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Editorial

Violence in America: A Public Health Emergency

Time to Bite the Bullet Back

Violence, according to one dictionary, is defined as "(1) exertion of any physical force so as to injure or abuse, (2) injury by or as if by distortion, infringement, or profanation, (3) intense, turbulent and often destructive action, or force." In his book *Powershift* Alvin Toffler identifies violence as the threat of violence as one of the three fundamental sources of all human power, the other two being money and knowledge. Toffler convincingly argues that these power sources influence every person and all groups including government. Of the three, violence is the lowest form of power because it can only be used to punish. Knowledge and money are far more versatile and can be used in an infinite variety of positive as well as negative or manipulative ways.¹ The violence referred to in this issue of *JAMA* is the interpersonal kind rather than such types as war or that produced by forces of nature.

Response to JAMA's Call for Papers

The response to a call for papers on any aspects of interpersonal violence, made last August on behalf of the editors of *JAMA* and all nine AMA specialty journals, was extraordinary.² *JAMA* alone received 131 topical papers for peer review and consideration. Of these, 12 appear in this issue; one relevant paper has been published in each *JAMA* since May 5, and another cluster of papers emphasizing domestic violence will appear in the June 17 issue. The specialty journals also received a great many manuscripts and published from one to 12 articles each in their June issues, in total 59. This outpouring of manuscripts not only confirms what we all know—that violence in the United States is a major issue—it underscores that violence is also a medical/public health issue, which is keenly felt by innumerable physicians and subject to medical/epidemiologic research.

The 1985 Surgeon General's Conference

One of us (C.E.K.) convened the Surgeon General's Workshop on Violence and Public Health at Leesburg, Va, in Oc-

tober 1985. The recommendations of the 150 assembled experts were reported by the Surgeon General to the Senate Committee on Children, Families, Drugs and Alcoholism.³ Regional, state, and local workshops followed to create a new awareness of the possibilities for understanding and dealing with violence provided by multidisciplinary approaches. Pediatricians, psychiatrists, and other physicians, along with administrators and the public, were challenged to consider violence as a public health issue and to seek out its root causes and best treatments.

Seven years later, violence in our country has not diminished; instead, violence makes constant headlines. In fact, the incidence of violence has increased, especially among some groups.

- One million US inhabitants die prematurely each year as the result of intentional homicide or suicide.
- From 1960 to 1980 the population of the United States increased by 26%; the homicide rate due to guns increased 160%.
- The leading cause of death in both black and white teenage boys in America is gunshot wounds.
- The number of deaths due to firearms is seven times greater in the United States than in the United Kingdom.
- The death rate from trauma in France is 66% that of the US rate, and the rate in the Netherlands is only 39%.
- Armed assaults in California schools are on a sharp increase.
- One third of students in 31 Illinois high schools have brought some weapons to school for self-defense.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among children and adolescents in the United States, a rate that has doubled in the last 30 years, the increase almost solely due to firearms.
- Of the fatalities in the 1992 Los Angeles, Calif, riots, the vast majority occurred as a result of gunshot wounds.

New Research in Firearm Fatalities/Deaths by Gunshot Wounds

- In this issue of *JAMA*, Fingerhut and colleagues^{4,5} document extraordinarily high firearm fatality rates in many core metropolitan counties, with rates for black male and female teenagers increasing sharply in recent years to reach alarming levels.

From the National Safe Kids Campaign, Washington, DC (Dr Kropp) and the Scientific Publications Group, American Medical Association, Chicago, Ill (Dr Lundberg).

Reprint requests to Scientific Publications Group, American Medical Association, 515 N State St, Chicago, Ill 60610 (Dr Lundberg).

• Saltzman et al¹⁰ demonstrate that firearm-associated family and intimate assaults in Atlanta, Ga, are 12 times more likely to result in death than nonfirearm assaults.

• Weil and Hemenway⁷ document in a national sample that large numbers of handgun owners keep their guns loaded in their homes and that many loaded weapons are not locked up, even if children are in the household. This dangerous behavior seemed not to be altered with training.

• Callahan and Rivara⁸ show that one third of Seattle, Wash, high school students report easy access to handguns, 6% own a handgun and 6% of males have carried a handgun to school.

These research findings, together with other articles in these issues, and an array of related data paint a grotesque picture of a society steeped in violence, especially by firearms, and so numbed by the ubiquity and prevalence of violence as to seemingly accept it as inevitable. We do not agree. No society, including ours, need be permeated by firearm homicide. This is unacceptable. Prior solutions have not succeeded. New approaches are required. Two such are included in adjacent commentaries.^{3,11}

What Now?

Regarding violence in our society as purely a sociologic matter, or one of law enforcement, has led to unmitigated failure. It is time to test further whether violence can be amenable to medical/public health interventions.

We believe violence in America to be a public health emergency, largely unresponsive to methods thus far used in its control. The solutions are very complex, but possible. We urge all persons in authority to take the following actions:

1. Support additional major research on the causes, prevention, and cures of violence.
2. Stimulate the education of all Americans about what is now known and what can now be done to address this emergency.
3. Demand legislation intended to reverse the upward trend of firearm injuries and deaths, the end result that is most out of control.

Proposed New Legislation

Automobiles, intended to be a means of transportation, when used inappropriately frequently become lethal weapons and kill human beings. Firearms are intended to be lethal weapons. When used inappropriately in peace time, they, too, frequently kill human beings.

In the state of Texas in 1980, deaths from firearms, for the first time in many decades, surpassed deaths from motor vehicles, 3443 to 3000, respectively, as the leading cause of injury mortality.¹² In the 1970s and 1980s, defining motor vehicle casualties as a public health issue and initiating intervention activity succeeded in reversing the upward trend of such fatalities, without banning or confiscating automobiles. We believe that comparable results can be anticipated, by similarly treating gunshot wound casualties. But the decline in fatalities will not occur overnight and will require a major coordinated effort.

The right to own or operate a motor vehicle carries with it certain responsibilities. Among them are that the operator meet certain criteria:

- be a certain age and physical/mental condition;
- be identifiable as owner or operator;
- be able to demonstrate knowledge and skill in operating the motor vehicle safely;
- be subject to performance monitoring; and
- be willing to forfeit the right to operate or own a vehicle if these responsibilities are abrogated.

We propose that the right to own or operate a firearm carries with it the same prior conditions, namely, that the owner and operator of a firearm also meet specific criteria:

- be of a certain age and physical/mental condition;
- be required to demonstrate knowledge and skill in proper use of that firearm;
- be monitored in the firearm's use; and
- forfeit the right to own or operate the firearm if these conditions are abrogated.

These restrictions should apply uniformly to all firearms and to all US inhabitants across all states through a system of gun registration and licensing for gun owners and users. No grandfather clauses should be allowed.

Anticipated Resistance and Support

We recognize the enormous amount of change and expense necessary to effect any major proposal such as this having to do with guns. But we believe that anything short of this proposed registration and licensing for gun ownership and use would be too little action to recommend at this time. We also believe that there is great public sentiment in support of this proposal.

A vast lobby of special interests supports the utterly unfettered ownership and use of firearms. It is certain vigorously to oppose this proposal at any cost. One of us (G.D.L.) has met with representatives of the National Rifle Association in Washington, DC, to discuss ways to counter the acknowledged epidemic of firearm homicides. We invite that organization and any other dissenting persons and groups, to make their own rational proposals for countering this acute public health emergency of injuries and homicides, especially those occurring in young black men and women. We can wait no longer to act.

C. Everett Koop, MD
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Guns, Drugs Threaten to Raise Public Health Problem of Violence to Epidemic

AS LETHAL weapons proliferate, this final decade of the 20th century is likely to be characterized by ever-increasing violence that will supplant drugs as a major public health problem and social concern.

This prediction comes from Herbert Kleber, MD, professor of psychiatry and director, Division on Substance Abuse, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, NY.

In support of this position, Kleber notes that while there is little question that drug use and violence are intertwined, the use of drugs is declining. "It may not be declining as fast as we would like or in every sector, but it is declining. There is a sense that things have begun to move in the right direction."

Increased Violence Levels

"Despite this, we are seeing increased levels of violence and many of these violent episodes have nothing at all to do with drugs," says Kleber. He notes recent news reports of indiscriminate violence in schools and on the highways.

In an interview, Kleber says that "drugs are no longer as socially acceptable as they were in the 1960s. Yet, at the same time, dealers will be fighting over a shrinking drug market."

This is occurring just as much more lethal handguns are becoming readily available. As Kleber puts it, "What has changed is not just availability, although certainly weapons are more available. What has changed is the availability of better weapons."

But availability is just one factor in the violence equation, says Kleber. A second factor is the increased lethality of the weapons that are available. "Certainly the 'Saturday night specials' were cheap and available, but they were also inaccurate. These newer weapons tend to be easier to use, more accurate, and can deliver more firepower than most weapons previously in circulation. They are far more lethal and require little or no experience to use effectively," he says.

Kleber recalls that he recently fired one of these modern handguns for the first time in his life. "On a 15-yard practice range with a 9-mm repeating pistol, I was able to do a very good job at

reaching the target. Not a bull's-eye every time, but very close," he says. "Considering I had never used a handgun and am not that well coordinated, I was able to do very well. One conclusion I draw from this experience is that the current technical sophistication of these weapons makes it much easier to kill somebody."

The weapons that Kleber is concerned about, such as the 9-mm repeating pistol he tested, are untouched by the present firearms legislation, he says. This deals with imported assault-type weapons such as Uzis, not with domestic handguns. In the past decade, repeating or semiautomatic pistols have largely replaced the standard six-cartridge revolver in handgun popularity, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. The modern repeating pistol can hold 10, 15, or even more cartridges. In effect, it is a handheld machine gun.

A third factor is that adolescents and young adults seem to be more ready to turn to these weapons as a way of resolving quarrels that formerly would have been dealt with by fists or, at the very worst, with knives. "There is a tendency today to solve every quarrel with guns," Kleber says.

Respect No Life

Finally, says Kleber, "Many of these individuals have no respect for their own lives, let alone the lives of others. To them, life is cheap, even their own life. They often have no vision of the future. If their life gets snuffed out, they don't feel they have lost a lot."

Kleber rejects the view that this is entirely the fault of society. After all, he says, the majority of those growing up in city slums don't use drugs or guns. "It's a slander to say young black males don't care about themselves or others, when we're really talking about a minority," he says.

Kleber, a psychiatrist with a substance abuse treatment background—he was deputy director of the Office of National Drug Policy, Washington, DC—notes the strong relationship between violence and drugs.

He cites four situations:

- The violence related to drug distribution, such as the turf battles mentioned earlier.

• The violence related to acquisition, where the addict engages in violence to get the funds to support his or her drug habit.

• The violence associated with the pharmacologic effects of a drug. Drugs such as cocaine, crack, angel dust, and the amphetamines produce irritability, paranoia, and need for action and are more likely to be associated with violence, including domestic violence, than are sedating drugs such as heroin. "This is independent of acquisition," Kleber says.

• Finally, there is indirect drug-related violence, such as auto crashes and the birth of "crack babies" to drug-addicted mothers. These elements change, depending on the level of drug use and the type of drug involved, he says.

"So," Kleber says, "if you decrease the amount of cocaine, you may not decrease the distributive violence, but you should decrease the acquisitive and pharmacologic violence because fewer people are using it." It's a complicated issue, Kleber concedes, adding: "It's a combination of gun and person, to be sure."

Kleber is reluctant to be more specific about gun control. "It's not my area of expertise," he says.

But, he adds, "I don't know if stricter gun control laws would in fact reduce gun-related violence."

As regards drugs, there are two areas of attack: Reduce the supply and increase funds for treatment. "But providing adequate funds for drug abuse treatment has been a bipartisan failure," he says. "The Republican administration has not requested adequate funds and the Democrat-controlled Congress has provided even less than the administration asked for." In the current year's budget, Congress cut by one third the funds the administration had requested for treatment.

"Sometimes it's easier to reduce access than it is to change the person," Kleber says. "Remember, we haven't changed teenagers, yet we have decreased the number of automobile deaths in this age group simply by increasing the legal drinking age."

—by Charles Marwick

CDC Investigators Explore New Territory in Aftermath of Unrest in Los Angeles

GOING WHERE apparently no epidemiologists have ever gone before, a team from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Ga, has taken the public health approach to the most extreme outbreak in the ongoing epidemic of urban violence.

Seven investigators descended on Los Angeles, Calif, as the riots there ebbed. "Our mission," says Mark Rosenberg, MD, "was first to assess the injuries that occurred as a result of the disturbance and second to work with the community to help them develop ways of starting and supporting long-term approaches to youth violence prevention."

Violence, says Rosenberg, who is director of the Injury Control Division at the CDC, should be susceptible to the same public health approach used to eradicate smallpox and reduce the incidence of heart disease—epidemiologic research to better define risk factors, followed by the development, implementation, and evaluation of interventions.

Need to Act Quickly

As with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), there is no magic bullet vaccine, and "it is clear we need to change behaviors to make an impact on preventing its spread," says Rosenberg. And, as with AIDS, the situation is so urgent that "we need to get out and try a variety of programs and approaches, and try them quickly," he says, even before it is known which if any will actually work.

Two approaches in particular are being studied in pilot programs. One tries to teach young people not to be violent. The second involves intervening with victims of violence while they still are in the emergency department.

"We've identified some programs we think will work, and want to share these with affected communities throughout the country," says Rosenberg. "It's very important to tell people that there are things they can do."

That very notion, he says, "in and of itself is important in giving people a sense that they're not powerless, that they do not have to be passive victims, and that they can make a difference in their communities, their families, and their own lives."

The theory behind emergency department intervention, says Rosenberg, is that people who come in with injuries from violence are frequently perpetrators of violence. They may go back out

on the street to "get even," or else get involved in the same types of activities that resulted in their initial injury.

Prevention in the Hospital

"If you can get to these people in the hospital when they have an injury, you may be able to teach them about the risks certain activities entail, about ways to resolve disputes without violence, or even the wisdom of walking away from fights," says Rosenberg. "The theory is compelling, and we'd like to try it."

Some emergency medicine physicians are rather skeptical, though.

"I've gotten to the point that I don't even bother asking what happened because I never get straight answers anyway," says neurosurgeon Leslie Geiger, MD. Geiger practices at Daniel Freeman Hospital in Inglewood, Calif, and helped patch up Reginal Denny, the truck driver whose near-fatal beating during the first hours of rioting in Los Angeles was televised worldwide.

Bruce Bulias, MD, who works in the emergency department at Daniel Freeman, says such a program "on the surface sounds nice," and might work "in a select group, maybe." But he says that "we have enough work down here just dealing with violence after it occurs, without worrying about what's going on out there and trying to prevent it."

Rosenberg says he believes that intervention in the emergency department may work. But he acknowledges that evaluation of such programs' effectiveness can be even harder than getting them up and running.

"You have to get it in place and done well so it has a chance of succeeding. You have to reach enough people so it might have a measurable impact. And you have to stick with the program and its evaluation long enough to detect the impact, if it has one," he says.

Unfortunately, Rosenberg concedes, such evaluation "may take many years. And we don't think we have time to wait."

Few Programs, Fewer Resources

Yet, while Rosenberg stresses the need for quick action, in Los Angeles right now there do not seem to be the resources "to get anything implemented quickly," says Mariella Hammett, MPH, a CDC health scientist. And for now, there does not seem to be all that much to implement.

After meeting with health leaders,

public health researchers, state and local health officials, criminal justice representatives, community-based organizations, and even gang leaders and members, Hammett says, "we didn't really come up with a whole lot as far as what could be done right now."

What they did come up with, she says, "is a better understanding of the problems in Los Angeles and what we need to be thinking about if we're interested in reducing violence."

That might entail providing services to children at risk, and not just the recreational activities traditionally offered to occupy otherwise idle young hands. Instead, "more broad-based programs," including tutoring after school, mentoring by successful adults in the community, and self-esteem-building support systems for both children and parents are needed, Hammett says.

Mentoring programs seem particularly, though for reasons unknown, to decrease violent behavior, says Alex E. Crosby, MD, a CDC epidemiologist who also went to Los Angeles. "That's not necessarily medical care, but it is care for the community."

How to Handle Hopelessness

Other aspects are much harder to get a handle on. "Unemployment, racism, hopelessness, exposure to violence—all those things are directly associated with violent behavior," says Hammett.

She notes that unemployment, for example, is not in the purview of public health. Yet, she adds, "it's really hard to implement anything without dealing with problems such as these. All we can do at this point is to continue to gain a better understanding of the community, their perception of what they feel their problems are, and come together to talk about how to deal with those things."

Reed Tuckson, MD, president of the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science in the Watts area of Los Angeles, says: "You must look at what occurred here from every element of life."

Tuckson says this extends "from the way people make a living to their education to how our institutions work and don't work—the level of respect and dignity as human beings. The causes relate very fundamentally to a community of people who absolutely feel hopeless and totally frustrated because of a history of insult, racism, disenfranchisement, and unfair financial practices of banks and

other entrepreneurial institutions. They're frustrated simply trying to get through each day."

Inadequate health care contributes to the frustration, he adds. Both Drew and the Martin Luther King Medical Center were created in response to Los Angeles' 1965 Watts riots. They are "on the front lines in the health care fight, taking care of a population that is overwhelmingly uninsured in a hospital that receives grossly inadequate support," Tuckson says. "The hospital asked to take care of the people with the highest burdens of disease is given fewer resources than probably any other in the country. There is a fundamental incompatibility there."

He adds that "it kills me when officials talk about how we have the finest health care system in the world, and that we don't want a Canadian system where people have to wait for certain procedures, as if people are not waiting in lines now for everything."

Tuckson says many of the urban poor "lack a concept of the possibility of a meaningful future, any sense that things will be better, that there's any chance for you to make it, and any chance that anybody's going to give a damn whether you make it or not."

Tuckson also cites the cumulative "psychic consequences" of violence among people in the community, and against them by police: "Each of those episodes has a consequence, and adds to the frustration."

