

More Than a Nuisance: The Prevalence and Consequences of Frotteurism and Exhibitionism

Sexual Abuse: A Journal of
Research and Treatment
2016, Vol. 28(1) 3–19
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DOI: 10.1177/1079063214525643
sax.sagepub.com



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Abstract

Despite indications that acts of frotteurism and exhibitionism are frequent occurrences, these sexual paraphilias have received little empirical attention. To address this gap in our knowledge about these paraphilias, 459 undergraduate students in a major metropolitan city completed a self-report measure designed to investigate the frequency and correlates of frotteurism and exhibitionism. Results indicate a high rate of victimization among female college students for both paraphilias. Furthermore, acts of frotteurism and exhibitionism most often occurred in places related to public transportation (e.g., subway trains or platforms) in this urban setting. In addition, victims reported a number of negative outcomes as a consequence of victimization, including feelings of violation, changes in behavior, and even long-term psychological distress. Older females were the most likely to be victimized. These findings are discussed as they pertain to the prevention and deterrence of paraphilic sexual acts.

Keywords

frotteurism, exhibitionism, paraphilias

Frotteurism and exhibitionism are both paraphilias that involve sexual arousal derived from non-consenting individuals, which, if acted upon may constitute sexual assault. Specifically, frotteurism refers to sexual urges or behaviors that involve touching or

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rubbing against a non-consenting person, whereas exhibitionism involves the exposure of one's genitals to a stranger (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* [4th ed., text rev.; *DSM-IV-TR*]; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000). According to the courtship disorder model, frotteurism and exhibitionism are different expressions of the same underlying disorder (Freund, 1990; Freund, Scher, & Hucker, 1983; Freund & Watson, 1990). The model posits that both are distortions of one of four normal courtship interaction phases (i.e., partner location, pretactile interaction, tactile interaction, and genital union). Frotteurism is a distortion of the tactile phase whereas exhibitionism is a distortion of the pretactile interaction. This model suggests that these paraphilias share similar etiological underpinnings. Consequently, most of what is known about frotteurism has been extracted from studies focusing mainly on exhibitionism (Freund & Watson, 1990; Freund, Watson, & Rienzo, 1988; Krueger & Kaplan, 2000) leading frotteurism to be one of the least understood types of paraphilia (APA, 2000).

Although frotteurism and exhibitionism were traditionally considered "nuisance" offenses (Davis & Davis, 1976; Firestone, Kingston, Wexler, & Bradford, 2006; Krueger & Kaplan, 2008), some research has suggested that victims of exhibitionism may experience considerable distress following exposure (Cox, 1988; Krueger & Kaplan, 2000). Although increased attention has been given to sexual crimes and their consequences generally, comparatively little is known about the prevalence and correlates of frotteurism and exhibitionism specifically. This article seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining the frequency and characteristics of these offenses, victim response, and disclosure of these paraphilic acts, as well as exploring correlates of victimization. By furthering our understanding of the factors associated with victimization, we will be better able to offer potential avenues to reduce victimization.

One of the challenges in examining both frotteurism and exhibitionism is the difficulty in obtaining reliable estimates of the prevalence of these offenses. Official reports are likely to underestimate the frequency of occurrence given that frotteuristic and exhibitionistic offenses are infrequently brought to the attention of authorities (Cox, 1988; Riordan, 1999). Perpetrator self-report may also underestimate the frequency of these behaviors as perpetrators may be motivated to under-report behavior in clinical or criminal justice settings (Abel et al., 1987; Bader, Schoeneman-Morris, Scalora, & Casady, 2008; Bhugra, Popelyuk, & McMullen, 2010). Despite these challenges, the limited research using official and perpetrator reports suggest that not only is there a high rate of perpetration of these acts but also that each perpetrator has a large number of victims (Abel & Rouleau, 1990; APA, 2000; Kafka & Hennen, 1999; Langstrom & Seto, 2006). For example, Becker, Stinson, Tromp, and Messer (2003) found that among sex offenders petitioned for Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) commitment in Arizona, 14% had an Axis I diagnosis of exhibitionism and 5% had a diagnosis of frotteurism. In addition, Abel and colleagues (1987) found prevalence rates of 25% for exhibitionistic behavior and 11% for frotteuristic behavior among a sample of non-incarcerated sex offenders. Furthermore, per offender, frotteurs reported an average of 901 victims whereas exhibitionists reported an average of 513 victims (Abel et al., 1987). Given the number of victims per perpetrator and the low incidence

of reporting, a more accurate way to assess the frequency of occurrence may be through the use of victim self-report.

