school related crime and violence and short-term school suspensions across K-12 grades, whereas Ramirez et al. (2012) examined only sixth-graders from a single school district.

The purpose of the present study was to examine student, school-related crime and violence (as defined above) in TPS versus public charter schools in the entire state of North Carolina during school year 2015-2016. The variables of interest in this study were specific, reportable acts of school-related violence and crime (see below) committed by students in all TPS (n = 2,433) and public charter schools (n = 157; 6% of all schools). The school-related crime and violence data were made available in compliance with the state's *Safe Schools Act of 1993* under which each Local Education Agency (i.e., school district) is required to report such data to the State Education Agency (i.e., Department of Public Instruction; DPI). The following research questions guided the investigation: (a) What student, school-related crime and violence rate differences (if any) exist in TPS versus public charter schools in the state public school system during an entire school year? (b) Given what is known about the relationship between school suspensions and school-related crime and violence (see Diliberti et al., 2019), what relationship exists between student school-related crime and violence and the occurrence of short-term school suspensions (i.e., 10 or fewer days per incident) in TPS versus public charter schools in the state? and (c) What risk ratios exist for school-related crime and violence among students attending TPS versus public charter schools in the state of North Carolina? The answers to these research questions are important to understand the scope of school-related crime and violence in the state and for prevention of such acts.

METHOD

Data Source

Data analyzed in this multi-year, grant-supported research project originate with annual statistics of the DPI in the state of North Carolina. While the data have been collected by the state, no analyses of the type presented herein have been conducted. The research project is a joint venture involving faculty from a major state university and DPI specialists; the faculty members' University Institutional Review Board approved a larger scope of research in January 2017 with annual continuation of approval in 2018 through 2021.

Per state statute, the school crime and violence, short-term suspension, and school demographic data presented in the present study were originally compiled by individual school personnel (i.e., school teachers, administrators, and administrative staff) and submitted directly to the DPI using *PowerSchool,* an educational technology platform for K-12 schools. The PowerSchool data are submitted by June 30 of each year. Failure to submit the data can result in sanctions levied by the DPI. After school submission, data specialists at the DPI examined the records for errors, checked for missing values, and consulted with individual school personnel whenever the data did not fit into specified spreadsheet columns and categories, or suspected data entry error patterns existed. At the conclusion of school data submission and DPI personnel inspection, less than one percent of the available data were found missing or misplaced on the spreadsheets; therefore, data imputation was not necessary for the present study and the entire 2015-2016 school year data. In other words, we used "complete case" analyses with only the available observations that had legitimate values found on the spreadsheets.

Population

During school year 2015-2016, a total of 2,590 schools submitted school demographics, discipline, and crime and violence data to the DPI, of which 2,433 were TPS, and 159 were public charter schools. Approximately 71% were elementary schools (Pre-Kindergarten to grade 8), and 16% were secondary level schools (i.e., middle schools [grades 6-8] and high schools [grades 9-12]). A second type of secondary schools (i.e., grades 9-13 "Early College") comprised 3%, "combined grades" schools totaled

3%, and public charter schools encompassed 6% of all schools examined. Two public charter schools were eliminated from the present data analyses because they were operated on the Internet without a physical building. The total student sample involved in the analyses included over 1.45 million pupils in traditional, K-12 public schools, and over 77,000 students in public charter schools. The primary unit of analysis involved in the present study was at the school level. For example, type of school (i.e., TPS vs. public charter) was compared on the variables of interest without emphasis on individual students. As a point of reference for the entire school population examined, Table 1 presents the ethnoracial distribution of students in all the schools included in the analyses.

Special public schools specifically for students with disabilities, and other, alternative schools (e.g., special, state-operated residential schools) were not included in the total number of TPS and charter schools examined.