"Put all that stuff together and let it simmer over time, and it doesn't matter much what the incident is that triggers unrest," he says. "Tensions are so high that the trigger is pulled by itself."

True Community Leaders Are Key

Key to addressing such problems, says Hammett, is finding true community leaders, not so much representatives of community organizations but "people who live directly in the communities affected by violence who are respected by that community. We have to figure out who they are, and how we can involve them."

One such leader, she suggests, is Paul Guidry, MD, who was born, raised, and is practicing in South Central Los Angeles—the epicenter of the recent unrest.

With a tenuous truce among gangs in the aftermath of the unrest, Guidry sees "an opportunity here with this window in history to markedly improve our whole country, a chance for the ones left out of our country's expansion to come back on board." He estimates that there are 1 million gang members throughout Cal-

ifornia, all disenfranchised members of society who are "right now at this point in time all reaching out, wanting to just be able to live the American dream."

However, this opportunity will be wasted, Guidry predicts, if the approach to solutions is decided by outsiders and implemented from the top down.

So far, says Guidry, "the same people who got us into this mess in the first place are the ones being allowed to make the decisions on how we keep it from happening again. Those people have not sat down with the people on the street to reach common ground. They just assume they know the problem. If they had known the problem in the beginning we wouldn't be where we are now."

If "we don't get any grassroots, from-the-bottom-up type structuring, the anger is going to boil up again, but it's going to lash out well outside the affected communities," Guidry cautions.

"This [riot] was a very small tremor" compared to what could occur next time, he says. "You've got people who have no fear. They've been shot multiple times, lived under poverty, had no hope. They're not afraid of the National Guard or the military or the police, and they're very well armed."

Riots, or revolt, as he terms the recent unrest, "are very negative and very destructive. It is a lot easier, just like with preventive medicine, to prevent things than to come in and try to get them cured."

Military Attack?

Richard Wigod, MD, president of the Los Angeles County Medical Association, says he advocates "a military attack" on areas with high degrees of crime and gang violence. "I don't see how society can tolerate much more of this kind of thing. We need to somehow make a sweep through those neighborhoods, take all the weapons we can find, and take some of these people off the streets somehow."

While uncomfortable with the possible trampling of constitutional rights, "what's happening is chaos," says Wigod.

Such an approach, says Guidry, would be like "pouring gasoline on a fire. Even if you cleaned everything up and took every gun away, you still haven't improved the root cause problems."

"That siege mentality, treating us in these communities not as citizens but as an enemy such as Iraq, that will never cure anything. It wouldn't take long to buy more guns, and we would be in the same mess again, only with the animosity even more bitter."

"The solution is not quasi-military. The solution is equal opportunity."

Tuckson also says that the "good guys/bad guys" discussion "drives me nuts. It is horrible to riot and loot, but you'll have a hard time trying to understand it if you write them off as bad people and take them to jail."

"To deny that there are legitimate reasons for the unrest does not help in terms of treatment and intervention."

Guidry outlines six principles for addressing the situation:

1. Confronting what he sees as "blatant racism" of the law enforcement and judicial systems.
2. Putting the needs of US citizens before those of other countries.
3. Rebuilding the infrastructure of American cities.
4. Investing in education, jobs, and industry so those in lower socioeconomic classes are "not forced into the drug and crime trades as their only option."
5. Establishing health care "for the masses, so one's medical prognosis does not have to be worse for poor blacks."
6. Getting the news media to stop negative stereotypical portrayals of minorities.

Guidry says that the resources to be allocated for rebuilding Los Angeles might even be adequate "so long as they go from the bottom up, and not from the top down. With the trickle-down theory we've been dealing with since the early 1980s, nothing has trickled down, it's a drought at the bottom."

'Opportunity for Medicine'

Tuckson says that all of medicine "now has the opportunity, the responsibility, and the obligation to make use of our networks and collaborations as health professionals facing these crises. Those trying to fight on the front lines need the help of those who have access to resources."

At some point, he says, "we have to say to each other that, while we're training plastic surgeons to go work on Rodeo Drive, maybe we can find a way to be of some assistance to those trying to work on the front lines in places where the rest of us really don't want to go."

That, says Tuckson, "is a moral commitment that we have as part of the profession."

Some such help is already provided through collaborations with the University of California at Los Angeles. Talks are under way with several federal agencies, and Tuckson says he has received an "astounding" array of calls from people throughout American medicine, yet he warns against any "Pollyanna sense that it's going to happen magically. It's going to be very hard."

—by Paul Cotton

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From the Assistant Secretary for Health, US Public Health Service

Reducing Youth Violence—The Physician's Role: The United States set a new murder record in 1991, for the second year in a row. The estimated 24 020 slayings recorded last year topped by about 2.5% the 23 440 murders in 1990. In the absence of effective intervention, law enforcement experts expect this tragic trend to continue, as a recent Senate Judiciary Committee report put it, "for many years to come."

While not the whole story, easy access to firearms figures prominently in the growing violence, and our children and young people are being hit particularly hard. Homicide is the second leading cause of juvenile injury deaths—second only to motor vehicle crashes. And gunshot wound is the cause of death about 75% of the time.

Suicide is the third-ranked cause of injury death in children and a serious public health concern, with rates for persons aged 15 to 19 years nearly doubling over the past two decades, from 5.9 suicides per 100 000 youngsters in 1970 to 11.3 per 100 000 in 1988. Guns were used in 61.2% of the suicides in 1988.

A recent Justice Department report, "Teenage Victims," noted that teenagers are more likely than adults to be victims of violent crime. Over the period of 1985 through 1988, a national crime survey reported an average of 67 of 1000 teens, compared with 26 of 1000 adults, were victims of rape, robbery, or assault each year. Teenaged victims described their attacker as an acquaintance almost twice as often as adults did.

For many children today, violence is not a drama that unfolds on television or film. It's a reality that they have known since birth and witness routinely on the streets of their neighborhoods and even in their own homes. Often, they are the victims. In 1986, nearly 4000 children younger than 19 years died of gunshot wounds, accounting for 12% of all deaths in that age group. If the cause was polio or untreated appendicitis, physicians would be taking action. Is there not a role for physicians in this epidemic?

As a native of a western state and, now, a resident of the Washington, DC, area, I can appreciate how different backgrounds and conditions foster different views of the violence problem and the part that guns play in it. As a physician, I have yet another view: I see, in youth violence, an epidemic as frustrating as the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and as debilitating as such past scourges as polio. I see a do-

mestic destruction of more young people than died in many of our military actions. And I see a great need for physicians and other citizens to find areas of agreement on how to fight this enemy.

Those areas of accord do exist. Few would claim, for example, that minors should have access to loaded weapons at home or that they should be permitted to carry them on the streets or to take them to school. We should all be able to agree that children and firearms are a dangerous and impermissible combination. That is why our health objectives for the year 2000 call for reducing the inappropriate storage of firearms, weapon-carrying by adolescents, and weapon-related injury deaths in this country.



Can we find other niches of agreement? As individual physicians, we certainly can emphasize to parents and to our young patients the risks of firearms. Perhaps questions about home access to a handgun can have as much predictive value as questions about alcohol and tobacco use.

Louis W. Sullivan, MD, secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services, has urged physicians to foster a culture of character that emphasizes the nonviolent resolution of conflict, personal responsibility, and community service.

Fighting is a prominent cause of injuries among high school students and often precedes homicides.

Recognizing that adolescents, particularly boys, are prone to this kind of violent behavior, we can offer counsel on the difference between standing up for oneself and being foolhardy. We can speak up for the old virtues of counting to 10, of staying sober and under con-

trol, and of walking away from dangerous situations.

We can push to raise the penalties for carrying weapons on school grounds, and we can speak out to make sure that liquor stores and bars are not selling alcoholic beverages to underage juveniles.

We can try to bridge opposing points of view and seek areas of agreement. For example, some who reject the National Rifle Association's opposition to all gun control can support its emphasis on gun safety.

More than 1 million children are abused and neglected in the United States each year. Abuse in the home, a serious problem in and of itself, quite often propels children into the streets, where violence is both a danger and a temptation.

Physicians and other health professionals—who see the addicted mother-to-be, the battered child, and the teen-aged victim—sometimes are uniquely situated to intervene. The American Medical Association's new Physicians' Campaign Against Family Violence will help them do so and may reduce by-product youth violence, as well.

We also must do our best to expand horizons. In Annapolis, Md, last summer, the city's housing authority teamed up with students from St Mary's College and the Marine Trades Association of Maryland in a program called "Sail Into Life" that brought together the sailing crowd and youngsters from the public housing projects.

Every Wednesday, the kids were taken out on the 50-foot *Gem*. Under the watchful eye of the boat's skipper and the volunteer students from St Mary's, these children learned about sailing, teamwork, the Chesapeake Bay, and much more—including themselves. The young sailors also took swimming and drown-proofing lessons, completed a boating safety course, and visited boat yards.

This program—and others that inspire and fire up children—can help them realize that there are other things out there to reach for besides a gun.

—by James Mason, MD, DrPH
Assistant Secretary for Health
Head of the Public Health Service
and Robert Proctor
Writer, Office of Communications

Editor's Note: Inquiries may be directed to Bill Grogg, Office of Communications, US Public Health Service, Room 719-H, 200 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20201; telephone (202) 245-6867.

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—by Paul Cotton

From the Centers for Disease Control

Leads From the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
Atlanta, Ga

Firearm-Related Deaths—Louisiana and Texas, 1970-1990

MMWR. 1992;41:213-215, 221

IN 1990, firearm-related injuries surpassed motor-vehicle crashes as the leading cause of death from injuries in both Louisiana and Texas, and from 1979 through 1987, these states ranked third and fifth, respectively, for age-adjusted firearm-related death rates.¹ (In both state analyses, a firearm-related death was defined as any death with the underlying cause listed as codes E922.0-E922.9, E955.0-E955.4, E965.0-E965.4, E970, or E985.0-E985.4 in the International Classification of Diseases [ICD], 8th and 9th revisions; a motor-vehicle-related death was defined as any death with the underlying cause listed as codes E810.0-E825.0 in the ICD, 8th and 9th revisions.)

Because firearm-related injuries are a major cause of death in Louisiana and Texas, the Louisiana Disability Prevention Program, Louisiana Office of Public Health, and the Injury Control Program, Epidemiology Division, Texas Department of Health, used death certificates to examine patterns in firearm-related mortality. This report summarizes the analysis of death certificate data for firearm-related mortality in these two states.

Louisiana

In Louisiana, firearm-related deaths have been the leading cause of injury-related mortality for 4 of the 5 years from 1986 through 1990. From 1970 through 1990, motor-vehicle-related death rates declined by 30% (from 32.4 per 100 000 population to 22.6 per 100 000) while the rate for firearm-related deaths fluctuated. Firearm-related death rates—including homicide and suicide—increased most for black males (42%) from 1970 through 1990 (from 54.1 per 100 000 to 76.7 per 100 000). Although the overall firearm-related death rate did not increase as dramatically among white males (16% during 1970-1990), the firearm-related suicide rate for white males increased 47%.

From 1985 through 1990, 5647 persons died as a result of firearm-related injuries; of these deaths, 2677 (47%) were

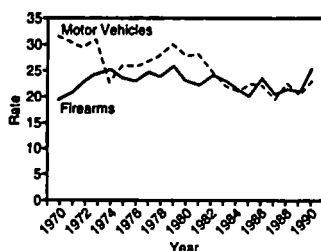


Fig 1.—Rates of firearm- and motor-vehicle-related deaths*—Louisiana, 1970-1990.

suicides, 2591 (46%) were homicides, 321 (6%) were classified as unintentional, 19 (0.3%) resulted from legal intervention, and 39 (0.7%) were of unknown intent. In 1990, males were 5.5 times more likely to die from firearm-related injuries than were females (43.7 per 100 000 and 7.9 per 100 000, respectively); blacks were 2.2 times more likely to die from firearm-related injuries than were whites.

Texas

During 1990, firearm-related injuries surpassed motor-vehicle crashes as the leading cause of injury-related mortality in Texas,² the first state to report this pattern to CDC. From 1964 through 1989, deaths resulting from motor-vehicle crashes had been the leading cause of injury mortality in Texas. Although death rates for motor-vehicle crashes decreased by 42% from 1970 through 1990 (from 32.5 per 100 000 population to 18.8 per 100 000), the firearm-related death rate remained relatively constant.

From 1985 through 1990, 19 184 persons died from firearm-related injuries; of these deaths, 9286 (48%) were suicides, 8581 (45%) were homicides, 1028 (5%) were classified as unintentional, 114 (1%) resulted from legal intervention, and 175 (1%) were of unknown intent.³ Males were five times more likely to die from firearm-related injuries than were females (31.3 per 100 000 versus 6.2 per 100 000). Age-specific rates were

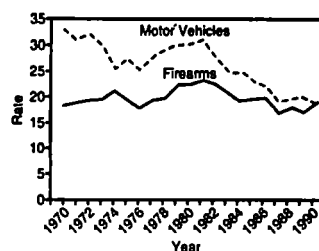


Fig 2.—Rates of firearm- and motor-vehicle-related deaths*—Texas, 1970-1990.

highest for persons aged 25-34 years (28.9 per 100 000). Blacks were 1.9 times more likely to die from firearm-related injuries than were Hispanics or whites (32.3 per 100 000 versus 17.4 per 100 000 and 16.8 per 100 000, respectively). The firearm-related death rate was highest for black males (57.1 per 100 000).

Reported by: DW Lawrence, MPH, EAG Hooten, MSPH, JR Mathison, MD, Disability Prevention Program; LJ Hebert, MD, Office of Public Health, Louisiana Dept of Health and Hospitals; D Zane, MS, MJ Preece, Injury Control Program; P Patterson, MD, Family Health Svcs; E Svenkerud, MD, Epidemiology Div, D Perrotta, PhD, Environmental Epidemiologist, Texas Dept of Health, Div of Injury Control, National Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control, CDC.

CDC Editorial Note: The trends that led to the emergence of firearm-related deaths as the leading cause of injury-related mortality in Louisiana and Texas are similar to those for the United States. Since 1966, the death rate for motor-vehicle crashes (measured as deaths per 100 million vehicle miles of travel) in the United States has declined substantially⁴ and has been associated with a combination of interventions, including the construction of safer highways and vehicles, reductions in the levels of alcohol-impaired driving, lower speed limits, and increased use of safety belts, motorcycle helmets, and child passenger restraint devices.⁴ In comparison, during 1970-1990, the firearm-related death rate has fluctuated; however, these rates have been higher than at any time since the 1920s.⁵

States, local systems have strategies to prevent and deaths. many of these restrict, or re firearms in the specific location the District of chase, sale, to handguns by this regulation ated with a 2 related homicide arm-related in 47 lives saved and localities, from being caused in Massachusetts created the p laws reduced t related homicide tems, methods from bringing t include random

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MMWR. 1992; DURING 1989 caused an estimate and more than United States.¹ mon form of among adolescence of injuries and group.² This reported data ab incidence of physical school students ing 1990.

The national Behavior Survey of the Youth Surveillance System measures the health-risk behavior through representative and local survey a three-stage as representative in grades 9-12 in District of Columbia Virgin Islands. "During the past times have you in which you or fighting were i treated by a doctor? "Who did you f you were in a j report, incidence ber of times per

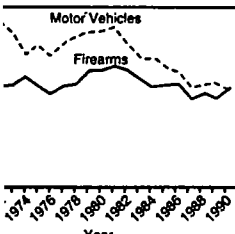


Figure 1. Rates of firearm- and motor-vehicle-related deaths, 1970-1990.

For persons aged 25-34 years (100,000). Blacks were 1.9 times more likely to die from firearm-related deaths than were Hispanics or whites (100,000 versus 17.4 per 100,000, respectively). The overall death rate was highest for males (57.1 per 100,000).

DW Lawrence, MPH, EAG Hooten, MD, Office of Public Health, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals; D Zane, MS, MD, Director, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; P Patterson, MD, Family Medicine, University of Texas; E Svenskerud, MD, Epidemiology Div, Division of Injury Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC.

Editorial Note: The trends that led to the emergence of firearm-related deaths as the leading cause of injury-related mortality in Louisiana and Texas are similar to those for the United States. In the United States, the death rate for motor-vehicle deaths (measured as deaths per 100,000 vehicle miles of travel) in the United States has declined substantially¹ and is associated with a combination of interventions, including the construction of safer highways and vehicles, the implementation of alcohol-impaired driving laws, and increased use of seat belts, motorcycle helmets, and passenger restraint devices.² In Louisiana, during 1970-1990, the firearm death rate has fluctuated; these rates have been higher than in any time since the 1920s.³

States, local communities, and school systems have employed a variety of strategies to prevent firearm-related injuries and deaths. An important element of many of these strategies is to inhibit, restrict, or reduce immediate access to firearms in the general population or in specific locations. For example, in 1976, the District of Columbia banned the purchase, sale, transfer, or possession of handguns by civilians. An evaluation of this regulation found that it was associated with a 25% reduction in firearm-related homicides, a 23% reduction in firearm-related suicides, and an estimated 47 lives saved per year.⁴ In some states and localities, firearms are prohibited from being carried in public; in Detroit and in Massachusetts, legislation that increased the penalty for violating such laws reduced the occurrence of firearm-related homicides.^{5,6} In some school systems, methods used to deter students from bringing firearms on school grounds include random locker searches, walk-

throughs with metal detectors, and policies requiring that students use only clear plastic or mesh bookbags so that weapons cannot be readily hidden.⁷ Community efforts to prevent firearm-related deaths should use other measures in addition to reducing access to firearms. Suicide may be prevented by improved identification and referral of persons at increased risk (e.g., those suffering from clinical depression or who exhibit suicidal behavior). Efforts to prevent homicide may include reduction of the incidence of interpersonal violence through behavioral and other interventions (e.g., conflict resolution training and mentoring programs).⁸ The reduction of mortality from motor-vehicle crashes in Louisiana and Texas illustrates how public health approaches can be used to control and prevent injury. The application of such approaches to firearm-related injury holds the potential for decreasing the morbidity and mortality associated with this problem.