Studies examining the frequency of exhibitionism using victim self-report have estimated lifetime victimization rates ranging from 33% to 52% for women (Cox, 1988; Rhoads & Borjes, 1981; Riordan, 1999). One study of female college students across the United States found that 33% of women reported being the victim of an exhibitionistic act at least once in their lifetime (Cox, 1988). However, higher rates were reported in an earlier study of females working in large medical centers in the United States and Guatemala. Specifically, 52% of the American women and 45% of the Guatemalan women reported having been victims of exhibitionism at some point in their lives (Rhoads & Borjes, 1981). No study has yet estimated the frequency of frotteurism using victim self-report.

Similarly, while some research has examined the characteristics of exhibitionism, to date, there has been no empirical investigation of the characteristics and correlates of frotteurism. Studies of exhibitionism have found that the behavior is primarily directed toward young unknown females. For instance, one study examining police reports of exhibitionistic offenses found that 56% of the victims were female and 20% were male (the gender of 24% of the victims was unknown; Bader et al., 2008). Cox (1988) found that 72% of female victims of exhibitionism were victimized for the first time between the ages of 10 and 19. Similarly, Riordan (1999) found that 88.5% of female victims of exhibitionism were under the age of 21 at the time of the incident. In addition to being young and female, victims of exhibitionism typically have no relationship to the perpetrator (Cox, 1988; Freund et al., 1988). For example, in a study of 238 exhibitionists, more than two thirds (68.1%) of the perpetrators reported that they preferred to expose themselves to strangers (Freund et al., 1988).

Other studies have examined the location of exhibitionistic crimes. Gittleson, Eacott, and Mehta (1978), who interviewed 100 female nurses in the United Kingdom, found that 39% of the reported incidents of exhibitionism occurred in a park or wooded area while 45% occurred in the street. Comparatively, Bader and colleagues (2008), who examined incident location from police reports of a Midwestern sample of exhibitionistic offenses, found that 25% of these offenses occurred in a business or parking lot while an additional 21% occurred on a public street.

It is also important to understand the victims' experiences of and reactions to these events as this knowledge may help guide intervention and prevention efforts. Specifically, listening to the victims' experiences may provide clues as to why these offenses are under-reported, why victims are not reaching out, and how we can encourage them to do so. As previously mentioned, exhibitionism has been traditionally considered a "nuisance" offense. In the earliest study of victims' responses to exhibitionistic behavior, Davis and Davis (1976) reported that victims were "not so much harm[ed]" by the incident, but rather "surprised" and "inconvenienced" (p. 392). However, some researchers suggest that exhibitionistic behavior can cause considerable distress to some victims (Cox, 1988; Krueger & Kaplan, 2000; Riordan, 1999). Cox (1988) found that approximately 18% of female victims of exhibitionism reported the experiences to be severely distressing. Furthermore, Riordan (1999) found that more than 28% of

female victims of exhibitionism reported that their movements and social activities had in some way been affected by the incident, suggesting that exhibitionism may have a long-term negative impact on victims. Currently, little is known about the impact frotteurism may have on victims. However, it is plausible that victims of frotteurism may experience higher levels of distress than victims of exhibitionism given that frotteurism involves physical contact between the victim and the perpetrator (Frieze, Hymer, & Greenberg, 1987).

Taken together, these findings suggest that victims of exhibitionism are typically young and female, that the offenses generally occur in public settings, are perpetrated by individuals unknown to the victims, and that the behaviors may cause considerably more distress to victims than previously believed. It remains unclear whether these same characteristics hold true for frotteuristic offenses. To develop effective prevention programs, researchers must identify what leads to frotteuristic and exhibitionistic behavior. Furthermore, we need to identify situational factors that may interact with offender factors to produce these offenses (Yeater & O'Donohue, 1999).

The present study is descriptive and exploratory in nature, with the intent to describe the situational factors associated with frotteurism and exhibitionism, and to examine the correlates of victimization. Thus, there are two aims of the current study. First, we sought to provide a detailed description of offense characteristics of both frotteurism and exhibitionism. This includes the frequency of victimization, identifying the conditions under which these incidents occur, and describing offenders' behaviors and how victims typically react to these offenses. Our second aim is to identify the correlates of victimization.

Method

Participants

Four hundred fifty-nine undergraduate students at an urban university in New York City completed a self-report, online questionnaire assessing exposure to frotteurism and/or exhibitionism. Participants were recruited through the university's online research pool and received course credit for participation. All undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses had access to the website. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 43 years, with an average age of 20.4 years ($SD = 3.84$). Seventy-four percent ($n = 342$) of the participants were female, and approximately 43% ($n = 194$) indicated they were of lower socioeconomic status (SES). The majority of participants were Latino (44.1%, $n = 201$), White (21.7%, $n = 99$), and African American (18.4%, $n = 84$).