TABLE 1
ETHNORACIAL DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS EXAMINED IN SCHOOL YEAR 2015-2016

Ethnicity	Traditional Public Schools %	Public Charter Schools %
African American	25.7	26.3
Asian	3.0	3.4
Latino	16.5	8.4
Native American	1.3	0.8
Other (i.e., mixed race)	3.8	3.8
Pacific Islander	0.1	0.2
White	49.5	57.1

Variables

The following variables were examined across TPS versus public charter schools in the state: (a) acts of school-related crime and violence (total number per 1,000 students at each school), and (b) rate of short-term suspensions (i.e., total per 100 students at each school). School-related crime and violence were classified by the DPI into 16 different "reportable criminal offense" categories as required by the Safe Schools Act and are presented in Table 2. Complete definitions and descriptions of the offenses are also found at https://www.dpi.nc.gov/data-reports/dropout-and-discipline-data/16-reportable-criminal-offenses.

As can be seen in the crime and violence category descriptions, certain reportable offenses can be categorized as either crime or violence. To classify each specific act and whether it involved crime or violence, the Principal Investigator and two other members of the university research team (i.e., a Ph.D. university faculty member in statistics, and a Ph.D. student in statistics) read all the acts' definitions and descriptions and voted whether each was indicative of either an act of crime or violence. A reliability check calculated as number of agreements / number of agreements + number of disagreements X 100 found 100% agreement across the three judges' votes on classification of acts as either crime or violence. Six reportable acts were voted as crime and 10 were classified as acts of school-related violence (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
CATEGORIES OF SCHOOL-RELATED VIOLENCE AND CRIME EXAMINED

Violence Acts at School	Crime Acts at School
Assault on school personnel (AP)	Burning of a school building (BS)
Assault resulting in serious injury (AR)	Bomb Threat (BT)
Assault involving use of a weapon (AW)	Possession of alcoholic beverage (PA)
Homicide (H)	Possession of a firearm (PF)
Taking indecent liberties with a minor (IM)	Possession of a controlled substance (PS)
Kidnapping (K)	Possession of a weapon (PW)
Rape (R)	
Robbery with a dangerous weapon (RW)	
Sexual assault (SA)	

Data Analyses

Nonparametric, correlational, and risk ratio statistical analyses were used to assess differences and relationships across the comparison groups of interest. Given the positive skew for each of the metrics of interest in the study, and the distribution of scores, Kruskal-Wallis tests were selected for analysis. This nonparametric statistical test was used so that all association tests were robust to deviations from parametric assumptions, and equivalent tests could be applied to group analyses. Pearson product-moment correlations were performed to understand the statewide relationship between short-term suspensions and acts of crime and violence across school type. Risk ratios were used to determine the comparative extent to which students in both types of schools were likely to experience acts of crime or violence at their school.

The dataset analyzed herein does not represent a random sample but a complete population. Therefore, the use of inferential statistics was not necessary and the *p*-values reported herein are provided only for reference. Any group differences (e.g., mean discrepancies) observed in the comparisons are therefore statistically significant, but the *applied* significance (e.g., Is the size of difference large enough to be noteworthy?) of such differences awaits additional interpretation. All data were analyzed using SAS software (version 9.4).

RESULTS

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables of interest in the present study, and Table 4 includes the crime and violence statistical analyses across school type.

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES[a]

Variable	*M* (*SD*) TPS[b]	*M* (*SD*) Public Charter Schools
Assault on school personnel[V]	2.16 (28.6)	0.32 (1.38)
Assault resulting in serious injury[V]	0.05 (0.84)	0.02 (0.26)
Assault involving use of a weapon[V]	0.02 (0.25)	0.02 (0.24)
Homicide[V]	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.00)
Taking indecent liberties with a minor[V]	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Kidnapping[V]	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Rape[V]	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Robbery with a dangerous weapon[V]	0.00 (0.08)	0.00 (0.00)
Sexual assault[V]	0.09 (2.43)	0.00 (0.00)
Sexual offense[V]	0.01 (0.15)	0.00 (0.00)
Total acts of violence	2.34 (31.1)	0.36 (1.51)
Burning of a school building[C]	0.00 (0.12)	0.00 (0.00)
Bomb threat[C]	0.06 (0.97)	0.01 (0.12)
Possession of an alcoholic beverage[C]	0.63 (3.21)	0.15 (0.78)
Possession of a firearm[C]	0.08 (0.77)	0.04 (0.36)
Possession of a controlled substance[C]	3.16 (10.9)	0.85 (2.82)
Possession of a weapon[C]	1.92 (4.31)	0.83 (2.68)
Total acts of crime	5.81 (14.3)	1.88 (4.40)