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Physical Fighting Among High School Students—United States, 1990

MMWR. 1992;41:91-94
DURING 1986, interpersonal violence caused an estimated 2.2 million injuries and more than 20,000 deaths in the United States.^{1,2} Physical fighting, a common form of interpersonal violence among adolescents, is a prominent cause of injuries and homicides in this age group.³ This article presents self-reported data about the prevalence and incidence of physical fighting among high school students in the United States during 1990.

The national school-based Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a component of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, which periodically measures the prevalence of priority health-risk behaviors among youth through representative national, state, and local surveys.⁴ The 1990 YRBS used a three-stage sample design to obtain a representative sample of 11,631 students in grades 9-12 in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Students were asked: "During the past 30 days, how many times have you been in a physical fight in which you or the person you were fighting were injured and had to be treated by a doctor or a nurse?" and "Who did you fight with the last time you were in a physical fight?" In this report, incidence rates describe the number of times per 100 students that physical

TABLE 1. Percentage of high school students who reported being in a physical fight,* by race/ethnicity† and sex—United States, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1990§

Race/Ethnicity	Male		Female		Total	
	%	(95% CI)	%	(95% CI)	%	(95% CI)
White	10.1	(8.3-12.0)	2.4	(1.9-2.9)	6.2	(5.3-7.2)
Black	17.6	(13.8-21.6)	7.7	(4.9-10.4)	12.5	(9.5-15.5)
Hispanic	16.2	(12.4-20.0)	4.4	(2.1-6.7)	10.0	(7.7-12.2)
Total	12.2	(10.6-13.8)	3.6	(3.0-4.3)	7.9	(7.0-8.9)

*During the 30 days preceding the survey, in which at least one person required treatment by a doctor or nurse.
†Numbers from racial/ethnic groups other than white and black were too small to provide separate estimates; however, the totals include all races.
§Unweighted sample size=11,631 students.
¶Confidence interval.

fighting occurred during the 30-day period. (The incidence rate was calculated by adding the number of times each student reported being involved in a physical fight during the 30 days preceding the survey and dividing this sum by the total number of students. The number of physical-fighting episodes per student was then multiplied by 100 to determine the incidence rate per 100 students. Students who replied that they had fought two or three times were assigned a physical fighting frequency of 2.5; four or five times, 4.5; and six or more times, 6.)

Because students were not asked the location of these fights, the extent to which physical fights occurred on school premises was not determined.

Nearly 8% of all students in grades 9-12 reported that, during the 30 days

preceding the survey, they had been in at least one physical fight that resulted in an injury requiring treatment by a doctor or nurse. Of these students, 53.3% said they had fought one time; 27.8%, two or three times; 10.1%, four or five times; and 10.1%, six or more times. Male students (12.2%) were significantly more likely than female students (3.6%) to report having been in a fight.

An estimated 18 physical-fighting incidents occurred per 100 students per month. However, the incidence of physical fighting was four times higher for male students (28 incidents per 100 students) than for female students (7 incidents per 100). The incidence was highest for black male students (47 incidents per 100), followed by Hispanic male students (35 incidents per 100) and white male students (22 incidents per 100).

Students who reported four or more physical fights during the 30 days preceding the survey (1.6% of all students) accounted for nearly half (46.4%) of all physical fights.

Among students who were involved in a physical fight, the most recent physical fight was more likely to have been with an acquaintance (family member, friend, or date) (57.3%; 95% confidence interval [CI]=54.8%-59.8%) than with a stranger (32.1%; 95% CI=29.7%-34.5%). Male students (40.2%; 95% CI=37.6%-43.0%) reported physical fights with strangers significantly more often than female students (18.6%; 95% CI=14.6%-22.4%).

Reported by: Div of Injury Control, National Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control; Div of Adolescent and School Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, CDC.

CDC Editorial Note: Preventing physical fighting among young persons should be an important public health strategy to prevent injuries and deaths from violence. Homicide is the second leading cause of death for persons aged 15-24 years,¹ and nonfatal violence often precedes fatal violence among young persons.² The demographic patterns of physical fighting in this report are consistent with those characterizing homicide: the prevalence of both is greater among males and minorities than females and nonminorities, and both physical fighting and homicide occur most frequently among persons who know each other.³ These similarities suggest that physical fighting is part of a spectrum of violent behavior that may result in homicide.

One of the national health objectives for the year 2000 (objective 7.9) is to reduce by 20% the incidence of physical fighting among adolescents aged 14-17 years.⁴ To achieve this objective, the

TABLE 2. Thirty-day incidence* of physical fighting, by race/ethnicity† and sex—United States, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1990‡

Race/ Ethnicity	Male		Female		Total	
	Incidence	(95% CI)§	Incidence	(95% CI)§	Incidence	(95% CI)§
White	22	(15-29)	4	(3-6)	13	(10-17)
Black	47	(29-66)	18	(8-26)	31	(19-44)
Hispanic	35	(24-46)	11	(0-22)	22	(14-30)
Total	28	(23-33)	7	(5-9)	18	(15-21)

*Per 100 students. Students who reported fighting (i.e., having been in a physical fight in which at least one person required treatment by a doctor or nurse) two or three times were assigned a fighting frequency of 2.5; four or five times, 4.5; and six or more times, 6.

†Numbers from racial/ethnic groups other than white and black were too small to provide separate estimates; however, the totals include all races.

‡Unweighted sample size=11,631 students.

§Confidence interval.

incidence rate determined by the 1990 YRBS must be reduced from 18 episodes per 100 students per month to 14 or fewer episodes. Strategies that may reduce interpersonal violence include decreasing the cultural acceptance of violence⁵; decreasing aggressive behavior among parents and their children⁶; reducing the exposure of children and adolescents to violence in the media⁷; and improving the recognition, management, and treatment of adolescent victims and those at high risk for assaults.⁸

Many experts in the prevention of violence recommend that emphasis also should be placed on helping schools and other agencies that serve youth to teach nonviolent conflict resolution skills as a means of preventing violence (objective 7.16).⁹ Educational interventions for adolescents who have not yet established patterns of physical-fighting behavior may reduce the need for more extensive rehabilitative efforts later (i.e., through juvenile detention centers, correctional facilities, or in-school disciplinary programs). Most of the recommended strategies to reduce physical fighting among adolescents require greater cooperation

among educational programs and other services in public health, criminal justice, education, and social service agencies.

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Availability of Varicella Vaccine for Children With Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia

MMWR. 1992;41:326-327

AN INVESTIGATIONAL, live, attenuated varicella vaccine is available free through Merck Research Laboratories to any physician requesting it for certain pediatric patients (aged 12 months to 17 years) with acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL). Patients must meet specified criteria, including no clinical history of varicella and continuous remission for at least 12 months.

Varicella vaccine is being provided to this group of patients for use through a study protocol to monitor and evaluate safety. An Investigational New Drug ap-

plication for the vaccine has been filed with the Food and Drug Administration.

Previous experience with this vaccine has shown it to be immunogenic in children with ALL.¹ The most common reaction to the vaccine is a mild (fewer than 100 lesions) varicelliform rash, occurring in approximately 40% of vaccinees.²

The physician must provide information outlined in the protocol, and the protocol and consent form for the study must be approved by the institution's Investigational Review Board. Additional information about eligibility cri-

teria and vaccine administration is available from Dr. Jo White, Merck Research Laboratories, telephone (215) 834-2554.

Reported by: Div of Immunization, National Center for Prevention Services, CDC.

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be improved by research into the storage of guns.²

We lack routinely collected information on behavioral risk factors (e.g. gun storage and accessibility to loaded weapons) that contribute to firearm associated morbidity and mortality. Information on these factors would help to establish the characteristics of persons with easy access to guns so that high-risk groups could be targeted for intervention. In addition, such information would help evaluate efforts aimed at preventing firearm injury, reducing access, and altering unsafe storage practices.⁴

This study analyzes a national random sample of gun owners to identify factors associated with keeping guns loaded. Four principal hypotheses are tested: that, all else equal, people are more likely to keep their firearms loaded if (1) the primary purpose for owning a gun is protection from crime, (2) the gun is a handgun, (3) there are no children in the household, and (4) the owner has not received instruction in the proper use of firearms.

METHODS

Data Origin and Potential Sources of Bias:

The data used were obtained from a random national telephone survey of gun owners 18 years and older. The survey, sponsored by *Time* magazine and Cable News Network, was conducted December 15 through 22, 1989, by Yankelovich Clancy & Shulman Inc. Telephone numbers were randomly generated to ensure that households with both listed and unlisted numbers were included. Respondents were not identifiable to the researchers by name or address. Participants were asked a screening question: approximately one in three individuals declined to answer this screening question, with no significant drop in participation for the remaining questions.

Surveys that sample the population are subject to sampling error. Results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population were interviewed. For a survey of 600 respondents, the results are subject to an error margin of ± 4 percentage points for each question because of chance variation in the sample.

Telephone surveys are subject to systematic error. Individuals without telephones or those who work unusual hours may not be represented. In 1986, 7% of all people in the United States (including more than 15% of all blacks and 27% of people living below the poverty line) lived in households that did not have a telephone.¹⁹

Registered gun owners have been shown to provide generally valid re-

sponses to questions about gun ownership.²⁰ However, the same may not be true for owners of unregistered weapons. Individuals who own guns illegally or for illegal purposes may be reluctant to admit ownership. Gun owners under the age of 18 years were not surveyed.

The imprecise wording of some questions might cause measurement error or incorrect interpretation of the results. For example, respondents were asked, "Do you sometimes keep your gun loaded, always keep it loaded, or never keep it loaded?" It is not immediately clear how someone with more than one weapon would answer this question, particularly if one gun were always loaded and another never loaded.

Finally, while respondents were asked why they purchased their gun, they were not asked why they kept it loaded. A primary goal of this study is to help determine who keeps loaded weapons.

Outcome Variable

A dichotomous dependent variable was created by separating individuals who never kept their gun(s) loaded from those who did keep a gun loaded some of the time or always. A second model, which excludes individuals who sometimes kept their guns loaded, was analyzed to determine whether the predicted odds ratios were sensitive to the treatment of this intermediate response group.

Individuals who kept their gun(s) both unlocked and loaded create the greatest potential for injury. Therefore, we created an alternate dependent variable that compares people whose firearms are loaded and unlocked with all other gun owners. Our principal results were unchanged when using this variable. We report the findings of the model that uses keeping a firearm loaded as the outcome of interest so that we can show the relationship between keeping a gun locked and keeping it loaded.

Predictors

The four key indicator variables examined were (1) type of gun, (2) reason for owning a gun, (3) presence of children in the home, and (4) training in the proper use of guns. To capture the effect of gun type, respondents who owned a handgun were placed into one category, and everyone else was put into the reference group. Individuals who owned both a handgun and a long gun were placed in the handgun category.

Individuals who owned their gun(s) primarily "for protection from crime," were distinguished from the subjects in the reference group that contains all other responses (hunting, target shooting, gun collection, work, other, and not sure).

Respondents were also categorized by whether or not they lived with children. Ninety-five people could not directly be assigned to either category. However, using responses from other questions, it was possible to determine that 73 of these individuals lived alone and that nine were married and living only with their spouses. These 82 people (86%) were put in the "no children" category, and the rest were put in the reference group. The results of the analysis do not appreciably differ by the assignment of the remaining 13 people.

Two questions in the survey concerned respondents' training in the use of firearms. The first asked whether the individual had been given instruction. Those who had received training were asked, "Where did you get this training—from someone you knew, from a class, from military training, or in some other way?" People who said that they received training from the military or a class were put into one category. All other individuals, including those who said that they had not received any training, were put into the reference category. Informal instruction may be more similar to military or classroom training than to a lack of training. Hence, an analysis was also conducted comparing individuals with any form of instruction in the proper use of guns with those with no training.

Background Variables

Various factors that might confound the relationship between the possession of a loaded firearm and any of the four predictors were incorporated into the model. Included among these variables were demographic characteristics such as the gun owner's age, race, sex, level of education achieved, and the region of the country where the respondent lives.

Other factors that might be associated with both the outcome and one or more predictors are the number of guns owned, whether or not they were kept locked up when not in use, and the location where they were stored (eg, in the bedroom). Respondent's income is another potential confounder. However, 20% of the participants ($n=119$) declined to provide information about their income, so the variable is not included in the final model. A sensitivity analysis was conducted to determine whether the presence of income in the model affects the results.

There is no established theory that suggests the functional form for many of the potential confounding variables. Alternative forms were tested to determine whether the principal results were sensitive to the way these background variables were specified. For ex-

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ample, the number of guns owned could be treated as a continuous or dichotomous variable. It could also be treated as several dichotomous variables. We tried various forms and none altered our results.

Multivariate logistic regression is used to estimate the odds ratio (OR) of keeping a gun loaded for individuals with a given characteristic (eg, they were handgun owners) relative to individuals without that characteristic while simultaneously controlling for the other variables in the model.

RESULTS

The sample consisted of 605 individuals; most were men (75%), few were nonwhite (12%). Each respondent owned at least one gun, with the majority owning more than one (77%). The most commonly owned type of firearm was a rifle (72%), while 61% of the respondents owned a handgun. The weapons were typically kept unloaded at all times. However, more than one third of the gun owners kept their gun(s) loaded either all of the time (25%) or some of the time (12%). Furthermore, 53% of the people surveyed did not keep their firearms locked up.

Simple crosstabulations indicate that owning a handgun, purchasing the weapon for protection, and having no children in the household are all positively correlated with keeping a gun loaded; training in the proper use of firearms is not significantly correlated with the dependent variable (Table 1). Similar results are found in multiple logistic analysis (Table 2). Only 583 observations are included in this analysis, since information concerning one or more of the variables of interest is missing for 22 individuals.

The strongest predictor of respondents who possess a loaded firearm was the type of gun owned. Handgun owners were more than twice as likely as other individuals to keep their guns loaded at least some of the time (OR, 2.17; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.67 to 2.82).

Among the people surveyed, individuals who owned their weapons primarily for protection from crime were 65% more likely to keep their firearms loaded than individuals who owned their guns for other purposes (OR, 1.65; 95% CI, 1.30 to 2.11). People who did not live with children were over 40% more likely to report that they kept their weapons loaded than gun owners living in households with children (OR, 1.42; 95% CI, 1.13 to 1.82).

Other factors associated with the maintenance of a loaded firearm are geographic location, race, and whether or

Table 1.—Crosstabulations of Possible Predictors of Private Ownership of a Loaded Gun and Associated χ^2 Statistics

Factor	No.*	Sometimes or Always Keep Gun Loaded, %	χ^2
Handgun†			
Owns a handgun	364	51	81.18‡
Does not own a handgun	227	15	
Purpose§			
Protection from crime	162	63	64.20‡
Other	432	27	
Children in house§			
No	358	42	8.11‡
Yes	236	30	
Training§			
Military or class	311	36	0.59
None or other	283	38	
Region§			
Southern¶	260	50	31.37‡
Other	334	27	
Race§			
White	523	35	6.46§
Nonwhite	71	50	
Locked up††			
Yes	267	33	2.62**
No	319	40	
Age, y††			
≤34	228	34	1.25
≥35	361	39	
No. of guns owned§			
≤2	257	33	3.05**
≥3	337	40	
Where stored§			
Bedroom	255	39	0.61
Other	339	36	
Education††			
≤High school	320	36	0.35
>High school	296	35	

*N=605 in the sample population.

†Fourteen observations were missing.

‡P<.001.

§Eleven observations were missing.

¶P<.01.

¶The southern region included Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The other region included all remaining states, Alaska, Hawaii, and Washington, DC, are not represented in the sample.

**P<.01.

††Sixteen observations were missing.

not the gun was locked up when not in use. Individuals who lived in the South and those who were not white were more likely to keep their guns loaded. People who did not lock up their guns were also more likely to keep them loaded.

Of the four main hypotheses, the only one that cannot be substantiated is the proposed association between training in the proper use of guns and the likelihood that a gun will be kept loaded. In the study population, instruction did not seem to affect the probability of keeping guns loaded (OR, 0.86; 95% CI, 0.69 to 1.07). The result holds whether the variable is any training or only military or classroom instruction.

If the income variable is included in the model, the principal findings are unaffected. Furthermore, the results do not appreciably differ when subjects who kept their guns loaded only some of the time are excluded from the analysis.

COMMENT

Handguns are the most common type of firearm involved in gunshot deaths in the home, whether accidental or intentional.^{1,2,3} The most common reason given for owning a handgun is protection from crime,^{1,2,3} yet only a small percentage of firearm deaths in the home are the result of an incident requiring self-protection.^{2,3,4} Unfortunately, no study seems to link specific shooting incidents with the reason for owning a gun.

This study does not include data on shootings. However, it does link gun type and purpose of gun ownership to the likelihood of keeping a gun loaded. Handgun owners and individuals who own firearms for protection are more likely than other gun owners to keep their weapons loaded. The tendency to keep ammunition in the gun may help explain the large number of injuries associated

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Table 2.—Factors Associated With Keeping a Gun Loaded*: Interpreting the Fitted Logistic

Factor	Logistic Regression Results, Odds Ratio (95% Confidence Interval)†
Handgun 1=owns a handgun 0=other	2.17 (1.67-2.82)
Purpose 1=protection from crime 0=other	1.65 (1.30-2.11)
Children living in home 1=no 0=yes	1.43 (1.13-1.82)
Training 1=formal (military or other) 0=none or informal	0.66 (0.69-1.07)
Region‡ 1=southern states 0=other	1.61 (1.31-1.98)
Race 1=nonwhite 0=white	1.37 (1.01-1.86)
Locked up when stored 1=no 0=yes	1.23 (1.01-1.54)
Age, y§ 30s 1=30-39 0=other	1.24 (0.92-1.66)
40s 1=40-49 0=other	1.10 (0.80-1.52)
50s 1=≥50 0=other	1.11 (0.83-1.48)
Sex 1=male 0=female	1.06 (0.82-1.36)
No. of guns owned 2 or 3 1=own 2 or 3 guns 0=other	0.83 (0.62-1.11)
4 or more 1=own 4 or more guns 0=other	1.19 (0.89-1.62)
Where stored 1=bedroom 0=other	0.92 (0.75-1.14)
Education¶ College 1=attended college 0=other	1.20 (0.97-1.49)
Postgraduate 1=have postgraduate degree 0=other	0.90 (0.54-1.48)

*1=store gun loaded some or all of the time, 0=never store gun loaded.