Procedure

All study procedures were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. The online survey was posted on the university's research pool website with a brief description of the content of the questions and the approximate length of time to

complete the survey (30 min). Undergraduate students from the research pool who were interested in participating followed a link to the survey where a full description of the study was provided. After obtaining informed consent, participants were asked to complete a 63-item self-report questionnaire developed for the purposes of the present study. The questions examined demographic characteristics and items related to being a victim of frotteurism and/or exhibitionism. Definitions for frotteurism and exhibitionism adapted from the *DSM-IV-TR* (APA, 2000) were condensed into one-sentence descriptions for ease of understanding. Exhibitionism was defined as “a stranger exposing his/her genitals in front of you without your permission,” whereas frotteurism was defined as “a stranger rubbing his/her genitals against you in public without your permission.” Participant responses were identified only by a study ID number to ensure confidentiality. Upon completion of the survey, participants were provided with contact information for the principal investigator of the study and the Institutional Review Board.

Measures

As there are no standardized assessments of frotteuristic and exhibitionistic behavior, a self-report questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and forced-choice questions was designed for the purposes of this study. Factors identified in previous studies as relevant to frotteuristic and exhibitionistic behavior were included in the measure. The content validity of the measure was assessed by three experts in the field prior to use. Content analyses were used to identify themes of open-ended responses, which were then transformed into categorical variables for subsequent analyses. To ensure the consistency of categorical transformations, all responses were recoded by the same researcher. The details of each question are provided in the following sections and are separated by type of content: participant demographics/characteristics, offense characteristics, and victims' reactions.

Participant demographics/characteristics. Seven items assessed participant demographic information including gender, age, race, SES (response options include middle, upper, and lower class), use of public transportation, and use of public parks.

Characteristics of frotteuristic and exhibitionistic behavior. Frequency of victimization was coded as having ever experienced either frotteurism or exhibitionism. If participants indicated they had been a victim of frotteurism or exhibitionism, they were prompted to provide information on each separate incident. Thirty-one items assessed offender demographics, as well as the location and characteristics of the incident. Of these 31 items, 19 dichotomously keyed questions assessed the behaviors of the perpetrator and the contextual characteristics of the incident. In addition, 12 open-ended questions assessed incident location, the perpetrator's reaction, and the age of the victim and estimated age of the perpetrator at the time of the incident. It should be noted that these items are the victims' descriptions and perceptions of what occurred.

Victims' reactions to frotteuristic and exhibitionistic behavior. Twenty-four items assessed victims' feelings and behaviors about the incident. Twelve of these questions were recorded as a dichotomous endorsement (0 = no, 1 = yes) assessing victims' physical and emotional reactions at the time of the offense, whether the incidents were reported to authorities, and whether the incidents had any long-term impact on the victims' psychological well-being and future behaviors. The remaining 12 items were open-ended and assessed the participants' immediate reactions to the incidents as well as the participants' feelings about what had occurred. In addition, we assessed whether and if so, how the incidents changed the behaviors of the victims.

Results

The results are presented in two parts to address the two main aims of the study. First, we ran descriptive analyses for those who experienced frotteurism and those who experienced exhibitionism to determine the frequency of (a) victimization among a college sample, (b) incident characteristics, and (c) participants' reactions to victimization (Aim 1). Second, we examined differences in demographic variables based on type of victimization. Because it was possible for respondents to experience both frotteurism and exhibitionism victimization, we separated type of victimization into four mutually exclusive groups for subsequent analyses: those who reported only frotteurism victimization (FO group), those who reported only exhibitionism victimization (EO group), those who reported both types of victimization (Both group), and those who reported no victimization (None group). Comparisons between these four groups were made using ANOVAs to test for differences among continuous variables and chi-square tests for categorical variables (Aim 2).

Aim 1: Descriptive Analyses

To facilitate comparison to prior research, the descriptive statistics for offense characteristics and victims' reactions are separated by gender and include all reported incidences of frotteurism and exhibitionism.

Frequency of victimization. As seen in Table 1, approximately 24% ($n = 83$) of women and 7% ($n = 8$) of men in our sample reported having been a victim of frotteuristic behavior at least once in their lifetime. Comparatively, more than 40% ($n = 137$) of women and 12% ($n = 14$) of men reported having been a victim of exhibitionistic behavior. As a whole, 44% ($n = 203$) of the sample reported being a victim of either frotteurism or exhibitionism at some point in their lives.