Note to Table 3: [a] = per 1,000 students at each school; [b] = traditional public schools; [V] = acts of violence at school; [C] = acts of crime at school

TABLE 4
CRIME AND VIOLENCE STATISTICAL ANALYSES ACROSS SCHOOL TYPE[a]

Crime or Violence Category	Kruskal-Wallis Test Result Values	*df*	*p*-values
Assault on school personnel (AP)[V]	13.714	1	0.0002
Assault causing serious injury (AR)[V]	0.1133	1	0.7364
Assault with a weapon (AW)[V]	0.0559	1	0.8132
Homicide (H)[V]	0.0673	1	0.7954
Rape (R)[V]	0.0673	1	0.7954
Robbery with a dangerous weapon (RW)[V]	0.2019	1	0.6532
Sexual assault (SA)[V]	3.5691	1	0.0589
Sexual offense (SO)[V]	0.8106	1	0.3679
Total acts of violence	37.281	1	<0.0001
Burning of a school building (BS)[C]	0.4719	1	0.4921
Bomb threat (BT)[C]	2.2218	1	0.1361
Possession of alcoholic beverage (PA)[C]	7.5657	1	0.0059
Possession of a firearm (PF)[C]	1.3086	1	0.2526
Possession of a controlled substance (PS)[C]	21.633	1	<0.0001
Possession of a weapon (PW)[C]	30.265	1	<0.0001
Total acts of crime	15.326	1	<0.0001

Note to Table 4: [a] = traditional public school vs. public charter school; [C] = crime act; [V] = act of violence; The school-related violence categories of Taking indecent liberties with a minor, and Kidnapping, did not occur in both types of schools during school year 2015-2016.

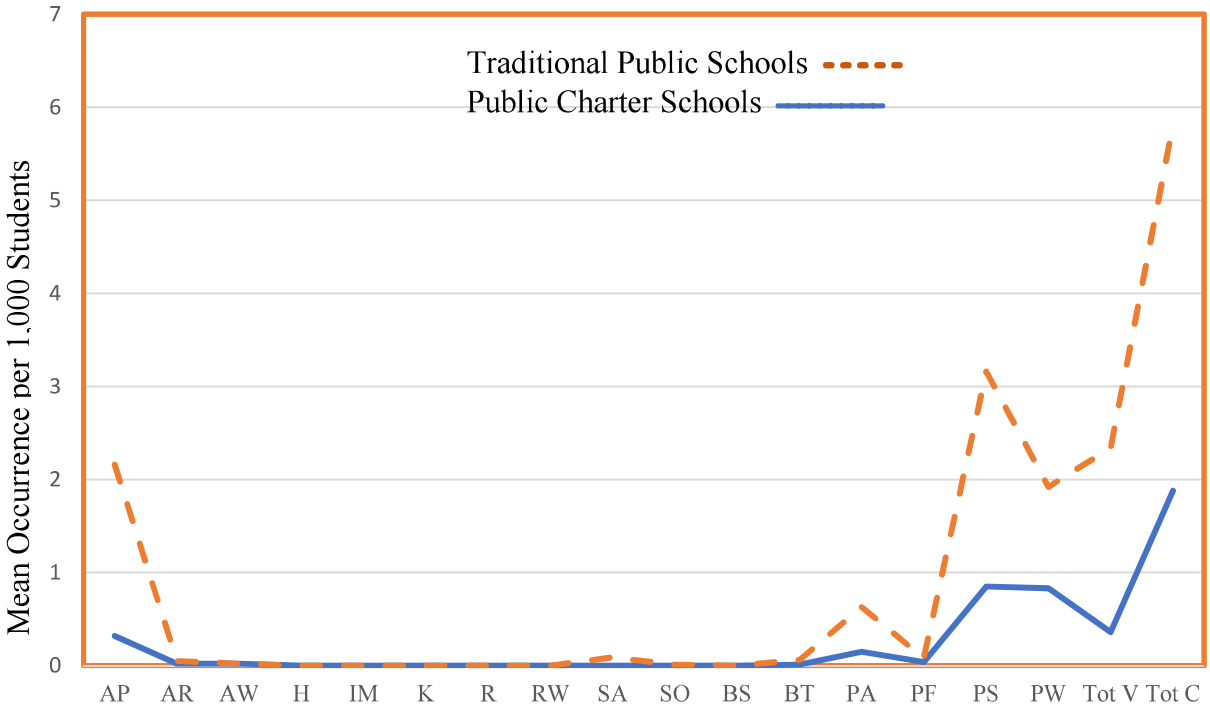
In nine individual categories of school-related crime and violence, plus total aggregated crime and total violence, the TPS means (per 1,000 students at the same school) were higher than those found in the public charter schools. The four largest individual crime or violence category mean differences between the two types of schools included (from highest to lowest): (a) possession of a controlled substance, (b) assault on school personnel, (c) possession of a weapon, and (d) possession of an alcoholic beverage. In each of the above four examples TPS means were higher than those of public charter schools. Large mean differences also separated the two types of schools in (a) total combined acts of crime, and (b) total combined occurrences of violence during the school year; again, the TPS means were strikingly higher than those of the public charter schools in the two global categories of total school crime or violence. We conclude that the mean differences across the above six dependent variables (i.e., four individual categories of crime or violence, and two classifications of global crime or violence) are noteworthy and, as an additional reference, the Kruskal-Wallis test *p*-values in Table 4 also show the significant statistical differences across the school types.