†N=583 for the logistic regression result; 22 observations were missing.

‡The southern region included Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The other region included all remaining states, Alaska, Hawaii, and Washington, DC, are not represented in the sample.

§The reference group consisted of all individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 years.

with accidental discharges and intentional shootings not justified by self-defense needs.

Research suggests that easy access to a loaded gun may be a risk factor for accidental firearm injuries among children^{11,12,11} and may be a contributing factor for adolescent suicide.²¹ Among the gun owners surveyed, those with children in the home were less likely to keep their guns loaded. Nonetheless, it appears that many families with children do keep loaded guns in the home (30%), even though experts, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics,¹³ warn

of the danger.

Increased attention has been given to the potential of design modification as a way of reducing the morbidity and mortality associated with firearms discharges.^{1,12,25,26} According to the GAO, two devices, a childproof safety mechanism and a mechanism that indicates whether a gun is loaded, could reduce accidental firearm fatalities by approximately 31%. However, noting that "a majority of the accidents ... examined involved some violation of safe gun-handling standards," and noting the large number of weapons already privately

owned, the GAO suggests the need for "proper education in the use and handling of firearms."²⁵

We did not discover any study that linked instruction in the use of guns to the safe handling of these weapons by their owners. One study that looked at unintentional firearm fatalities among children did note that the victim and the gun owner (most often the victim's parent) were unlikely to have received any training in gun safety procedures.¹¹ Furthermore, the authors note that, even after an accident, guns often remained accessible and safety rules were not observed.

Safety instruction does not necessarily lead to the observation of safety rules. The results of this analysis indicate that training, even if provided by the military or in a formal class, is not associated with safe gun-handling procedures as they relate to keeping guns loaded. One possible explanation is that important safety information is omitted from the training. Another possible explanation is that this information is insufficiently emphasized, particularly for individuals who have purchased a firearm for protection. Unfortunately, the survey did not collect information on the specific content of the safety instruction received, so we cannot determine whether education about safe storage practices is ineffective based on this analysis.

In the study population, nonwhite individuals were more likely than whites to keep their guns loaded (OR, 1.37; 95% CI, 1.01 to 1.86). One possible explanation is that blacks and other racial minorities feel less secure in their homes than whites. Violent crime, such as robbery, rape, and aggravated assault, is committed against members of black households at a rate 1½ times higher than the rate among white households,²⁷ and nonwhites are several times more likely than whites to be homicide victims.²⁸

Among the individuals surveyed, those who did not keep their weapons locked up were more likely than other individuals to keep their weapons loaded (OR, 1.23; 95% CI, 1.01 to 1.54). This pairing of hazardous behaviors creates the greatest risk of injury. While such behavior runs counter to the theory of risk compensation,²⁹ it is probably to be expected. Many people who own firearms for protection may believe they need ready access to a weapon that is both loaded and unlocked.

The South has high rates of homicide, gun homicide, and gun ownership compared with other regions of the country.^{30,31} This study indicates that southerners are also more likely to keep their firearms loaded.

Loaded Guns in the Home—Weil & Hemenway

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There are several limitations to this analysis. The information in the data set is derived from self-reports rather than observational data. This could be a problem if, for instance, respondents were unable to recall whether their guns were loaded. Indeed, the GAO report suggests that a contributing factor in many accidental firearm fatalities is the victim's belief that the gun was not loaded when it was.⁸ Self-report data are also subject to inaccuracies if respondents are embarrassed to tell the truth. For example, some individuals living with small children may not want to admit to keeping a loaded gun in the house.

The generalizability of the survey may also be limited by two factors. First, racial minorities account for a small percentage of respondents. Telephone sur-

veys tend to underrepresent low-income and minority groups, and this appears to be the case in the present study. Second, the survey excluded gun owners under 18 years old, yet many young people own guns.

CONCLUSION

J. Warren Cassidy, formerly executive vice-president of the National Rifle Association, wrote that gun owners in America are "safe, sane and courteous in their use of guns."²² The large number of gun-related assaults, homicides, suicides, and accidental shootings raises questions about this assertion. Our findings show that a significant proportion of gun owners disregard basic safety procedures. Over one third of the gun owners surveyed kept their weapons

loaded, and more than half kept them unlocked. People who owned handguns or owned their guns for protection from crime were the most likely to keep their guns loaded. The presence of children in the home was a modifying factor. However, a significant number of gun owners with children reported that their guns(s) were neither unloaded nor locked up. One of the most interesting findings of this analysis is that instruction in the proper handling of firearms was not associated with whether a gun was kept loaded when not in use.

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Urban High School Youth and Handguns

A School-Based Survey

Charles M. Callahan, MD, MPH, Frederick P. Rivara, MD, MPH

Objective.—To determine the prevalence of handgun ownership among urban high school youth and investigate associations with socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and deviant behaviors.

Design.—Survey of half of the Seattle, Wash, public high schools, which enroll 50% of the school district's 11th-grade students (N=970).

Main Outcome Measures.—Self-reports of handgun ownership, perceived access to handguns, racial/ethnic identity, social status (Hollingshead's Two Factor Index of Social Position), and social deviance (Seattle Self-Report Instrument) were determined.

Results.—Thirty-four percent of the students reported easy access to handguns (47% of males, 22% of females) and 6.4% reported owning a handgun (11.4% of males, 1.5% of females). Reported firearm experiences indicated a high rate of handgun utilization: 33% of handgun owners had fired at someone, 9.7% of female students reported a firearm homicide or suicide in family members or close friends, and 6% of male students reported carrying a handgun to school sometime in the past. Handgun ownership was more common among students who reported deviant behaviors. Adjusting for age, gender, and racial/ethnic group and controlling for covariation among the problem behaviors, gang membership (odds ratio [OR], 8.8; 95% confidence interval [CI], 3.7 to 20.8), sentencing by a judge (OR, 4.6; 95% CI, 1.3 to 15.5), selling drugs (OR, 3.7; 95% CI, 1.8 to 7.8), suspension or expulsion from school (OR, 3.5; 95% CI, 1.7 to 7.0), and assault and battery (OR, 2.5; 95% CI, 1.1 to 5.9) were associated with handgun ownership. However, 22% of male handgun owners did not report any of the above behaviors.

Conclusion.—The availability of handguns to the urban high school students surveyed is pervasive, and it is not limited to high-risk groups.

(JAMA. 1992;267:3038-3042)

FIREARM injuries among American youth are a nationwide tragedy and an international embarrassment.¹ The frequency and lethality of firearm injuries have resulted in this method of dying now being among the leading causes of death for various groups of young people. In 1988, firearms accounted for 20% of all deaths among 15- to 24-year-olds. Over three fourths of adolescent homicides and slightly more than half of adolescent suicides are firearm related, with the majority the result of handguns.² It is estimated that for every firearm fatality, there are 2.4-fold more non-fatal firearm injuries,³ often with serious morbidity.⁴



Despite the frequent association of firearms, especially handguns, with serious adolescent injuries, little is known about which adolescents have access to handguns and who decides to acquire one. The purposes of the present article are to determine the self-reported extent of handgun access and ownership among a population of urban high school students; to discover the self-reported reasons for ownership; and to relate access and ownership to socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and deviant behavior.

METHODS

Sample Population

During a 6-week period in the winter of 1990-1991, we conducted a cross-sectional survey of 11th-grade students in the Seattle (Wash) Public School District. In the city of Seattle, 73% (2244/3088) of all 11th-grade students attend public schools and the remainder attend private

schools.⁵ The dropout rate for 11th graders attending public schools during the 1988-1989 school year was 15.3%.⁶

All 10 high schools were approached, and the decision for school participation was made by individual principals. Five of the 10 principals agreed to participate in the study.

This study was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee of the University of Washington and the Research Office of the Seattle Public School District.

Survey

Data were collected by means of an anonymous questionnaire administered by one person (C.M.C.) during a required history course in each school. Following written notification, passive consent by the parents was presumed unless telephone contact was made with the research team or school.

The 76-item questionnaire measured self-reported deviant behavior, socioeconomic status (SES), drug/alcohol use, educational aspirations, driving behavior, group memberships, social activities, the availability and use of firearms, and injuries to self and family members.

Deviant behaviors were ascertained using 34 of the original 69 questions from the Seattle Self-Report Instrument. This instrument, developed in 1975 and validated in 14 000 youth, related self-reported socially deviant behaviors with police contacts.⁷ In our study, students were asked to check any of the deviant acts they had done in the past 3 years.

Social status was measured with Hollingshead's Two Factor Index of Social Position⁸ based on student report of the occupation and highest grade of education of household wage earners. The wage earner in the home with the highest occupational and educational scores was coded. Weighted partial scores of the occupational and educational levels of the wage earner were combined to generate a social class from I (highest) to V (lowest).

The principal outcome variable was handgun ownership, which included personal ownership and shared ownership with friends. Perceived access to hand-

Table 1.
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From the Department of Pediatrics, University of Washington, Seattle. Dr Callahan is now with Children's Hospital and Medical Center, Seattle.

Reprint requests to Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, 325 Ninth Ave, ZX-10, Seattle, WA 98104 (Dr Callahan).

Table 1.—Demographic Characteristics of the Study Population

	Respondents*	
	No.	%
Gender	938	
M		49
F		51
Racial/ethnic group	967	
White		47
Asian/Pacific Islander		21
Chinese	(5)	
Southeast Asian	(8)	
Filipino	(5)	
Japanese	(1)	
Pacific Islander	(3)	
African American		17
Others		15
Hispanic	(2)	
Native American/Alaskan		
Native	(1)	
Multiracial/ethnic	(4)	
Other	(8)	
Social class†	702	
I		29
II		30
III		24
IV		14
V		3

*Number with missing data=970—No.
†Social class by Hollingshead's score.*

guns was also examined. Handgun access was coded as easy if the student selected "I already have one" or "I could get one in a few days"; other responses were coded as difficult. Internal consistency of responses to handgun questions with similar content was assessed.

Data Analysis

Bivariate analyses were conducted using the Yates corrected χ^2 statistic or two-tailed Fisher's Exact Test. The prevalence ratio (PR) (eg, prevalence of easy access in students reporting a behavior divided by the prevalence of easy access in students denying that behavior) was one effect measure. Epi-Info software* generated PRs with Taylor series 95% confidence intervals (CIs).¹⁰ The relative rarity of handgun ownership permitted the use of the odds ratio to estimate the relative risk of handgun ownership among different groups of students.¹¹ The odds ratio with Cornfield's 95% CIs represents the ratio of the odds of handgun ownership in those with a selected behavior to the odds of ownership in those without the behavior. Logistic regression analysis (SPSS-PC 4.01, SPSS Inc, Chicago, Ill) generated adjusted odds ratios, controlling for age, gender, racial/ethnic group, and other problem behaviors.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

Students.—Of the 1119 students enrolled in the five participating schools, 970 (87%) were surveyed. During the survey, 132 students (12%) were absent, one parent actively withheld permission, and 16 students refused to participate.

Almost half of the sample was male

Table 2.—Demographic Characteristics of the Schools

	Surveyed	Not Surveyed
No. of schools	5	5
Enrollment	1119	1125
Racial/ethnic group, %		
African American	20	18
Asian/Pacific Islander	24	38
White	49	37
Other	7	7
Grade point average	2.6	2.7
Graduation rate, %	89	88
Suspension/expulsion rate, %	13	18
Weapons confiscated*		
Guns	0.1	0.5
Knives	1.7	3.6
All†	4.3	7.7

*Weapons confiscated per 100 students, school year 1990/1991.
†Guns, knives, stars, ammunition, etc.

(Table 1). The mean age of the students was 16.3 (± 0.7) years. Forty-seven percent of the participants described themselves as white and 17% as African American. For purposes of analysis, Asians and Pacific Islanders were combined (21%) and Hispanics, Native Americans/Alaskan Natives, multiracial/ethnic students, and others were combined. Because 17% of the students were unwilling or unable to report the occupation and 15% the education level of the primary wage earner in their home, data on SES were missing for 27%. Data on SES were more likely to be missing for minority racial/ethnic groups (SES missing values were as follows: whites, 14%; African Americans, 33%; Asians/Pacific Islanders, 48.5%; and others, 30%) and in students receiving subsidized school lunches (missing data for 60% [72/119] of students with subsidized lunch vs 23% [190/821] of students with self-pay lunch).

Internal consistency of responses to questions relating to firearm use was high. All 28 students who reported shooting at someone also reported having easy access to handguns, and the eight students who reported firing at someone in their home also reported elsewhere in the questionnaire as having shot at someone.

Study Schools.—In comparing the five schools surveyed with the schools that did not participate (Table 2), more whites and fewer Asians/Pacific Islanders were enrolled in the surveyed schools. The mean grade point averages and the graduation rates for the two groups of schools were similar. The suspension and expulsion rate was 3% lower in the surveyed schools. The number of weapons (guns, knives, and/or any type) confiscated during the preceding school year was higher in the nonparticipating schools.

Access to Handguns

Overall, 34% of the students perceived handguns to be easily accessible (Table 3).

Male students were twice as likely as female students to report easy access to handguns. Easy access to handguns was almost twice as common for African Americans as for Asians/Pacific Islanders, with whites falling between these two groups. The highest prevalence of easy access was reported by African-American male students (59%). Easy access to handguns was most common in the lowest social class (class V) and least common in the highest social class (class I). Handguns were perceived to be easily accessible by more than 50% of male youths in all social classes except the highest class, in which 36% reported easy access.

When students who perceived handguns to be easily accessible ($n=321$) were asked where they would acquire a handgun, 31% said they would obtain it from a friend, 18% would buy one on the street, 13% already owned one, 8% specified a gun shop, and 7% would obtain it from home. Overall, only 22% doubted they would ever need one.

Handgun Ownership

Handgun ownership was reported by 6.4% of students (Table 3). Of the 60 handgun owners, 51 (85%) reported personal ownership and nine (15%) had shared ownership with friends. Male students were eight times as likely to report ownership as female students. Statistically similar rates of handgun ownership were reported by African Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders when compared with whites.

The relationship between social class and handgun ownership was similar to that for access. Handgun ownership was more common in the lowest social class (20%) and least common in the highest social class (3.1%). However, social class could not be determined for 28% (17/60) of the handgun owners, thus limiting further comparisons. Students who reported hearing gunfire in their neighborhoods

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Table 3.—Factors Associated With Handgun Access and Ownership

No.	Easy Access		Ownership	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
	954	34	937	6.4
Gender				
M	457	47*	446	11.4*
F†	467	22	462	1.5
Race/ethnic group				
African American	159	49*	154	11.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	194	25†	196	4.1
White‡	454	34	444	6.3
Other	144	30	140	5.0
Social class				
I† (highest)	201	24	195	3.1
II	209	40‡	208	8.2‡
III	165	43*	163	6.7
IV	99	41‡	97	5.2
V (lowest)	21	57‡	20	20.0‡
Neighborhood gunfire				
Never†	837	32	824	5.2
Sometimes	80	44‡	78	11.5‡
Often	37	65*	34	23.5*
Expect to attend college				
No	83	43	83	15.6‡
Yes†	867	33	850	5.5

*P<.001.

†Reference group for pair-wise comparisons.

‡P<.05.

§P<.01.

often (at least one or two times per week) reported a fourfold higher rate of handgun ownership compared with students from neighborhoods where gunfire was never heard.

The prevalence of handgun ownership did not vary significantly by participation in school sports, church membership, or employment. Students who did not expect to attend college reported a threefold greater prevalence of handgun ownership than students expecting to attend college.

For the 31 students who owned a handgun only (29 either shared the handgun or owned long guns in addition to handguns), the median age of acquiring a handgun was 15.0 years (range, 11 to 16 years). The handgun was received as a gift for 29%, all but one of which were from parents. Twenty-two percent acquired their handgun from a friend; 19% bought it from someone on the street and 6% from a gun store. Seven (22%) of the 31 students chose "other" as a source category.

Among the handgun owners, only 27% (16/60) selected hunting or target shooting as the primary reason for owning any firearm.

Firearm Experiences

Almost half (46%) of handgun owners, 4% of all 11th-grade students, and 6.6% of male students had carried a handgun to school at some time. Three percent of students, 5% of male students, 9% of students with easy access to handguns, and

33% of handgun owners indicated they had shot at another person.

Serious firearm injuries (including homicide or suicide and excluding war-related injuries) to family members or close friends were reported by 9.7% (46/475) of all female students and 5.0% (23/463) of all male students (PR, 1.9%; 95% CI, 1.2% to 3.2%). More than one quarter (20/74) of African-American female students reported serious firearm injuries to family members or close friends.

Problem Behaviors and Handgun Availability

The availability of handguns, in terms of either perceived easy access or actual ownership, was more common in students who reported problem behaviors (Table 4).

The strongest associations with handgun access were gang membership (PR, 2.8; 95% CI, 2.4 to 3.2), selling drugs (PR, 2.7; 95% CI, 2.3 to 3.2), interpersonal violence (ie, robbery [PR, 2.6; 95% CI, 2.2 to 3.2], assault and battery [PR, 2.7; 95% CI, 2.3 to 3.1], striking a teacher [PR, 2.4; 95% CI, 1.8 to 3.1]), conviction for crimes (PR, 2.6; 95% CI, 2.0 to 3.1), and either suspension or expulsion from school (PR, 2.1; 95% CI, 1.8 to 2.5).