Description of incident conditions reported by female victims. The characteristics of frotteuristic and exhibitionistic incidents as reported by female victims are presented in Table 1. The majority of incidents of frotteurism and exhibitionism were reported to have occurred on a subway train or platform and in crowded areas. Victims of frotteurism were most commonly alone and on average 18 years old (range = 5-31) at the time

Table 1. Percentage of Victims Endorsing Offense Characteristic.

Offense characteristics	Type of Victimization			
	Frotteurism		Exhibitionism	
	Females (n = 83)	Males (n = 8)	Females (n = 137)	Males (n = 14)
n (%)				
Mean age at victimization (SD)	17.74 (3.88)	16.00 (3.79)	16.50 (3.76)	19.08 (6.47)
Incident location crowded ^a	73 (90.1%)	6 (85.7%)	71 (52.2%)	6 (42.9%)
Alone during the incident ^a	54 (65.9%)	4 (57.1%)	61 (45.2%)	3 (23.1%)
Incident location ^b				
Public transportation	69 (84.1%)	4 (57.1%)	76 (55.9%)	4 (30.8%)
Street or public building	10 (12.2%)	1 (14.3%)	38 (27.9%)	6 (46.2%)
School	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (6.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Other	3 (3.7%)	2 (28.6%)	13 (9.6%)	3 (23.1%)
Perpetrator was male ^a	78 (95.1%)	3 (42.9%)	133 (97.1%)	10 (76.9%)
Perpetrator well-groomed				
Yes	30 (36.6%)	5 (71.4%)	35 (25.7%)	0 (0.0%)
No	31 (37.8%)	2 (28.6%)	76 (55.9%)	11 (84.6%)
Uncertain	21 (25.6%)	0 (0.0%)	25 (18.4%)	2 (15.4%)
Perpetrator masturbated ^c				
Yes			72 (52.6%)	3 (21.4%)
No			47 (34.3%)	8 (57.1%)
Uncertain			18 (13.1%)	3 (21.4%)
Perpetrator did <i>not</i> leave ^a	61 (74.4%)	3 (50.0%)	100 (73.5%)	10 (76.9%)
Perpetrator's reaction ^b				
No reaction	36 (45.6%)	3 (60.0%)	39 (37.9%)	8 (80.0%)
Moved closer	10 (12.7%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Moved away	8 (10.1%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (13.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Scared/shocked	6 (7.6%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Smiled/laughed	5 (6.3%)	0 (0.0%)	19 (18.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Uncertain	2 (2.5%)	1 (20.0%)	12 (11.7%)	1 (10.0%)
Other	12 (15.2%)	1 (20.0%)	9 (8.7%)	1 (10.0%)

Note. Pairwise deletion used for missing data. Victimization groups are not mutually exclusive, each group includes all incidents of victimization.

^aItem was coded dichotomously yes/no.

^bOpen-ended item recoded into categories.

^cQuestion not asked for frotteurism incidents.

of the incident. However, the majority of victims of exhibitionism were slightly younger with an average age of 16 (range = 7-37) and more often with someone at the time of the incident.

With regard to activities during the incident, more than half of all exhibitionists were reported to have been masturbating at the time of the incident (this question was not asked to victims of frotteurism). Perpetrators of frotteurism were more often well-groomed than perpetrators of exhibitionism. The majority of victims of both frotteurism and exhibitionism reported that the perpetrators remained in the area after the incident occurred. Almost half of the perpetrators of frotteurism were perceived by their victims as showing little emotion or obvious reaction after the incident occurred. In cases where the victim reported a reaction from the perpetrator, the most common reactions included moving closer to the victim and moving or looking away.

Table 2. Percentage of Reaction to Victimization.

Victim's reaction	Type of victimization			
	Frotteurism		Exhibitionism	
	Females (n = 83)	Males (n = 8)	Females (n = 137)	Males (n = 14)
n (%)				
Reported to the police ^a	4 (5.1%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (8.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Reported to someone ^a	53 (64.6%)	6 (85.7%)	99 (73.3%)	5 (38.5%)
Feelings about the incident ^b				
Violated/disgusted	52 (63.4%)	3 (42.9%)	82 (61.7%)	6 (50.0%)
Angry/upset	19 (23.2%)	0 (0.0%)	17 (12.8%)	1 (8.3%)
Scared/shocked	8 (9.8%)	2 (28.6%)	20 (15.0%)	1 (8.3%)
No negative feelings	1 (1.2%)	2 (28.6%)	10 (7.5%)	2 (16.7%)
Other	2 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.0%)	2 (16.7%)
Fearful the perpetrator wanted to cause harm ^a	34 (41.5%)	0 (0.0%)	50 (37.0%)	1 (7.7%)
Long-term effects ^a	28 (34.6%)	1 (14.3%)	21 (15.3%)	1 (7.7%)
Reported change in behavior ^a	52 (64.2%)	0 (0.0%)	44 (32.1%)	1 (7.7%)
Type of behavior change ^b				
More cautious	20 (39.2%)	0 (0.0%)	20 (45.5%)	1 (100%)
Monitor proximity to others	15 (29.4%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (6.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Avoid crowds	5 (9.8)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)
Avoid being alone	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Other	11 (21.6%)	0 (0.0%)	16 (36.4%)	0 (0.0%)