Of the four individual types of crime or violence with the highest rate, three are categorized as school crime with only one in the school violence group. In other words, one-half of the total crime categories are represented with the largest mean differences across school type, while only 10% of the school violence types are found in the same group. Figure 1 (below) shows a graphic illustration of all the variables involved in the above analyses and their respective relationships across the two school types. It should also be noted that in six individual categories of school violence or crime (i.e., five in the violence group and only one in the crime category) the two types of schools were equal (i.e., $M = 0$) in having the lowest rates. School violence, therefore, appears to be a lesser problem in comparison to school crime in North Carolina schools during the year of interest.

Short-term suspensions (per 100 students) were correlated with total crime and violence rates (combined per 1,000 students) at a significant level in TPS ($r = .14$, $p = < .00001$) but not in public charter schools ($r = .006$, $p = .552$). Such low-level correlations in both cases are not notable when considering the entire population of schools studied herein.

Risk ratios (see Table 5 below) were calculated as a form of effect size estimates with the available school crime and violence data across the two school types. While controlling for school size and number of schools, the risk ratio analyses showed that public charter schools were "protective" (see Schnell, 2020) in that the students educated in such schools experienced 75% lower risk of school violence, and 71% lower risk of school-related crime in comparison to TPS students. It is noteworthy that not one of the 14 individual types of school crime or violence, and the total crime and violence measures found in Table 5, support lower risk for students in TPS versus public charter schools. The difference in population-based, school-related crime and violence risk for students who attended public charter schools versus those in TPS is particularly noteworthy.

FIGURE 1
CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVALENCE IN NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS IN SCHOOL YEAR 2015-2016



Note:

AP = Assault on school personnel
AR = Assault resulting in serious injury
AW= Assault involving use of a weapon
H = Homicide
IM = Taking indecent liberties with a minor
K = Kidnapping
R = Rape
RW = Robbery with a dangerous weapon
Tot V = Total acts of school-related violence
SA = Sexual assault
SO = Sexual offense
BS = Burning of a school building
BT = Bomb threat
PA = Possession of alcoholic beverage
PF = Possession of a firearm
PS = Possession of a controlled substance
PW = Possession of a weapon
Tot C = Total acts of school-related crime