The association between handgun ownership and problem behaviors is presented in Table 5. The crude odds ratios for owning a handgun are significant for all behaviors listed. The strongest associations are seen with students report-

ing the more deviant behaviors (ie, gang membership, sentencing by a judge, selling drugs, assault and battery) and being suspended or expelled from school. Controlling for age, gender, and racial/ethnic group with logistic regression and a forward stepwise method for entering the problem behaviors, the adjusted odds ratios reflect the independent effect contributed by the individual behavior, simultaneously adjusting for the other four behaviors. Problem driving behaviors, chemical abuse, and other school-related behaviors did not increase the odds of gun ownership once gang membership, court sentencing, selling drugs, assault, and school suspensions or expulsions were entered into the equation. Although gang members of the same age, gender, and race were 8.8-fold more likely to own a handgun than non-gang members, it is important to realize that only 37% of handgun owners were gang members. Further, 22% (13/60) of the handgun owners did not report any of the five problem behaviors that were independently associated with handgun ownership.

For nearly all problem behaviors, the crude odds ratios were considerably higher for female compared with male students, indicating that few female students without deviant behaviors owned handguns. For example, the crude odds ratios for female handgun owners who reported selling drugs, gang membership, assault and battery, or being sentenced by a judge were 61, 36, 22, and 13, respectively (vs crude odds ratios for males of 7.3, 17.7, 9.1, and 11.9, respectively). Although the rarity of female handgun ownership prevents more precise estimation of the association in this sample, all seven female handgun owners reported at least two of the deviant behaviors, in contrast to 22% of male handgun owners who reported no deviant behaviors.

COMMENT

Data from this report indicated that many urban high school students have easy access to handguns and that handgun ownership is not uncommon. The firearm experiences of these students were not limited to mere perceptions of ready access. The reported frequency of carrying weapons, discharging firearms, and firearm injuries among family members or close friends suggests that handguns are not only accessible but frequently used.

Ecological studies by Wintemute and others¹²⁻¹⁵ have suggested an association of the high rates of homicide, suicide, and unintentional deaths from firearms with high local and regional rates of gun ownership. The availability of handguns has been shown to increase the risk of urban

deviant behaviors (ie, gang enticement by a judge, sell-out and battery) and being expelled from school. Controlling for age, gender, and racial/ethnic status in regression and a form of method for entering the data, the adjusted odds ratios for independent effect of individual behavior, adjusting for the other four problem driving behaviors, and other school-related factors did not increase the odds of once gang membership, selling drugs, assault, expulsions or expulsions were equal. Although gang membership, age, gender, and race were more likely to own a non-gang members, it is realized that only 37% of students were gang members. (3/60) of the handgun owners reported any of the five problem behaviors were independently associated with handgun ownership. All problem behaviors, the associations were considerably weaker compared with male students that few female students owned handgun behaviors. For example, the crude odds ratios for handgun owners who sold drugs, gang membership, assault, battery, or being sent to juvenile were 61, 36, 22, and 13, respectively. The crude odds ratios for female students were 1.7, 9.1, and 11.9, respectively. The rarity of female handgun ownership prevents more precise estimates of the association in this study. In female handgun owners, at least two of the deviant behaviors contrast to 22% of male students who reported no deviant

behaviors. This report indicated that handgun ownership among school students have increased and that handgun ownership is not uncommon. The findings of these students do not merely reflect perceptions of handgun frequency of use, but also the frequency of use, discharging firearms, and the frequency of use among family members suggests that handgun ownership is not only accessible but readily available. Wintemute and colleagues suggested an association between handgun ownership and rates of homicide, suicide, and injuries from firearms with regional rates of gun ownership. Handgun ownership increases the risk of urban

Table 4.—Problem Behaviors Associated With Handgun Access and Ownership

Problem Behavior	Easy Access		Ownership	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Deviant behavior				
Gang member				
Yes	47	87	44	52
No	907	31	893	4
Sentenced by judge				
Yes	23	83	22	50
No	931	33	915	5
Assault and battery				
Yes	60	83	58	38
No	894	31	879	4
Robbery				
Yes	29	86	29	41
No	925	32	908	5
Sold drugs				
Yes	84	81	83	32
No	870	30	854	4
School				
Striking teacher				
Yes	19	79	19	37
No	935	33	918	6
Suspensions				
Yes	137	62	133	23
No	817	29	804	4
"High" in school				
Yes	189	61	184	12
No	765	27	753	5
Driving				
Motor vehicle violations				
>2	42	64	42	17
1	81	48	80	12
None	819	31	801	5
Driving "high"				
Yes	134	55	130	12
No	820	31	807	5
Chemical abuse				
Beer				
≥Monthly	263	53	256	10
<Few times	691	27	681	5
Cocaine				
Ever	21	71	20	20
Never	933	33	917	6
Marijuana				
≥Monthly	97	62	96	17
<Few times	857	31	841	5

homicide in all age groups¹⁶ and to be a significant risk factor for urban suicide in the 15- to 24-year-old age group.¹⁷ Previous publications about adolescent problem behaviors have either ignored or minimally considered handgun availability.¹⁸⁻²¹ A recent study of adolescents and firearms by Sadowski et al²² focused on nonurban youth, a population that differs in the types of firearms acquired and in which recreational use of long guns predominates. Sadowski et al reported that 4.9% of rural youth owned a handgun. Male students had a rate of handgun ownership ninefold greater than female students, and school dropouts were three times more likely to own a handgun. Neither race nor SES was associated with handgun ownership. Sadowski et al reported associations of handgun ownership with hunting and the possession

of long guns. In our study, this association was less apparent. We explored the association of handgun ownership with many problem behaviors. Chance associations are possible with the number of comparisons made, but the magnitude of the odds ratios and the consistency of the associations of handgun ownership with the correlated problem behaviors make chance an unlikely explanation for the associations found. Although direct validation and reliability of responses about behaviors or attitudes were not possible due to the anonymous nature of the survey, the findings in our study are comparable with other reports. The higher rate of African-American firearm injuries among close friends or family members found in our survey is congruent with national race-specific

mortality data. A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and its 1990 nationwide school-based Youth Risk Behavior Survey noted that 20% of all students in grades 9 through 12 reported carrying a weapon to school at least once in the month preceding the survey.²³ Of those carrying weapons, 20.8% reported carrying a firearm. They concluded that approximately one student in 20 had carried a firearm, usually a handgun, to school in the month prior to the survey. The 1987 National Adolescent Student Health Survey,²⁴ a school-based survey that included 5560 10th graders, reported that 41% of male and 24% of female 10th graders could obtain a handgun. In the National Adolescent Student Health Survey, 2.9% of 10th-grade male students had carried a handgun to school during the past year compared with our finding that 6.6% of 11th-grade male students had carried a handgun to high school at least once. Although death during adolescence is uncommon, violent causes (homicide and suicide) are among the most common reasons for death. By studying an urban population and focusing on handguns, our intention was to further the understanding of this more common mechanism of injury among the youth most at risk.²⁵⁻²⁷ While handgun ownership was strongly associated with problem behaviors in the Seattle public schools surveyed, handguns were not restricted to any one social class or racial/ethnic group or restricted to students who reported deviant behaviors. Students have handguns for various reasons and obtain them from numerous sources. Both access to handguns and handgun ownership are related to problem behaviors, and the strongest associations are seen with the more deviant behaviors. Despite these associations, our data and the scope of adolescent firearm injuries in the United States suggest that the availability of handguns to urban youth is not restricted to the more deviant individuals but extends into the mainstream. The major limitation of this study is the lack of a random sample that would permit us to generalize our findings to the total population of Seattle public school 11th-grade students. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that the effect measures from this study are likely to be underestimates for the Seattle School District, the city of Seattle, and urban centers in general. In light of the higher disciplinary rates and rate of weapons confiscation in the nonparticipating schools, exclusion of those five schools may have lowered the true prevalence of handgun ownership and the associations with deviant behaviors. Students who

Council Report

Assault Weapons as a Public Health Hazard in the United States

Council on Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association

MOST of the scientific research relating to firearms and their effects on public health has concentrated on handguns. Despite the severity of the firearm problem in this country, and the wealth of publicity associated with it, more scientific investigation is needed on all firearm injuries¹ and those due to special classes of guns like assault weapons. The purpose of this report is to review what is known about assault weapons and their impact on public health and to discuss legislation to restrict the sale and private ownership of assault weapons. This report adds to the information provided by Substitute Resolution 264 (A-89), Restriction of Assault Weapons, which states that "the AMA [American Medical Association] supports appropriate legislation that would restrict the sale and private ownership of large-clip, high-rate-of-fire automatic and semiautomatic firearms, or any weapon that is modified or redesigned to operate as a large-clip, high-rate-of-fire automatic or semiautomatic weapon."

DEFINING ASSAULT WEAPONS

Traditionally, firearms have been split into two broad categories: long guns, which are fired from the shoulder (rifles and shotguns); and handguns, which are designed to be fired with one hand (revolvers and pistols).² The term *assault rifle* originated during World War II and refers to military weapons capable of automatic fire and having detachable magazines that hold 20 or more cartridges.³ Assault weapons were developed to utilize firepower, in order to reduce the reliance on marksmanship in mil-

itary settings. Currently, the term includes both automatic and semiautomatic firearms designed for killing people and generally considered to be of little use for hunting or trap and skeet shooting. *Automatic* and *semiautomatic* refer to the operating mechanism of a firearm and can apply to either long guns or handguns; there are semiautomatic rifles and semiautomatic pistols.² Semiautomatic hunting rifles are precisely aimed and fired from the shoulder, while assault weapons are meant to be spray-fired from the hip.⁴ Both automatic and semiautomatic firearms can be spray-fired. Holding down the trigger of an automatic firearm results in a continuous stream of bullets until the ammunition magazine is emptied. In the case of a semiautomatic firearm, each trigger pull releases a single bullet, loads the next bullet, and permits rapid, sustained firing until the magazine is emptied.⁴

Not all semiautomatic firearms are assault weapons.² According to Sugarman and Rand, "assault weapons are merely one type of semiautomatic firearm that can be distinguished by specific design characteristics."⁵ Proponents who seek to regulate or ban assault weapons contend that assault weapons can be distinguished from other semiautomatic weapons by attached "combat hardware," such as silencers, folding stocks, bayonets, large-capacity magazines, short barrels, pistol grips on rifles or shotguns, or threaded barrels for accommodating flash suppressors.¹ They may also be differentiated by the ease with which they convert to fully automatic weapons and by their use in organized crime and narcotics cases. Opponents of a ban argue that some of these features may also apply to semiautomatic firearms used for hunting and sport,⁶ and they feel that banning semiautomatic assault weapons is the first step toward banning all semiautomatic firearms.²

Assault weapons are difficult to define in legal terms,² and the lack of a precise definition may be the greatest obstacle to successful legislation against assault weapons. Confusion exists about weapons terminology: terms like *assault*, *paramilitary*, and *semiautomatic* are considered to be synonyms, when they are not.² Cur-

rent legislative efforts to control the ownership and use of assault weapons have focused on semiautomatic weapons; therefore, the remainder of this report will concentrate on semiautomatic firearms used as assault weapons. For the purposes of this report the term *semiautomatic assault weapons* refers to the semiautomatic firearms that were permanently banned from importation into the United States in July 1989 and those domestically manufactured firearms identified in legislation such as that proposed by Sen Dennis DeConcini (D, Ariz) (S 747, Antidrug, Assault Weapons Limitation Act of 1989)⁷ and Rep Fortney (Pete) Stark (D, Calif) (HR 1190, Semiautomatic Assault Weapons Act of 1989).⁸

PREVALENCE OF POSSESSION AND USE IN CRIME

Approximately 200 million firearms are owned by private citizens in the United States.⁹ Since gun manufacturers are not required to give out their sales figures, and reports do not usually differentiate between standard long guns and assault weapons, a reliable estimate of how many of these guns are assault weapons is not available.² The best estimate may be the sum of the number of assault weapons legally imported into the United States and

Members of the Council on Scientific Affairs at the time of the report included the following: Yank D. Coble, Jr, MD, Jacksonville, Fla; A. Bradley Eisenbrey, MD, PhD, Royal Oak, Mich, Resident Representative; E. Harvey Estes, Jr, MD, Durham, NC, Vice Chairman; Mitchell S. Karlan, MD, Beverly Hills, Calif; William R. Kennedy, MD, Minneapolis, Minn; Michael P. Moulton, San Antonio, Tex, Medical Student Representative; Patricia Joy Numan, MD, Syracuse, NY; William C. Scott, MD, Tucson, Ariz, Chairman; W. Douglas Skelton, MD, Macon, Ga; Richard M. Steinhilber, MD, Cleveland, Ohio; Jack P. Strong, MD, New Orleans, La; Henry N. Wagner, Jr, MD, Baltimore, Md; William R. Hendee, PhD, Secretary; William T. McGivney, PhD, Assistant Secretary; Sharon B. Buchbinder, RN, MA, and Sona Kaulousdian, MD, MPH, staff authors.

From the Council on Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association, Chicago, Ill.

This report was submitted to the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association at the June 1990 annual meeting as an informational report of the Council on Scientific Affairs.

This report is not intended to be construed or to serve as a standard of medical care. Standards of medical care are determined on the basis of all the facts and circumstances involved in an individual case and are subject to change as scientific knowledge and technology advance and patterns of practice evolve. These reports reflect the views of scientific literature as of June 1990.

Reprint requests to the Council on Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association, 515 N State St, Chicago, IL 60610 (Jerod M. Loeb, PhD).

Table 5.—Handgun Ownership and Problem Behaviors: Crude and Adjusted Odds Ratios (ORs)*

Problem Behavior	Crude OR (95% CI)	Adjusted OR (95% CI)†
Deviant behavior		
Gang member	25.3 (12.2-52.7)	8.8 (3.7-20.8)
Sentenced by judge	17.7 (6.7-48.5)	4.6 (1.3-15.5)
Assault and battery	13.5 (6.9-26.3)	2.5 (1.1-5.9)
Robbery	12.6 (5.3-29.9)	NS
Sold drugs	12.0 (6.5-22.2)	3.7 (1.8-7.8)
School		
Striking teacher	9.5 (3.2-27.4)	NS
Suspensions	7.5 (4.2-13.4)	3.5 (1.7-7.0)
"High" in school	2.8 (1.5-4.9)	NS
Driving		
Motor vehicle violations		
>2	3.5 (1.2-9.7)	NS
1	2.5 (1.1-5.5)	NS
Driving "high"	2.4 (1.3-4.6)	NS
Chemical abuse		
Cocaine	3.8 (0.9-12.4)	NS
Marijuana	3.6 (1.9-7.0)	NS
Beer	2.3 (1.3-4.1)	NS

*CI indicates confidence interval; and NS, not significant after adjustment.

†Adjusted for age, racial/ethnic group, gender, and other deviant behaviors.

are found carrying a firearm in Seattle schools are uniformly expelled; other high-risk individuals (ie, frequently absent students, school dropouts, and incarcerated youth) were not surveyed. Moreover, victims of firearm injuries, the seriously disabled or fatally injured, are excluded from such a school-based survey. Data about handguns in private schools are not available.

The prevalence of handguns among high school students in Seattle is likely to be lower than in other urban centers. During 1986 through 1988, Seattle had lower rates of adolescent male firearm

homicide for both whites (3.8/100 000) and African Americans (48.5/100 000) when compared with the national average for urban areas (9.0 and 82.3/100 000, respectively) (Lois Fingerhut, MA, National Center for Health Statistics, oral communication, May 15, 1991). Firearm suicide rates specific to urban centers are not available, but the firearm suicide rate among 15- to 24-year-olds in King County (which includes Seattle) (7.38/100 000) is slightly lower than the national average (8.0/100 000).²

Previous work that compared adolescents' self-report of deviant behaviors

with actual police and court records indicated high correlations, except among the more deviant minority male youth, who underreported their criminal behavior.⁷ Kellerman et al²⁸ demonstrated the validity of self-reported handgun ownership among recent adult purchasers of handguns in Seattle and Memphis (Tenn). The validity of self-reported handgun ownership in adolescents is unknown.

CONCLUSION

Despite federal regulations restricting the sale of handguns to adolescents, the high school students surveyed reported that handguns are accessible and acquisition is neither difficult nor uncommon. In view of the high rate of firearm homicide and suicide among adolescents, this access to handguns must be addressed.^{29,30} Similar to the adult segment of society, certain adolescents will feel a need or desire to own a handgun and there appear to be few barriers to ownership. Parents, school administrators, teachers, and health care providers should view handgun availability as a major threat to the health of high school age youth.

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Urban Youth and Handguns—Callahan & Rivara

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the number of assault weapons that are domestically produced. This estimate depends on which models of semiautomatic weapons are considered to be assault weapons. If assault weapons are defined as the 49 models that were temporarily banned from importation by the Bush administration in March 1989, plus those made domestically, then the US Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) estimates that there are 1 million assault weapons in private hands in the United States.¹⁰ Another BATF estimate is much higher—2 to 3 million—when 1.5 million M-1 semiautomatic Garands are included.¹¹ These weapons were used by the US military, and surplus Garands have been sold at a special price by the US Army to National Rifle Association members.¹² They are not included among the weapons banned by President Bush and are now widely used in high-power-rifle competition.

In 1987, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Uniform Crime Reports, 1.3 million crimes against individuals were reported, and 361 000 involved a firearm. A total of 35 100 trace requests were filed during that same year.¹³ Requests to trace the ownership of a gun are submitted by police departments to the BATF. These requests may be filed to trace firearms known to have been used in crimes or found at crime scenes or to identify stolen weapons. Police departments around the country differ in the frequency with which they request traces and the crime characteristics and gun attributes that may prompt a request.¹⁴ The sample of firearms for which traces are requested is not likely to be representative of all firearms used in crimes. Despite these limitations, trace requests submitted to the BATF form the only national database of its kind.