Note. Pairwise deletion used for missing data. Victimization groups are not mutually exclusive, each group includes all incidents of victimization.

^aItem was coded dichotomously yes/no.

^bOpen-ended item recoded into categories.

Exhibitionists' most common reactions included smiling or laughing and moving or looking away.

Description of female victims' reactions. As seen in Table 2, more than one third of the victims of frotteuristic behavior reported having experienced long-term effects as a result of the incident, whereas only one fourth of victims of exhibitionistic behavior reported long-term consequences. Although only a small percentage of victims of frotteurism (5%) and exhibitionism (9%) reported the incident to the police, the majority of victims of both frotteurism and exhibitionism told a family member, friend, or significant other about the incident.

When asked how they felt about the incident, victims of frotteurism most frequently reported feelings of violation and disgust. Similar themes emerged for victims of exhibitionism, while few victims reported no negative feelings. Victims of frotteurism report having been fearful the perpetrator wanted to cause them harm more often than victims of exhibitionism. Furthermore, twice as many victims of frotteurism reported changes in their behavior following the incident compared with victims of exhibitionism. Of those who reported a change in behavior, both victims of frotteurism and exhibitionism were most likely to report that they became more cautious. Victims of frotteurism were much more likely to report that they began to monitor their proximity

to others and avoid crowds than victims of exhibitionism. Victims of exhibitionism, however, were much more likely to report that they began to avoid being alone compared with victims of frotteurism.

Description of male victimization. Eight men (6.8% of the male sample) reported having been the victim of a frotteuristic act and 14 men (12% of the male sample) reported having been the victim of an exhibitionistic act. Men reported having been, on average, 16 years old (range = 8-20 years) when the incident of frotteurism occurred and 19 years (range = 13-40) when the incident of exhibitionism occurred. In more than half of the cases (4/7), the perpetrator of the frotteuristic offense was female, while the majority of perpetrators of exhibitionism were male (10/14). The majority of incidents of frotteurism occurred in a train/subway station (4/7). Similarly, most of the incidents of exhibitionism also took place in public places such as a train/subway station (4/14) or on the street (4/14). All victims of frotteurism and exhibitionism described negative feelings toward the event such as feeling “disgusted,” “shocked,” or “weird.” None of the victims, however, reported the incident to authorities. The majority (6/7) of the victims of frotteurism told someone (e.g., family member or friend) about the incident while less than half (5/14) of the victims of exhibitionism told anyone about the event. Finally, almost all (7/7 of the victims of frotteurism and 13/14 of the victims of exhibitionism) reported that the incident did not change their behavior, and only one victim of exhibitionism reported any long-term consequences of the event (see Tables 1 and 2 for a complete description).

Aim 2: Bivariate Associations With Victimization Type

To facilitate comparison of victimization type, four mutually exclusive victimization groups were created and compared concerning six victim demographic characteristics and public amenity use variables. Results are shown in Table 3. The FO, EO, Both, and None groups differ significantly in gender, $\chi^2(3, n = 459) = 44.29, p < .001$, and age,¹ $F(3, 433) = 4.83, p < .01$. Specifically, analyses indicated that victims were more likely to be female and of older ages than non-victims. There were no significant differences between groups for ethnicity, SES, transportation use, or park use.

Discussion

This study is one of only a handful to have examined the incidence, characteristics, and situational variables associated with exhibitionism, and it is the first to examine the characteristics of frotteurism and the impact this offense has on victims. Overall, our results revealed three key findings. First, in terms of descriptive characteristics, we found a high lifetime prevalence rate for both frotteurism and exhibitionism with 44% ($n = 203$) of our sample reported having been victimized by one of these paraphilias at some point in their lives. Furthermore, the majority of these offenses occurred near public transportation sites. Second, more than one third of the victims of frotteurism reported long-term negative consequences as a result of the incident, such as behavior

Table 3. Sample Characteristics and Bivariate Association With Victimization.