TABLE 5
RISK RATIOS FOR VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS: PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS VERSUS TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Crime and Violence Category	Risk Ratio
Assault on school personnel (AP)[V]	0.24
Assault causing serious injury (AR)[V]	0.64
Assault with a weapon (AW)[V]	0.96
Homicide (H)[V]	0.00
Rape (R)[V]	0.00
Robbery with a dangerous weapon (RW)[V]	0.00
Sexual assault (SA)[V]	0.00
Sexual offense (SO)[V]	0.00
Total acts of violence	**0.25**
Burning of a school building (BS)[C]	0.00
Bomb threat (BT)[C]	0.26
Possession of alcoholic beverage (PA)[C]	0.31
Possession of a firearm (PF)[C]	0.46
Possession of a controlled substance (PS)[C]	0.25
Possession of a weapon (PW)[C]	0.34
Total acts of crime	**0.29**

Note: [C] = crime act; [V] = act of violence; Two school violence categories (i.e., Taking indecent liberties with a minor, and Kidnapping) could not be calculated because both did not occur in the 2015-2016 school year in either traditional public schools or public charter schools in the state.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to examine student school-related crime and violence in every public K-12 school in North Carolina during one school year. As a group, and keeping in mind that the present large population had numerous exceptions, students in traditional schools were more "crime active" than in public charter schools. The implications from these major findings are many, but a weighty one undoubtedly relates to *why* TPS are not as successful in reducing student, school-related crime as are public charter schools in North Carolina. Our findings also run counter to those of McEachin et al. (2019) who claimed that the relationship between student crime and public charter school attendance is "thin." The present findings do not allow us to recommend that TPS should consider implementing the organizational, instructional, preventative, and disciplinary policies that are used in many public charter schools, but further examination of the differences found herein are worthy of additional exploration and dissemination through research.

Many educators believe that dangerous, school-related crime by students is worthy of suspension and perhaps expulsion (Weingarten, 2015-2016). We are not advocating for lenient treatment of serious student crime and violence at school that merits strong disciplinary responses. In this study, however, the evidence supports that certain educational structures and philosophies (i.e., in public charter schools) may decrease the need for using harsh student discipline in an effort to prevent school crime and violence from occurring. Similarly, Restorative Justice school programs, and Schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support, have been shown to decrease student behavior problems and should be considered in schools seeking order and fairness for all (see Skiba et al., 2016).

To place these one-state results in proper perspective it is wise to compare our findings with similar national statistics for the same school year (see Diliberti et al., 2017; Musu-Gillette et al., 2018). The following acts of crime and violence were found to be characteristic of schools across the U.S. during school year 2015-2016:

- Approximately 39% of schools reported at least one student threat of physical attack *without* a weapon, compared with 9% of schools that reported such a threat *with* a weapon;
- About 749,400 nonfatal, violent victimizations (e.g., theft, assault) occurred in schools among students aged 12-18, while 601,300 occurred off school grounds;
- Roughly 10% of public school teachers received threats of physical injury from students at their school, and six percent were actually attacked by a student;
- 25% of schools reported at least one incident of the distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs, a higher percentage than that of the distribution, possession, or use of alcohol (13%) or prescription drugs (10%);
- 43% of school teachers reported that student misbehavior interferes with their instruction in classrooms;
- Among the factors that were reported to limit schools' efforts to reduce or prevent crime "in a major way," three factors were more likely to be reported than others: (a) lack of, or inadequate, alternative placements or programs for disruptive students (30%); (b) inadequate funds (28%); and (c) federal, state, or district policies on disciplining students in special education (17%). (Diliberti et al., 2017, pp. 3-4)

It appears that many schools across the nation face the same variety of school crime and violence as those in our comprehensive one-state examination. The above national statistics, however, did not separate TPS from public charter schools. Acts of school crime and violence may appear as infrequent events during the school year (in certain schools); nevertheless, many offenses are intense and challenging episodes worthy of great attention and intervention. To further emphasize the gravity of low frequency but high intensity crime and violence in schools, high crime schools have been shown to deter social-emotional progress as well as mental health in students (Hamlin, 2017; Ripski & Gregory, 2009).