In 1989, Stewart and Alexander of the Cox Newspaper Bureau analyzed gun trace requests to estimate the approximate prevalence of assault weapon use by criminals. They examined 42 758 requests submitted to the BATF during the period January 1, 1988, through March 27, 1989.¹⁵ Among all firearms traced, pistols (29% of all traces) and revolvers (33%) were traced most frequently by law enforcement agencies.¹⁶ Using a list of 64 models, which included the 49 banned weapons and the US-made weapons listed in S 386 (introduced by Sen Howard Metzenbaum [D, Ohio]), Stewart and Alexander concluded that one of every 10 firearm traces involves an assault weapon.¹⁷

An analysis of the major types of crimes for which gun traces were submitted revealed that assault weapons were involved in 12.4% of gun traces related to narcotics crimes and 30% of traces related to organized crime.¹⁸ Ninety percent of

the assault weapons traces involved only 10 models: six rifles, three pistols, and one shotgun. In a comparison of nine major US cities, Los Angeles, and Miami, had the highest percentages of assault weapons traces (19% and 18%, respectively); Washington, DC, had 13%, and Detroit, and New York City both had 11%. Two thirds of traced assault weapons were domestically manufactured.¹⁹

To officers of evidence, however, the number of assault weapons in the United States increased between 1986 and 1988. First, the percentage of firearm trace requests for assault weapons grew from 6% in 1986 and 1987 to 10% in 1988 and the first 3 months of 1989.¹⁵ Second, the number of importation requests for semiautomatic weapons has also grown: 40 000 in 1987, 44 000 in 1988, and 114 000 in the first 3 months of 1989,¹⁴ which was immediately before the Bush administration's temporary importation ban.

Although the proliferation of semiautomatic weapons has been documented, the reasons for the increase have not. In 1984, President Reagan removed importation restrictions on Chinese military surplus weapons, which made the relatively inexpensive AK-47 (\$300) readily available.¹⁶ In addition, a renewed interest in the Vietnam War, along with the availability of cheap ammunition, and the frequent appearance of assault weapons on television ("The A-Team" and "Miami Vice"), in movies (*Rambo* and films with Chuck Norris and Arnold Schwarzenegger), and in weapons magazines, have probably all had a role in increasing their popularity.¹⁵ In 1987, the US toy industry spent more than \$40 million on advertising new war toys that included water and dye-pellet versions of the Uzi and AK-47.¹⁷

INCIDENCE OF DEATH AND INJURY

The actual numbers of deaths and injuries caused by assault weapons are not known. While the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports tabulate the number of reported homicides by types of firearms used, there is not a separate category for assault weapons.¹⁶ The reported number of firearm homicides was 11 641 in 1988²⁰ and 8,1% of the gun traces for homicides during the same period were assault weapons.¹⁵ Even given the limitations of these data, these figures may still be used to give a crude approximation of the number of reported homicides due to assault weapons: 898. This figure is similar to the number of homicides in which rifles (764) or shotguns (1117) were used and is considerably lower than the number of homicides due to handguns (8278) in the same year.¹⁶ Statistics on firearm suicides and unintentional firearm deaths, as compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics, are not subdivided according to type

of firearm. It is unlikely that assault weapons are responsible for many of these deaths, as Wintemute et al²¹ have shown that revolvers and pistols are the weapons of choice in firearm suicides.

Perhaps the most succinct depiction of the assault weapon problem was made by the California Attorney General's Office: "The danger of the semiautomatic assault weapon is not yet the frequency with which it is used in crime, or the volume which exist compared to other types of guns. Rather the danger is the potential each semiautomatic assault weapon confers upon an individual to kill and wound a large number of people."²²

During the past year, the medical and lay press have reported on an epidemic of drug-related violence.¹⁹ Semiautomatic weapons have been described as the weapon of choice for drug gangs,^{19,23} and officials have noticed their use has increased in areas where crack cocaine is endemic.¹⁴ In Los Angeles, at least 20% of those seen in emergency departments for injuries from assault weapons were innocent bystanders who became victims of drive-by shootings.²⁴ One South Bronx, NY, hospital has determined that 75% of all the trauma cases it treats are drug-related.²⁵ Clearly, the injuries from assault weapons are taxing hospital emergency departments in large urban areas.^{19,21,25} For this reason, military trauma physicians are being recruited to relieve the work load at the Washington (DC) Hospital Center²⁶ and at Martin Luther King Hospital in Los Angeles.²⁵ In return, these surgeons receive practical experience in treating combat wounds.²⁶

Wounds from high-velocity assault weapons resemble the wounds inflicted in the Vietnam War: they are often multiple and massive,²¹ and immediate treatment is critical to survival. High-velocity bullets may set up shock waves and cause cavitation effects, resulting in unpredictable damage at sites far from the wound tract.²⁷ With low-velocity assault weapons, multiple wounds still occur, but the damage is localized to the tissues adjacent to the wound tract, and the full extent of the injury can usually be determined at the time of surgery.²⁸ A spokesman for the Hospital Council of Southern California has stated that mortality rates from high-velocity bullet wounds are four to five times higher than those from low-velocity bullet wounds and stab wounds.²¹

The estimated cost of treating a case of penetrating trauma (like that from an assault weapon) varies from \$15 000 to \$20 000.^{19,22,29} A stay in intensive care is not unusual^{19,25} and may cost as much as \$150 000,³⁰ and patients may require a long rehabilitation.³⁰ These patients need a tremendous amount of care and can be a burden on hospitals.²¹ Most gunshot

wound patients are insured by private insurance or public health systems. The hospital system in Chicago, for example, is not reimbursed for the cost of treating these patients. The hospital system in Chicago, for example, is not reimbursed for the cost of treating these patients.

The number of assault weapons is a reliable data source for estimating the costs of injuries during General Hosma center. T not including trial hospitalizations the study was \$6915 per patient these costs which is a major cost paid hospitalization.

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wound patients are not covered by private insurance, and their costs are reimbursed by government insurance programs or are uncompensated. Thus, the public bears a major share of the cost.^{19,21} The hospitals that belong to the trauma system in Chicago lost an average of \$6000 per trauma patient in 1987 and 1988. According to the Chicago Department of Health, this corresponds to \$10 million of uncompensated care charges for each of these years.²¹ It is easy to see how this can affect the fiscal viability of hospitals and trauma systems^{19,21} and for the hospitals to drop out of trauma networks.

The number of deaths from assault weapons can be estimated, but again, no reliable data are available on how many of the victims were treated before dying, or how many were injured and survived. Estimated costs for treating firearm injuries in general are available, however; Martin et al²³ conducted a population-based study of all patients hospitalized for firearm injuries during 1984 at San Francisco (Calif) General Hospital, the region's only trauma center. The cost (total hospital costs, not including professional fees) for the initial hospitalizations for the 131 patients in the study was \$905 809, for a mean cost of \$6915 per patient.²³ Eighty-six percent of these costs were paid from public sources, which is a much larger percentage than the costs paid from public sources for all hospitalizations combined.²³

The total number of firearm injuries have been estimated by applying the ratio of firearm deaths in San Francisco to the total number of firearm deaths in the United States for 1984.²³ This analysis assumes that the San Francisco ratio is similar to the ratio of injuries to deaths in the rest of the country and that the severity of injuries is also similar. When their mean cost is multiplied by the injury estimate, then the national cost for first hospitalizations due to firearm injuries was \$429 million in 1984.²³ Total direct costs (hospitalizations, professional fees, rehabilitation, physical therapy, and long-term-care costs) are probably greater than \$1 billion per year, and the associated indirect costs would be twice this figure.²³

Data sources for firearm injuries in general are fragmented and incompatible with each other,²³ so it is not surprising that reliable data are not available for the number of assault weapons, the numbers of deaths and injuries resulting from the use of assault weapons, and the costs associated with them. Health care provision systems, especially emergency department and trauma centers, need to collect epidemiological data on the incidence of assault weapons injuries and the costs associated with victims' health care, in order to enable informed decisions about assault weapons and the public's health.

PUBLIC OPINION

In January 1989, Patrick Purdy opened fire with an AK-47 assault rifle on a Stockton, Calif, school yard, firing approximately 120 rounds in about 2 minutes. Five children were killed, and 28 children and one teacher were wounded.²⁴ Public outrage focused attention on assault weapons, which were available under the same restrictions as ordinary rifles.²⁵

In February 1989, *Time* magazine reported the results of a *Time/Cable News* Network poll in which 86% of respondents felt that crime is getting worse, and 84% felt that firearm violence is becoming a bigger problem in the United States.²⁶ In the same survey, while 84% of those polled said that people have a right to own guns, two of three people felt that existing laws make it too easy to buy guns, and 89% favored a 2-week waiting period in order to conduct a background check. Fifty-one percent of those polled would make civilian ownership of semiautomatic weapons illegal,²⁶ and 77% favored the mandatory registration of semiautomatic weapons.²⁶ Opinion was evenly divided as to whether stricter gun control laws would reduce the amount of violence in the country.²⁶ Two weeks later in another poll, a higher percentage (72%) of all respondents favored a federal ban on the manufacture, sale, and possession when the phrase "semiautomatic assault guns such as the AK-47" was included. Even two thirds of gun owners favored a ban on these weapons.²⁷

Several law enforcement organizations have endorsed banning the manufacture and sale of assault weapons. These include the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Executives, the Police Executive Research Forum, the National Association of Police Organizations, and the Fraternal Order of Police.¹ The Board of Governors of the American Bar Association has called for laws to restrict private ownership of assault weapons.²⁸ Former Sen Barry Goldwater, a life member of the National Rifle Association, has said that there is no reason to use automatic or semiautomatic weapons for hunting and that "they have no place in anybody's arsenal. If any SOB can't hit a deer with one shot, then he ought to quit shooting."²⁹

REGULATION OF ASSAULT WEAPONS

Baker et al³⁰ have identified four times in a "gun's life span" when legal regulation can occur: (1) the time of manufacture or importation, (2) the time of sale or transfer, (3) the period of possession, and (4) the period of use. The most stringent regulation occurs during the time a gun is used. Possession is also regulated, in an

attempt to keep guns out of the hands of criminals. They note that laws against possession are hard to enforce and are of little value once the gun is in an individual's hands. States have laws, which vary greatly from state to state, dealing with the sale of guns, and there are federal requirements for gun manufacturers and importers.³¹

Automatic weapons have been regulated since 1934, largely in response to the use of submachine guns in violent crime during the prohibition era.³ These weapons must be registered, and an FBI criminal record check and a \$200 transfer tax are required to transfer ownership.³⁴ In 1986, federal legislation outlawed the future production and importation of automatic weapons.³⁴ In 1989, President Bush banned the importation of certain semiautomatic weapons. Federal law does not specifically regulate semiautomatic weapons, but treats them like other handguns, shotguns, and rifles,³ and it does not prohibit the domestic manufacture of semiautomatic assault weapons.⁴ According to the BATF, the majority of semiautomatic assault weapons that are used in crimes were originally purchased legally.⁴

The 1968 Gun Control Act gave the BATF the authority to ban the importation of any weapon that is not "generally recognized as particularly suitable or readily adaptable to sporting purposes."³⁵ In March 1989, prompted by the Stockton killings and publicity on the use of "sporting" semiautomatic weapons for violent crime, the Bush administration temporarily banned the importation of 49 foreign-made rifles that had been considered sporting weapons.³⁷ No pistols were banned, so some manufacturers have redesigned banned rifles as pistols.^{38,39} The US manufacturers increased production of domestic counterparts to the banned weapons and reportedly made up for the lost imports.⁴⁰ In any event, the BATF has reported that 75% of the assault weapons in this country are made domestically,^{37,40} so a ban on imports should not have a marked effect on the overall supply.

In an effort to determine what types of firearms are currently used for sporting purposes, the BATF sent out 3000 questionnaires to competitive shooting clubs, licensed hunting guides, state fish and game commissioners, editors of hunting and gun publications, and hunting association executives.³⁷ Based on these results and the BATF's analysis of weapon characteristics (eg, barrel length, caliber, and safety devices)³⁷ that are common to assault weapons, 43 assault weapons were permanently banned from importation into the United States in July 1989.³⁷

Several AMA-supported bills that dealt with assault weapons were introduced in the 101st Congress in 1989 and

1990. The legislation that came closest to enactment was S 747, introduced by Senator DeConcini.⁷ This bill sought to prohibit importation, domestic manufacture, and sale of a specific set of new weapons, but would not have affected weapons that were lawfully owned before its enactment or purchases by government entities. The Secretary of the Treasury would have been able to recommend other weapons for ban, but such additions required congressional approval. An additional 5-year prison sentence would have been given to those convicted of using or carrying assault weapons in violent crimes or drug trafficking.⁷ The bill also called for a study of the legislation's effectiveness. If enacted, the law would have been automatically repealed after 3 years. The US Senate Committee on the Judiciary initially reported the bill in July 1989, by a vote of seven to six with one abstention.¹¹

While no action was taken on S 747, similar provisions were incorporated in the Senate's comprehensive, or omnibus, crime bill, S 1970, introduced by Sen Joseph R. Biden, Jr (D, Del).¹² In the spring of 1990, gun control advocates turned back attempts by gun control opponents to delete the assault weapons ban from the crime package; first by a vote of 48 to 52 on the Senate floor, and then, on a vote to reconsider, by one vote (49 to 50). Later in the year, in order to pass a comprehensive anticrime bill, Senate conferees agreed to delete these provisions in exchange for the House's agreement to delete racial protections for death penalty defendants.¹³ The AMA supported HR 4225, the Restricted Weapons Act of 1990, which was introduced by Rep William J. Hughes (D, NJ).¹⁴ HR 4225 would have expanded the Secretary of the Treasury's existing authority to include domestically made semiautomatic rifles that did not meet the "sporting purposes" test. Within 60 days of enactment, the Secretary of the Treasury would have been required to publish a list of banned weapons. Weapons that were legally owned by individuals at the time of the list's publication would not have been affected. Although scheduled for consideration, the House of Representatives did not consider this bill before the close of the 101st Congress.

Some state and local governments have already proposed or enacted their own legislation to regulate assault weapons.¹⁵ California prohibits the sale of specific assault weapons throughout that state. Maryland and Virginia have restricted possession,^{16,17} and some cities, like Stockton¹⁸ and Denver,¹⁹ have either banned the guns or required registration. Other states and cities have bills pending,^{20,21} but there is not a consensus on exactly which weapons should be included.

BARRIERS TO LEGISLATION

The single greatest barrier to the enactment of federal legislation restricting or banning access to semiautomatic assault weapons is a precise definition of the weapons. Establishing objective criteria is proving difficult for legislators, as expressed by the differences in specific weapons listed in the various federal, state, and local bills that have been passed or are pending.

In his testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee in May 1989, Edward Ezell, PhD, curator of the National Firearms Collection at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, emphasized that the central issue in any gun control argument is the balance between the private ownership of firearms (an individual right) and the question of public safety (the common good),²² or in this instance, individual rights vs public health. Cost must also be a primary consideration, since taxpayers bear most of the costs associated with firearms injuries.²³ The AMA will continue to monitor the impact of assault weapons on public health and to support appropriate legislation to reduce this impact and save lives and scarce health care dollars.

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UPDATE[®]

TEACHERS' EDITION

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YOUNG AND DEADLY: The Rise In Teen Violence

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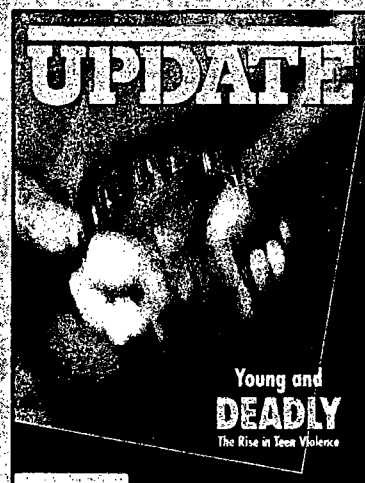
• **BACKGROUND:** Between 1985 and 1989, the teen murder rate rose 68 percent, and assaults 30 percent. More than 56,000 kids are jailed in public facilities. This issue shows readers the human tragedy behind the grim statistics.

• **GOVERNMENT TEACHERS:** One of government's jobs is to jail criminals. But what do you do when the bad guys are 15 years old? Two articles examine the debate over how to treat young offenders.

• **SOCIOLOGY TEACHERS:** Crime and punishment are as much a part of the social fabric as home and family. Two features take readers into family court and a juvenile detention facility. A third reports on the short life of a talented teenager who fell victim to teen violence.

• **HISTORY TEACHERS:** A timeline gives readers a new perspective on the punish-or-reform debate—from colonial times to the present.

—The Editors



TEACHING THE COVER

Students who have ever seen a TV cop show will understand what this cover depicts. Ask them why they think *UPDATE*'s editors picked this photo to illustrate teenage violence. Suggest that one reason might be that the stark image of handcuffed wrists immediately brings home the consequences of criminal behavior.

In 1989, the latest year for which there are reliable data, more than 56,000 juveniles were being held in public detention facilities. Thousands more were incarcerated in private facilities. Undoubtedly, many of these kids started their journey to jail looking just like the image on our cover.

ISSUE DATES FOR THIS YEAR

Sept. 7	Sept. 21	Oct. 5	Oct. 19
Nov. 12	Nov. 26	Dec. 7	Jan. 11
Jan. 25	Feb. 8	Feb. 22	Mar. 8
Mar. 22	Apr. 5	Apr. 19	May 3

BECAUSE WE SHARE YOUR COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING THE ENVIRONMENT, WE ARE PRINTING THIS SCHOLASTIC PRODUCT ON RECYCLED PAPER.



A NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Rising teen violence triggers fears that the U.S. is breeding a lost generation of children.



ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, James Russell was supposed to celebrate his 17th birthday. His unemployed mother, Beverly, had even scratched together enough money to buy him a much-wanted new coat with the Los Angeles Raiders football-team logo stitched across the back.

"I had the money hidden in a suit-

case," she says.

But instead of purchasing a present, Beverly Russell used the money to help pay for James's funeral. The teenager, who dreamed of becoming a professional football player, was shot to death four days before his birthday on a street corner in northeast Washington, D.C., about a block from his home. The killer: another 17-year-old teenager from the neighborhood. The motive: robbery.

Across the nation, in communities

large and small, similar stories abound. As shocking as it may seem, some of the most brutal and senseless crimes in America today are being committed by and against teens.