Characteristic	Type of victimization				Test statistic (df)	Effect size	Total
	FO	EO	Both	None			
<i>n</i> (%)	52 (11.3%)	112 (24.4%)	39 (8.5%)	256 (55.8%)	44.29 (3)	.096**	459 (100%)
Gender ^a							
Female	44 (84.6%)	98 (87.5%)	39 (100%)	161 (62.9%)			342 (74.5%)
Male	8 (15.4%)	14 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	95 (37.1%)			117 (25.5%)
Current age ^b							
<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	20.69 (3.69)	20.61 (4.33)	22.33 (5.98)	19.92 (3.02)	4.83 (3)	.032*	20.40 (3.84)
Ethnicity ^a					17.28 (12)	.013	
Latino	24 (46.2%)	50 (45.5%)	18 (46.2%)	109 (42.7%)			201 (44.1%)
Caucasian	11 (21.2%)	23 (20.9%)	3 (7.7%)	62 (24.3%)			99 (21.7%)
African American	10 (19.2%)	22 (20.0%)	14 (35.9%)	38 (14.9%)			84 (18.4%)
Asian	2 (3.8%)	7 (6.4%)	1 (2.6%)	25 (9.8%)			35 (7.7%)
Other	5 (9.6%)	8 (7.3%)	3 (7.7%)	21 (8.2%)			37 (8.1%)
SES ^a					5.05 (3)	.011	
Lower	27 (51.9%)	50 (45.0%)	20 (51.3%)	97 (38.5%)			194 (42.7%)
Middle/upper	25 (48.1%)	61 (55.0%)	19 (48.7%)	155 (61.5%)			260 (57.3%)
Public transport use ^a					4.80 (3)	.011	
1 day or less	7 (13.5%)	21 (18.8%)	6 (15.8%)	63 (24.7%)			97 (21.2%)
> 1 day	45 (86.5%)	91 (81.3%)	32 (84.2%)	192 (75.3%)			360 (78.8%)
Park use ^a					0.21 (3)	.001	
Rarely	19 (36.5%)	44 (38.3%)	16 (41.0%)	99 (38.7%)			178 (38.8%)
Not rarely	33 (63.5%)	68 (60.7%)	23 (59.0%)	157 (61.3%)			281 (61.2%)

Note. Pairwise deletion used for missing data. Victimization groups are exclusive. FO = frotteurism victimization only; EO = exhibitionism victimization only;

Both = experienced both frotteurism and exhibitionism victimization; None = no victimization; SES = socioeconomic status.

^a χ^2 and ϕ^2 reported for chi-square analyses.

^bF and η^2 reported for ANOVAs.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

change and experiencing feelings of violation and disgust. As well, a smaller though still significant percentage (15%) of victims of exhibitionism reported some form of long-term negative consequence. However, few victims reported these incidences to the authorities. Finally, compared with non-victims, victims were more likely to be female and older in age at the time the survey was completed.

Approximately half of the exhibitionistic incidents reportedly occurred on a subway train or platform and in a crowded place; however, the *majority* of frotteuristic behaviors occurred in these types of areas. Specifically, more than 3 out of every 4 incidents of frotteurism occurred on a subway train or platform and 9 out of 10 occurred in a crowded place. Given the necessity of contact between the victim and the perpetrator, it is not unexpected that these behaviors would occur in a context where close proximity to strangers is the norm. These findings also likely reflect the population-dense nature of the study site as well as high rates of public transportation usage in the urban area where this study took place. In the New York metropolitan area, more than 30% of the residents use some form of public transportation to get to work, while the national average for public transportation use is a much smaller (5%; McKenzie & Rapino, 2011). Previous research examining the location of exhibitionistic crimes has been conducted in cities without a subway system. For instance, using official police reports from Lincoln, Nebraska, Bader and colleagues (2008) found that exhibitionistic assaults generally took place in parking lots or on the street. However, our results are not inconsistent with this finding. The other half of the exhibitionistic incidences generally occurred in outdoor public areas such as on the street or in a park.

Although the current study targeted college students, the reported age of first exposure was consistent with previous research (Cox, 1988; Riordan, 1999). The majority of victims of exhibitionism were young and reported their age at the time of their first exposure to be between 10 and 16. Similarly, about two thirds of the victims of frotteurism reported that they were between the ages of 10 and 19 when the assault occurred. Although, being older was a significant correlate of victimization, this is likely due to the fact that older individuals have simply had more life experiences and thus a higher likelihood of experiencing this form of victimization.