Our results showed that short term suspensions were correlated (but not deemed noteworthy) with student, school-related crime and violence in TPS but not in public charter schools. This finding highlights an imperfect relationship, however, for students are often disciplined through school suspension for non-crime and non-violence related offenses (e.g., student disrespect of a teacher; Skiba et al., 2016). Additional investigation to further clarify this relationship, and to determine why public charter schools did not show the same pattern as TPS, appears worthy of pursuit.

Limitations

Shortcomings of the present study must be recognized to understand the social validity of its contribution. First, we did not separate schools into elementary, middle, or high school categories, but considered all in the same two school-type population. This could have led to overlooking embedded differences across dissimilar levels of schooling. The grade grouping patterns across many schools in the entire state, however, made exact grade level uniformity in school comparisons difficult, if not impossible. Secondly, charter schools can be subdivided into Charter Management Organizations (i.e., nonprofit institutions), and Education Management Organizations (i.e., for-profit entities). Perhaps school-related crime and violence differs across these types of charter school management, and the present study did not examine this specific issue. It would be worthy of future research to undertake such a comparison. Similarly, the inability to examine school-related crime and violence statistics in schools serving differing levels of student socioeconomic status is a shortcoming of the present study. Future research should consider this in obtaining a deeper understanding of differences in school crime and violence across school categories. Moreover, the one-state results presented herein might not easily generalize to other states across the U.S.

Another weakness of the present study involves the actual comparisons across types of students who attend TPS versus public charter schools. Students attend public charter schools as a result of parents' exercising their right of school choice, while parents of students in TPS have not made such a selection. The population of students in TPS, therefore, is different in many ways in comparison to their public charter school peers. Parents who choose to send their offspring to charter schools have a stronger bond to

their child's development, and children of school choosers also have been shown to exhibit fewer school discipline problems (Hamlin, 2017; Jones et al., 2009). Without the ability to control for school selection bias (or lack thereof) in students' parents and guardians, and student demographics, some of the school type differences found in this study seem inevitable.

This study replicated well-conducted prior research showing that TPS experience higher rates of crime and violence than public charter schools (cf. Hamlin, 2017). In the present study public charter school students, in comparison to those in TPS, had more favorable profiles on a multitude of crime and violence measures examined. Whether these differences are due to student demographics, driven by parental choice, or to structural-operational variables specific to public charter schools is unclear from the present study results. Research that isolates the influence of these and related factors on traditional versus public charter school outcomes is critically needed.

Lastly, our data and findings cannot draw any conclusions regarding the relationship between school-related crime and violence and student safety. All we were able to expose is that the two different types of schools diverge on school-related crime and violence; the school crime and violence and student safety interaction awaits other testing. Additionally, the present research was not an attempt to study the relationship between crime, violence, and school locale (cf. MacDonald et al., 2018), but mainly to examine school-related wrongdoing by students across an entire state with varying types of schools, enrollments, and locations. In essence, we presented a necessary global, statewide comparison with many nuances that need further replication.

CONCLUSIONS

With charter schools becoming increasingly abundant in the U.S. (e.g., in 2019 there were over 7,000 charter schools in 44 states educating over 3.2 million students; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2019), continued research is necessary to understand the array of characteristics of such an educational approach. Charter schools have some benefits for certain students, teachers, and administrators, and school-related student criminality, as shown in this study, is merely a singular factor. We do not recommend that public charter schools should replace all TPS because their place in U.S. public education is still debated (see Chen, 2017; Gleason et al., 2010; Saloomey, 2017), and their shortcomings are many (see Finn et al., 2017). Likewise, the capability of public charter schools in adhering to a national commitment to achieve diversity and educational equity across all demographic groups within the public education system must also be considered. School-related crime and violence by students in public charter schools, however, appears notable in this one state representation and worthy of additional examination and possible replication in other states across the U.S.

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