Since 1983, according to the U.S. Justice Department, murders committed by juveniles under the age of 18 have increased three times, rapes two times, and robberies five times. Homicide is now the leading killer of black males aged 15 to 24 and the second-leading cause for white youths after car accidents. And on any given day, reports the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, some 100,000 adolescents are confined in correctional institutions—nearly twice the number confined in 1965, when there were 6.5 million more people

ty years ago, parents and educators were up in arms over teenage gangs and violent "alienated youth." Such 1950s films as *West Side Story*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and *The Wild One* chronicled society's concern over "juvenile delinquency." But, say experts on juvenile behavior, teen crime appears to be more widespread and vicious today than ever before. What is most frightening, they say, is the remorseless nature of many teen crimes. Police report increasing instances of youths killing for "kicks," and then bragging of their exploits.

"We're seeing a new breed of young people who are very reckless, very carefree, and who have thrown off the inhibitions that traditionally constrained adolescent behavior," says Victor Herbert, the executive director of New York City's public high schools. "They take the attitude of, 'Why not do almost anything, why not knock someone over if they are in the way.'"

SOCIETAL BREAKDOWN

Contrary to widespread belief, say Herbert and others, the teen crime wave is not confined to disadvantaged minority youth in the inner city, but flows across all races, social classes, and life-styles. Indeed, one of the most notorious recent teen crimes—a sexual assault on a mentally impaired girl in affluent Glen Ridge, N.J.—was allegedly carried out by eight idolized high school football stars, one the son of the local police chief.

Most experts agree that much of the violence reflects a breakdown of families, schools, and other community institutions. Combine that with increasing high school dropout rates, growing drug use, and easy access to guns, and "you have fertile ground for the kind of behavior we're seeing," says William Celester, of the Boston police department.

"Youth violence is rising," says Celester, "because the problems that cause it aren't being addressed: lack of education or training for jobs with a future, housing, recreational facilities, drug treatment on demand."

Other experts blame television, movies, and other cultural institutions that feed children a steady diet of glorified violence. By the age of 16, says the Boston-based Action For Chil-

dren's Television, the typical child has witnessed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence, including 33,000 murders. Inevitably, contend many experts, some young people will imitate the brutality in real life. Indeed, some youth counselors say that sexually explicit and violent movies may be a contributing factor in "date rape," one of the most common violent adolescent sex crimes (see *Special Report*, page 5).

Whatever the causes, more and more Americans are becoming fed up with teen crime and demanding that society "get tough" with juvenile offenders. They argue that juveniles should be prosecuted as adults and given the same sentences—including the death penalty (see *Government*, page 10).

But with the juvenile justice system already strained to the breaking point, many cities and states are questioning whether filling up the jails with more teenagers is the answer. A more sensible approach, some experts argue, are innovative rehabilitation programs that get juvenile offenders off the street, but also offer them counseling, therapy—and a second chance to lead a productive life.

But while the debate over what to do about juvenile crime goes on, so does the killing. And some teens—and some victims of teen crime—are organizing to stop the violence now.

STOPPING THE VIOLENCE

In Washington, D.C., students from half a dozen high schools have come together to organize assemblies, "speak outs," and community programs on the crisis. The students have demanded greater security in schools, student mediation teams to resolve disputes, self-esteem courses, and anti-violence hotlines. "What we really need is kids to help kids," says Alonzo Patterson, of Woodson High School in Northeast Washington. "And it has to be from grade one. By eighth grade half of us are gone anyway."

Meanwhile, in memory of her son, Beverly Russell has organized a series of antiviolence workshops for her neighborhood's teenagers and their parents. "I want my son's death to make a difference," she says. "I can't sit here crying. I have to do something about these kids killing each other."

—Steven Manning

A gang member in custody.

under age 18 in the country. Such statistics have led the U.S. House Committee on Children, Youth, and Families to declare youth crime a "national emergency."

What's behind the rising tide of teen violence? Why is it happening now? What can be done about it? In this issue of *UPDATE* we'll examine—and try to answer—those questions. But we'll also go beyond the statistics and policy debates—and take you into the nation's streets, schools, courts, and prisons, where you'll hear the voices of both the victims and perpetrators of teen violence.

To be sure, there's nothing new about youth crime and violence. Thir-

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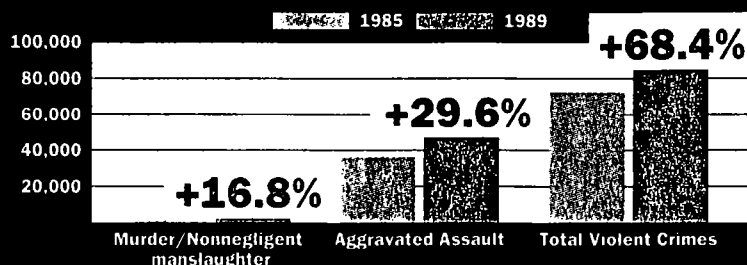
TIDE OF TEEN VIOLENCE

The story of teen crime today is a story of increasing violence. Even though the number of teen arrests has fallen 13 percent from 1985 to 1989, teenagers are far more likely to be arrested for serious crimes such as murder, robbery, and assault. As the graphs below show, the rising tide of violence means a growing number of teens are growing up behind bars.

MORE TEENS ARE COMMITTING VIOLENT CRIMES

Violent crimes are those that involve the most serious threats to physical safety. In addition to murder, manslaughter, and assault, they include such things as rape, robbery, and arson. The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines murder and nonnegligent manslaughter as the willful killing of one human being by another. Aggravated assault, which includes attempted murder, is an unlawful attack, usually involving a weapon, that is likely to produce death or great bodily harm.

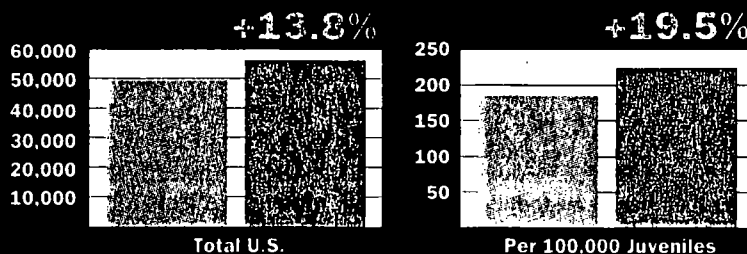
Total arrests, under age 18, 1985-89



...AND MORE TEENS ARE IN CUSTODY

The figures at right reflect the number of young people held in public facilities. Thousands more are being housed in private programs. The proportionate rate of increase (per 100,000 juveniles) is higher than the total rate because there are fewer teenagers today than there were five years ago. Ninety-five percent of those being held in public facilities were there for criminal offenses.

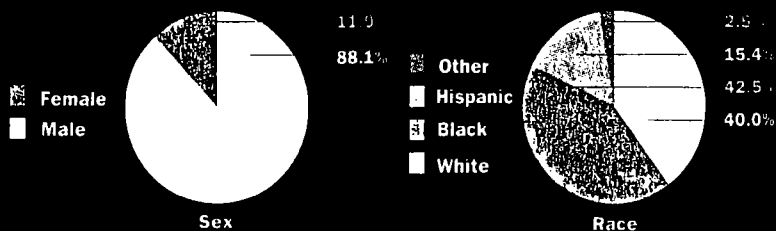
Number of juveniles in custody facilities, 1985-89

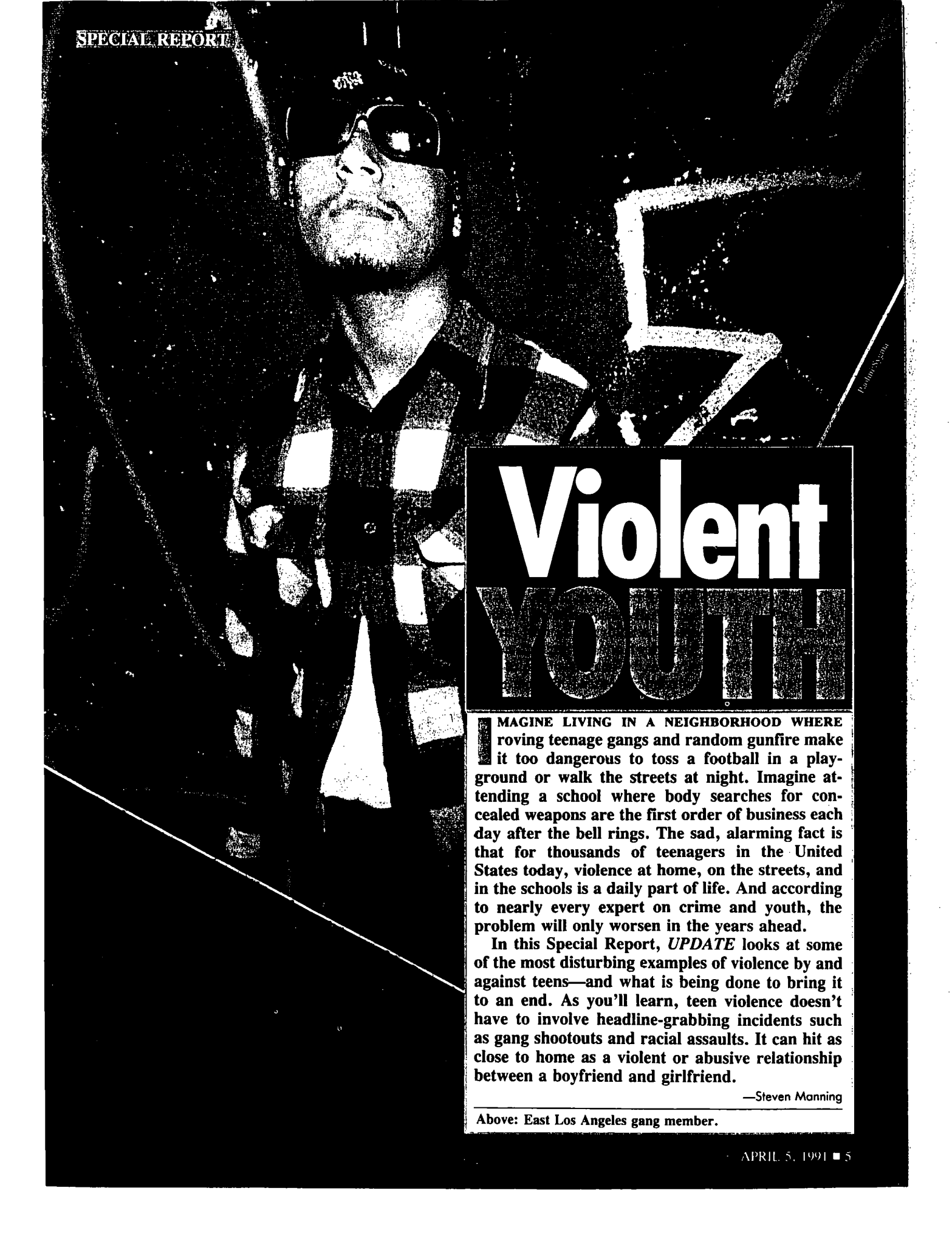


MOST ARE MALES AND MANY ARE MINORITIES

Statistics show that the population of juveniles in custody is becoming more male and less white. Between 1987 and 1989, the number of males in custody increased 7 percent, while the number of females dropped 8 percent. Meanwhile, the number of whites dropped 5 percent, while the numbers of blacks increased 13 percent and the number of Hispanics increased 14 percent.

Demographic characteristics of 56,123 juveniles in custody, Feb. 15, 1989





Violent YOUTH

IMAGINE LIVING IN A NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE roving teenage gangs and random gunfire make it too dangerous to toss a football in a playground or walk the streets at night. Imagine attending a school where body searches for concealed weapons are the first order of business each day after the bell rings. The sad, alarming fact is that for thousands of teenagers in the United States today, violence at home, on the streets, and in the schools is a daily part of life. And according to nearly every expert on crime and youth, the problem will only worsen in the years ahead.

In this Special Report, *UPDATE* looks at some of the most disturbing examples of violence by and against teens—and what is being done to bring it to an end. As you'll learn, teen violence doesn't have to involve headline-grabbing incidents such as gang shootouts and racial assaults. It can hit as close to home as a violent or abusive relationship between a boyfriend and girlfriend.

—Steven Manning

Above: East Los Angeles gang member.

GANG WARFARE

Last April, 17-year-old Ramon Rios was riding a bus in Los Angeles when he was shot and killed in front of 15 other passengers. The reason? Rios was wearing all blue, which is the color worn by members of the "Crips," a notorious East Los Angeles teenage gang. Rios's murderers belonged to the "Bloods," arch-rivals of the Crips. Rios's killers apparently assumed he was a member of the Crips—but Rios wasn't a gang member.

Rios wasn't the first innocent victim of gang warfare—and he hasn't been the last. Cities such as Boston, Detroit, and Atlanta are also burying victims of rampant, remorseless killings by teen gangs. But in Los Angeles County, the situation is especially grave. Police estimate there are some 600 teen gangs in the county, with 70,000 to 80,000 members. Last year, say police, these gangs were responsible for 374 murders. The fact that many of those pulling the trigger were as young as 13 has left law enforcement officials dumbfounded.

Teen gangs are, of course, not a new phenomenon. "They have always served as a sort of extended family, especially for alienated inner-city kids," says Dr. Irving G. Spergel, a sociologist at the University of Chicago who studies gangs. Historically, says Spergel, gangs have been formed to "defend" a group's neighborhood from outsiders, particularly another ethnic or racial group.

ARMED AND DEADLY

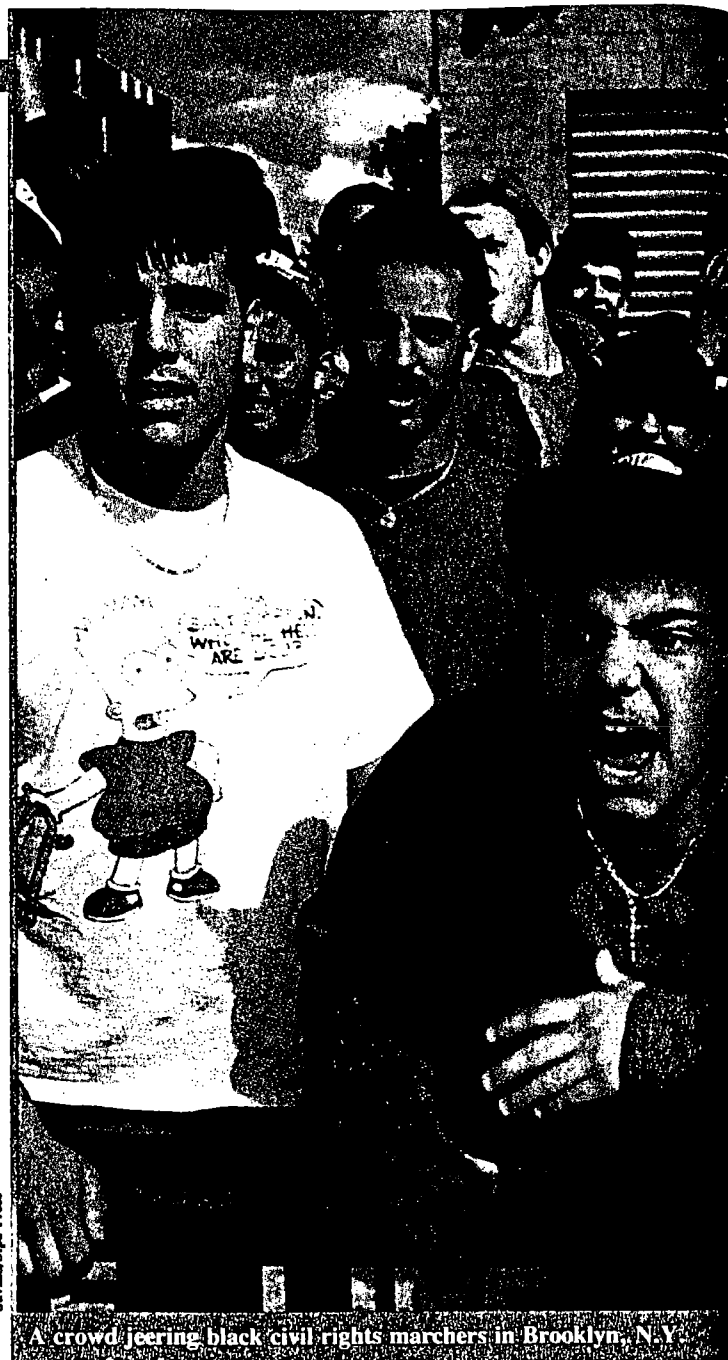
But today, gangs are fighting over more than turf—and they are fighting with more deadly weapons. Carl Taylor, author of *Dangerous Society*, a study of Detroit gangs, says that poverty in the inner city has helped create a new, violent gang culture—one where the weapons of choice run to sophisticated Uzi submachine guns and high-powered assault rifles.

In some cities, organized, well-armed gangs, or "posses," have been formed solely to operate profitable drug businesses. The rivalry between these gangs often explodes into violence. Innocent teens as well as adults have been the victims of drive-by shootings, where gangs randomly fire upon people in their rivals' territory. A rash of such killings in Detroit and Boston has made parents afraid to let their children congregate outside.

Recently, a number of cities have taken steps against gang violence. Atlanta has imposed an 11 p.m. nighttime curfew (midnight on weekends) for all teenagers under the age of 16. Politicians in Boston are calling for more police and pressing for passage of legislation that would allow juvenile offenders to be tried as adults in murder cases.

And in Los Angeles, the police department has set up special patrols in areas of heavy gang activity (known as "Crash Units"), and won passage of a law that allows them to take into custody any youth under the age of 18 who is on the streets after 1 a.m. The police department is also attempting to discourage young people from joining gangs through workshops for students and parents in local schools.

But many experts on juvenile crime believe that in addition to "getting tough," society must also address the social conditions—such as drug use and high unemployment



A crowd jeering black civil rights marchers in Brooklyn, N.Y.

ment in the inner city—that cause violent teen gangs to emerge in the first place.

"These kids don't care if they can be put in jail for the rest of their lives," says Carl Taylor. "For many of them, life is already a jail. It's time for society to help unlock the cell."