Despite their targeting of young females, there is little evidence to suggest that the sexual interests of those who commit these offenses are pedophilic in nature (Myers & Berah, 1983). It may be that girls and young women are targeted because they react differently to these behaviors. It is plausible that perpetrators believe that girls and young women may be more timid and scared and thus less likely to scream or report the incident to authorities making it less likely that the perpetrator would be detected. However, more research investigating how and why perpetrators target certain victims is needed before such conclusions can be drawn.

A significant proportion of the victims of exhibitionism and frotteurism in this study reported negative outcomes as a consequence of victimization. One third of victims of frotteurism reported that they changed their behavior by monitoring their proximity to others as a result of victimization. One participant reported, "I was angry and depressed for a long time. Now whether I'm late to some place I would rather get there late than get in a crowded bus/train." Others reported caution and the avoidance

of men when on a train or in other heavily congested public areas. Those participants who reported being victims of frotteurs reported more negative consequences than victims of exhibitionistic behavior. Specifically, victims of frotteurism were twice as likely to report feelings of personal violation and long-term negative impacts than were victims of exhibitionism. For example, one victim of frotteurism reported, "I felt violated; soon after this incident I found it hard to be around men on a train." Research on victimization suggests that as the seriousness of the violation increases, the likelihood of negative reactions also increases (Bard & Sangrey, 1986; Frieze et al., 1987). It is suspected that the contact between the victim and the perpetrator results in the victims' appraisal of higher degrees of violation for victims of frotteurism compared with victims of exhibitionism.

Despite reports of negative consequences as a result of victimization, most incidents of exhibitionism and frotteurism in our sample were *not* reported to authorities. Indeed, only a minority of individuals in our sample (<10%) indicated that they reported the incident to police. These findings are consistent with the general contact sexual assault literature, which has shown that although approximately two thirds of victims eventually disclose their assault to someone in their social network, the majority of victims do not report their assault to authorities (Golding, Siegel, Sorenson, Burnam, & Stein, 1989; Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). Similar to these findings, most victims of frotteurism and exhibitionism in our sample eventually told someone about the incident, and most commonly a family member, friend, or a significant other. Ullman and Filipas (2001) found the primary reason that victims of contact sexual assaults delay in disclosing or alternatively opt not to disclose their victimization to authorities is due to feared negative reactions. However, it is unclear whether these same findings apply to victims of non-contact sexual assaults. Some research has shown that victims of contact sexual assault consider formal sources to be less supportive and more likely to engage in victim blaming than informal social supports (Ullman, 1999; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). Therefore, it has been recommended that educational efforts should be directed at helping those in the investigations or medical fields to supportively respond to victims to increase rates of formal disclosure (Koss, 1993; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006; Zinzow & Thompson, 2011). These issues may not be as relevant to victims of non-contact sexual offenses such as frotteurism and exhibitionism. Thus, efforts directed toward victims of these types of crimes should perhaps focus on raising public awareness that these types of crimes are relatively frequent occurrences and that victims should not feel shame to talk about their victimization. In addition, victims can be made aware of the resources available to them as they may not know that such behavior is in fact a sex crime and not just a nuisance behavior.

As noted, female gender was a significant correlate of victimization and a sizable percentage of the urban female college students in our sample reported having been a victim of either exhibitionism or frotteurism during their lifetime. These rates were higher for exhibitionism than frotteurism with approximately 40% of female respondents reporting having been the victim of exhibitionism, and 25% reporting having been the victim of frotteurism at some point in their lives. Our findings for

exhibitionism are in line with those of previous studies using victim self-report (between 33% and 52%). Although previous research using samples of community sex offenders found that 11% of sex offenders reported having engaged in frotteurism (Abel et al., 1987), to date, no research has examined the prevalence of frotteurism using victim self-report (Cox, 1988; Rhoads & Borjes, 1981; Riordan, 1999). Given the exceptionally high number of victims (average = 901) that each perpetrator of frotteurism in Abel and colleagues' (1987) sample reported having, it is not altogether surprising that 25% of our sample reported having been a victim of a frotteuristic offense. Indeed, it may even be that a small number of perpetrators were responsible for many incidents of victimization in our sample.

This was one of the first studies to examine the impact of frotteurism and exhibitionism among male victims. Although the number of males reporting victimization is small, especially when compared with the rates of female victimization, some interesting findings emerged. The majority of exhibitionists were reported to be male; however, several of the perpetrators of frotteurism were reported to be female. This is in contrast to the female victims in which case the perpetrator of frotteurism was almost always a male. It is plausible that gender may play an important part in our etiological understanding of these behaviors. Interestingly, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator, all victims of both frotteurism and exhibitionism reported negative feelings following the event, indicating that males consider these acts to be a violation. Yet, no male victims in our sample reported the crime to authorities and only one victim reported any long-term consequences due to the event. This suggests that male victims may experience more barriers to disclosure or that they may view these events differently than do female victims. However, before any meaningful conclusions are drawn, more research on larger samples of male victims is needed.

There were several limitations to the current study that should be noted. First, as there has been little empirical research directed at understanding the incidence and prevalence of frotteurism and exhibitionism, we were unable to use a validated measure to examine the frequency and characteristics of these offenses. It would be beneficial if future studies could use similar measurement tools so that results could be compared and understood across samples. Second, it is possible that the participants in our sample under-reported the rate of victimization as well as the feelings associated with having been a victim. There is evidence that victims of contact sexual offenses under-report their crimes due to social stigma (Frieze et al., 1987), but it is unclear if this stigma also pertains to non-contact sexual offenses. In addition, because the questionnaire asked the participants to detail each incident of victimization, it is possible that they under-reported the extent of their victimization. Finally, use of an urban college student sample may have decreased generalizability of these findings. Although most victims of paraphilic offenses are young females, the participants in our sample may have experienced, reported, and reacted to these events in ways unique to their urban environment. In addition, the sample of males was small and thus more research with larger samples of male victims is needed before firm conclusions can be reached.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Considering that a large majority of these behaviors occur in congested public areas, preventive measures might address the issue at the environmental level. Public education campaigns (e.g., posters on subway platforms or in subway cars) may be one way to help to change the social climate by affecting the actual incidence of these events as well as the likelihood of victim disclosure and bystander mobilization. In addition, some research suggests that other situational crime prevention (SCP) measures such as increased lighting and police presence may serve to deter crimes from occurring (Farrington & Welsh, 2002; Painter, 1996; Sherman & Weisburd, 1995). SCP approaches have been shown to have a demonstrated success in preventing subway crime. Some of the SCP techniques used by the Washington, D.C., metro system to reduce crime may also function well with paraphilic offenses. La Vigne (1997) noted how public safeguards such as the closing of stairways during off-peak hours and the deliberate omission of benches and public restrooms in the Washington, D.C., metro system have helped to deflect offenders from lingering in places where crimes were most likely to occur. These efforts should also be expanded to public parks and parking lots as these are also areas with high incidences of exhibitionistic and frotteuristic crimes. According to displacement theory, if the opportunity to commit a crime is removed or prevented by changing the situation or environment, then the crime may just be moved to another location (Felson & Clarke, 1998). Ongoing research should continue to monitor the incidences of these types of crimes once public transportation campaigns are implemented to determine whether such campaigns deter or only displace crimes of frotteurism and exhibitionism to other locations.

Education could also lead to an increase in reporting frotteuristic and exhibitionistic behavior to the authorities. Research suggests that large-scale media and social campaigns, coupled with legal reforms and the growth of services available to victims of sexual assault, have played significant roles in increasing the likelihood that a woman will report a sex crime to police (Baumer, 2004). Although this research pertains to contact sexual offenses, research could be conducted to determine whether similar patterns will emerge for the reporting of non-contact sexual offenses. Given that the majority of victims are girls and young women, education efforts might be directed toward teaching this demographic to identify boundary violations or unwanted contact. In addition, educational efforts directed at the guilt or self-blame that many victims experience may mitigate long-term negative impact (Finkelhor, 2009). Ullman and Filipas (2001) encouraged education and training directed at those in the medical, mental health, and criminal justice professions to ensure that those in positions of authority respond in an empathic and non-victim blaming manner. Finally, Ahrens, Stansell, and Jennings (2010) encouraged the use of community outreach programs to help sexual assault victims locate supportive services should they decide to disclose of the event.

In conclusion, our results demonstrate that a significant percentage of women and a smaller proportion of men are victims of frotteuristic and exhibitionistic behavior, and that this behavior can result in long-term negative consequences for victims. Given the near total lack of research on frotteurism and the still limited research on

exhibitionism, this study adds to our understanding of the incidence and correlates of these offenses, as well as the victim response to these acts. It is our hope that this work, in highlighting the frequency and potential long-term impact of these so-called “nuisance” offenses, incites further research into the etiology and treatment of these behaviors. In addition, it is our hope that this work will help guide criminal justice system response in the development of situational or other preventive measures.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. Post hoc comparisons for using the Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test indicated that the mean age for the Both group ($M = 22.33$, $SD = 5.98$) was significantly different from the None group ($M = 19.92$, $SD = 3.02$). There were no other significant differences between groups.

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