—James Earl Hardy

KILLING FOR CLOTHES

As Michael Jordan, the Chicago Bulls basketball star, goes for another death-defying, 360-degree slam dunk, his most loyal fan, Mars Blackmon, stares at him in amazement.

After Jordan returns from the heavens, Mars shakes his head—for what has to be the millionth time—and says, "Is it the shoes? It's got to be the shoes."

For many teenagers, it *is* the shoes.

This scene from a popular Nike sneakers TV ad is one in a series directed by and featuring filmmaker Spike Lee as his fictional character, Mars. Ads like these have made Air Jordan sneakers the ultimate hip status symbol among inner-city minority teenagers. In addition, the "Mike and



Spike'' ads have helped make Nike one of the world's leading athletic-apparel companies. The company earned \$2.4 billion in profits last year—a good hunk of it attributable to Nike's advertising campaign.

But cities such as Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Houston, and Baltimore are reporting a growing number of incidents in which teenagers are being stabbed, shot, and killed over their sneakers, varsity jackets, and leather coats. These crimes have shocked the nation's black community, where the majority of such incidents occur. They have also put Nike—and celebrities like Lee and Jordan—in the hot seat for pitching expensive items to poor minority teens. Some critics even claim that Nike and other apparel companies share responsibility for the rash of killings.

No one would disagree that in order to gain acceptance by their peers, many teens dress to impress. Unfortunately, many of the hottest fashions are also very expensive. A pair of Air Jordans, for example, can cost \$125. For poor teens, such items have become status symbols—especially

when their favorite celebrities endorse them. As a result, "the guy on the block who has the new Nike sneaker or jacket is considered a big shot," says Harvard University psychologist Dr. Alvin Poussaint.

But Nike spokesperson Liz Dolan says it is one thing to say that images and idols influence teens to buy a product, and another to hold Nike and other companies responsible for crimes associated with their products.

"Our ads don't tell teens to go out and rob or kill each other," Dolan says.

MORAL OBLIGATION

But the Rev. Tyrone Crider, director of Operation PUSH, a civil rights organization based in Chicago, says that companies like Nike—and especially its endorsers such as Jordan and Lee—have an obligation to address the problem.

"Nike continues to exploit our youth for money while they [Jordan and Lee] go on pitching items that are getting people who look up to them killed. That, to me, is obscene."

Last September, angered over what it saw as Nike's insensitivity to the issue, Operation PUSH launched a boycott of the company's products. The boycott has not made a major dent in Nike's sales, but it has upset many people, including Spike Lee.

Lee told *UPDATE*, "These senseless crimes are occurring not because of an advertising campaign, but because the people who are doing the killing have screwed-up values. To them, life is cheap because they don't feel life has anything to offer." Lee insists that Nike is addressing the problem through a new series of ads—featuring himself and Jordan—that advise young people to stay in school. But Lee agrees that more must be done to make kids see "that life is not about wearing fancy clothes; it's about making something out of yourself." —J.E.H.

WHEN TEENS HATE

Hate crimes—acts of violence against people purely because of their race, religion, ethnic background, or sexual orientation—are one of the fastest-growing categories of violent crime in the U.S. today. And more often than not, teenagers are the perpetrators.

Almost all minority groups in the U.S. are reporting an increase in "bias" crimes. Attacks on blacks and gays are up dramatically. So is violence against Jews, Arab Americans, Asians, and Hispanics.

New York City, one of the few cities that keeps track of bias-related crimes, reports that between 1986 and 1990, hate crimes jumped 80 percent. And 70 percent of those arrested for hate crimes were under age 19—a fact generally reflective of the situation across the country, says Daniel Levitas, executive director of the Center for Democratic Renewal in Atlanta, which tracks the incidence of racial violence.

Some of the most violent crimes are carried out by "skinheads," young men usually in their teens and early 20s who shave their heads and frequently espouse white supremacy. But most bias crime is not committed by easily recognized groups like skinheads. More often they are

done by the kids down the block—like the 30 to 40 youths in New York City's Bensonhurst neighborhood who ganged up on Yusef Hawkins and his friends' in the summer of 1989. Hawkins, a black 16-year-old, went to Bensonhurst to look at a used car. Within minutes of exiting the subway in the predominantly white Brooklyn neighborhood, he was shot to death by one of the white youths.

No single reason explains why teenagers hate and attack people they don't know, and usually know little about. One explanation, say experts on juvenile behavior, is that such actions make kids feel like they belong to an "in group"—one that defines itself in opposition to "others" who are different or threatening in some way.

Economic frustration channeled in the wrong direction is another factor. "Young people who don't see themselves going to college, or getting a good job, are looking for somebody to scapegoat," says Adele Terrell, of the National Institute against Prejudice and Violence.

Much of the blame may also rest with the messages teens get from the adult community. Stereotyped images of minorities on television, racial slurs over the dinner table, and a lack of moral leadership all shape young people's attitudes significantly. Frequently, young people are just acting out the ideas and beliefs they get from society, says Levitas. "These acts of violence are as much products of the home and the community as they are of the individuals." —Katie Monagle

SECURING THE SCHOOLS

Armed with an automatic pistol and a double-action revolver, a 16-year-old boy holds two teenagers hostage in Miles City, Montana. In Dedham, Massachusetts, a 15-year-old boy bludgeons an unpopular boy to death with a baseball bat. In the Bronx, New York, one teen shoots and kills another in a fight that began with a staring match.

Americans are growing used to hearing violent tales like these. The evening news is full of gun fights and murders, much of it involving young people. But what's most striking about the stories above is that they didn't take place on the street, but in what once were taken for granted to be safe and secure institutions: the schools.

Schools should be places where young people can learn and grow in well-ordered environments—and even escape from violent homes or communities, if they need to. Instead, for many students, schools have become just another arena of fear, where they face the same crime and violence that haunts them at home or in the streets. According to the U.S. Justice Department's National School Safety Center, about 3 million incidents of assault, rape, robbery, and theft occur in schools each year.

INTENSIFYING LEVEL

"Unfortunately," says E.O. McAllister, head of security for Dade County public schools in Miami, a "community should not expect that just because a kid's in school, he or she is safe from being victimized."

What most troubles educators is the intensifying level of violence in the schools. Twenty years ago, says Ronald Stephens, director of the National School Safety Center, disputes that broke out in schools ended up in little more



Police patrolling a New Jersey high school.

than fist fights. Today, he says, those same disputes "are being replaced by gun fights."

Many experts say the jump in violence is tied to the accessibility of weapons. More than 40 percent of 8th- and 10th-grade boys in a 20-state survey reported that they could easily get a handgun if they wanted one. The result is that any confrontation between students is potentially lethal.

METAL DETECTORS

As the violence increases, schools are taking measures to protect their students. Armed police-like security guards patrol the grounds of many inner-city schools. In some high-crime areas, students must submit to metal detectors, and gun-sniffing dogs roam the hallways.

Since most crime in schools involves theft of personal property, such as gold jewelry, sheepskin coats, and expensive sneakers, some schools are banning these items or instituting dress codes.

Tough security measures and the dress codes have been



somewhat successful in stemming violence in schools. But many educators agree that turning America's schools into armed camps is not a long-term solution.

Instead, many stress antiviolence programs that teach young people alternative ways of resolving conflicts.

Educators are also finding that many violent kids experience violence at home, and then bring what they've learned to school with them. So some schools are beginning to offer counseling to students and their parents.

The key, most agree, is reaching young people early, and getting parents involved. But, says Ronald Stephens, turning the tide of violence in the schools will not be easy. It's a job, he says, that needs to be done "individually—one person at a time, one school at a time." —K.M.

BATTERED WOMEN

"My boyfriend didn't like what I was wearing today. He told me to change, but I said no. So he grabbed me and threw me up against the wall."

These are the words of a 15-year-old girl. They appear

on the cover of a pamphlet distributed to thousands of high school students in Connecticut by the Domestic Violence Services of Greater New Haven.

Her story is not uncommon. Over the past five years counselors have discovered that, like adults, many teenagers are involved in abusive relationships—those that include physical or sexual violence.

The extent of the problem remains unclear, since many teens do not report the abuse out of fear or lack of awareness that they are in a potentially harmful relationship. Yet family-violence experts suspect that as many as 1 out of 4 high school students may be involved in a violent relationship.

Teen dating violence occurs when someone uses physical—or even emotional—abuse to assault, control, or intimidate someone else. Physical abuse can include slapping, shoving, holding a person down against his or her will, and rape.

VIOLENCE TO INTIMIDATE

While there are recorded cases of boys being physically assaulted by girls, the vast majority of incidents involve boyfriends abusing their girlfriends, according to Regina Braham, a teen educator with Jersey Battered Women's Services in New Jersey.

"When a girl hits, it is often in self-defense, whereas boys tend to use violence to intimidate," says Braham, adding that "girls usually sustain much more serious injuries than boys."

Some experts say that emotional abuse—such things as yelling, verbal threats, or intentionally humiliating a girlfriend or boyfriend—can also be a form of violence—and may be a warning signal that physical violence could follow.

Domestic-violence experts believe that most violent and abusive behavior among teens is learned behavior. That's especially true for young boys, they say, who often receive messages from parents, the media, and other boys that being a "real man" means being tough and aggressive.

Exposure to violence in the home also seems to play a significant role in shaping boys' later behavior, as compared to girls. A 1981 study by domestic-violence researchers A. Rosenbaum and K. O'Leary found that 75 percent of boys in abusive relationships came from abusive homes, as opposed to 25 percent of girls in abusive relationships.

Braham and other counselors are quick to point out that most violent or abusive boyfriends are not hostile all the time. Often, after a violent episode, a boy may be genuinely remorseful and try to shower his girlfriend with gifts and expressions of love. Faced with conflicting messages, the girl believes—or at least hopes—that her boyfriend will change.

But far from being a situation that disappears over time, teen dating violence tends to escalate if ignored. Domestic-violence counselors urge teenagers in an abusive relationship to acknowledge their problem and seek help. The first step? Tell someone you trust—a friend, teacher, family member, or counselor—about the abuse. "You'll realize you're not alone," says Braham, and begin to end the cycle of violence.

—Valerie Chow Bush



WHAT KIND OF JUSTICE?

Should violent young offenders be getting stiffer punishment?



BILLY L. WAS ALREADY due in court for armed robbery when he, along with two teenage friends, came upon a homeless woman in New York City's Central Park. On the spur of the moment, they beat her with a pipe and repeatedly raped her.

At the time, Billy was 12 years old.

Upon apprehending the youths, police found evidence leading them to believe that, a month earlier, Billy had murdered a woman in a similar rape and beating. At a hearing in New York's Family Court, Billy received the maximum penalty a 12-year-old could get: 18 months at an upstate boys camp. After a year at the camp, Billy was moved to a community re-entry program, where he was allowed home for visits. On one of those visits, he disappeared.

To critics of the juvenile justice system, the case of Billy L. is but one example of a legal process gone awry. Time and again, they say, the law allows young offenders to get away with serious crimes simply because they are children.

"DELINQUENT ACTS"

Under adult law, murder, rape, and armed robbery are punishable with serious jail time. But under juvenile law, they are not even called "crimes." They are "delinquent acts."

Unlike adults, juveniles—defined in most states as youths older than 7 and under age 16—aren't held criminally responsible for their acts by

The hallway of a juvenile court.

"reason of infancy." They are deemed too young to understand the differences between right and wrong and to know the ramifications of their illegal acts. The assumption is that society can step in, rehabilitate them, and turn them into productive citizens.

But critics say the system was built in a different era, when "delinquency" meant truancy and petty thievery. Today delinquents may carry guns, commit robberies, and even kill. The increasingly violent nature of crimes by young offenders poses a much greater threat to public safety, critics say, and should justify far tougher punishment—a simple formula of "You do the crime, you do the time," regardless of age.

Should juvenile offenders be locked up like adult criminals, or should society seek to rehabilitate them? Is one approach better than the other? And why, with either of these approaches, hasn't the justice system done better in stopping juvenile crime?

SPECIAL CASES

The basic philosophy of juvenile justice has its roots in the early 19th century, when reformers began advocating rehabilitation for "wayward youths" instead of punishment (see *History*, page 18). Over time, a whole system of courts and laws grew up to treat juveniles as special cases. Today, even though drugs, guns, and broken families have made juvenile crime a far more complex phenomenon, there remains broad agreement that in all but the worst cases young offenders can be rehabilitated under the right conditions.

But advocates of a get-tough approach say that too often, the rehabilitative approach allows violent young offenders to slip through the system with little more than a slap on the wrist. Once back on the streets, they commit new crimes. A 1987 survey by the U.S. Department of Justice showed that 49.7 percent of all violent juveniles in state institutions had been

arrested 6 or more times. An additional 24.9 percent had been arrested 11 or more times.

Hardliners got a boost in the 1980s when California, the nation's largest state and a trendsetter in public policy, began prosecuting an increasing number of juveniles in adult courts—and putting them in adult prisons. The state also sent more young offenders to juvenile facilities. In 1989, 529 out of every 100,000 California juveniles were in public juvenile facilities—more than twice the



Paolino/Sygma

Hardliners got a boost when California, the nation's largest state, began prosecuting an increasing number of juveniles in adult courts—and putting them in adult prisons.

national average.

"I don't think you'll find too many crime victims criticizing our system," said one state official. "The people who think we're locking up too many juveniles don't seem as concerned about the communities that are trying to deal with the carnage these young criminals are creating."

But even with a massive number of young offenders behind bars, California's get-tough policy had virtually no effect on deterring juvenile crime. Seventy percent of California youths who spent 14 months in a state institution were rearrested after their release, and 62 percent were reincarcerated, according to a 1989 study by the National Council on Crime and Delin-

quency (NCCD) in San Francisco.

Advocates of a rehabilitative approach say community-based programs have proved to be more effective. Offenders can be closely monitored and receive counseling and education outside an institutional environment, they say.

The leading state in this approach has been Massachusetts. In 1972, then Commissioner of Youth Services Jerome Miller closed all of the state's training schools for young offenders. Hundreds of youths who had been jailed were paroled, placed in group homes, or turned over to privately run, community-based programs. Only the most dangerous juveniles were locked up, and even those were put in small facilities of 15 beds.

At the time, the concept was considered revolutionary. But research has indicated that the system worked better than punishment. The NCCD study found that of juveniles who had spent five months in Massachusetts youth services, 51 percent were rearrested and 23 percent of those were reincarcerated—significantly lower than the rates in California.

"These are about as good results as one might expect out of a correctional system," said Barry

Krisberg, NCCD president. "Given who these kids are, what's happened to them with poverty and abuse and all, it's very, very good."

NEW CRIMES

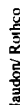
Nevertheless, Massachusetts has come under pressure recently from hardliners in the state who feel that too many teens are coming out of the system and committing new crimes.

"It's a lot easier to talk about being harsh on kids than treating them individually and humanely," says Miller, who is now director of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives in Alexandria, Virginia. "The punitive approach has been shown not to work, but no one's really interested in

"I don't think there's any military commander in the world who would say he could take a group of criminals and reform them," says Hunter Hurst, director of the National Center for Juvenile Justice in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. "I can see why they're popular. Policymakers are always looking for instant, acceptable solutions, and this is an easy sell. But they do nothing to deal with the motivations of criminal behavior."

Ultimately, the direction of juvenile justice may be determined by money. States now spend an average of \$40,000 a year to incarcerate one youth in an institution, according to NCCD. With the federal government slashing its budget for juvenile justice programs, many states, faced with already overcrowded prisons, have begun experimenting with cheaper, alternative programs instead of building expensive new prisons. Some 25 states are now moving to reduce the number of juveniles they incarcerate, says Ira Schwartz, a professor at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, who directs its Center for the Study of Youth Policy.

—Phil Sudo



Kids Do the Crime, Parents Do the Time

These so-called parental-liability laws are designed to bring mothers and fathers

THE FUTURE



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THE ULTIMATE PRICE

Should teens who commit heinous crimes be subject to the death penalty? Many people say yes.



FEW ISSUES ARE AS PASSIONATELY debated in this country as capital punishment. The essential issue—whether it's right to take a life for a life—raises profound questions about our national values and ideas of justice.

The moral issues become even more complicated when the murderer is a juvenile. Thirty-three convicted murderers who committed their crimes under the age of 18 are sitting on death row today.

In 1988, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the State of Oklahoma could not execute Wayne Thomp-

son, who was sentenced to death for a murder he committed at age 15. Killing a 15-year-old, the Court said, would amount to "cruel and unusual" punishment, and therefore violate the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

By barring the execution of a 15-year-old, the Court effectively established 16 as the minimum age for execution in the United States for those states that did not have a minimum age written into their laws. The Court reaffirmed that decision the following year in a case called *Stanford v. Kentucky*. Not only could states execute 16- and 17-year-olds, the Court said, but they could possibly execute even younger juveniles so long as lawmakers had

fully debated the issue and set a minimum age for the death penalty.

Polls show that between 75 and 85 percent of all Americans favor capital punishment for the worst offenses. And nearly half of those say that even 16- and 17-year-old killers should be subject to the death penalty.

Of the 36 states that have death-penalty laws, 22 have established a minimum age for execution (12 being the youngest age, allowed by Montana). Fourteen states have yet to determine a minimum age.

Those in favor of juvenile capital punishment say that the young can distinguish between right and wrong and should suffer the consequences of their acts. In addition, they say, the death penalty would deter teenage violence and ease the burden on an overcrowded prison system.

AGE OF ADULTHOOD

Many people oppose the death penalty for criminals of any age, believing it is morally wrong. But others support the death penalty for adults and not for juveniles. They believe the line should be drawn at the very least at age 18, which is often considered the beginning of adulthood.

"The magic number 18 presumes an adult state of mind," says Victor Streib, professor of law at Cleveland State University and author of the book *Death Penalty for Juveniles*.

A 16- or 17-year-old, experts say, is still maturing emotionally and intellectually. If society deems these teens too young to vote, drink, or join the armed forces, how can they be seen as adults when it comes to crime?

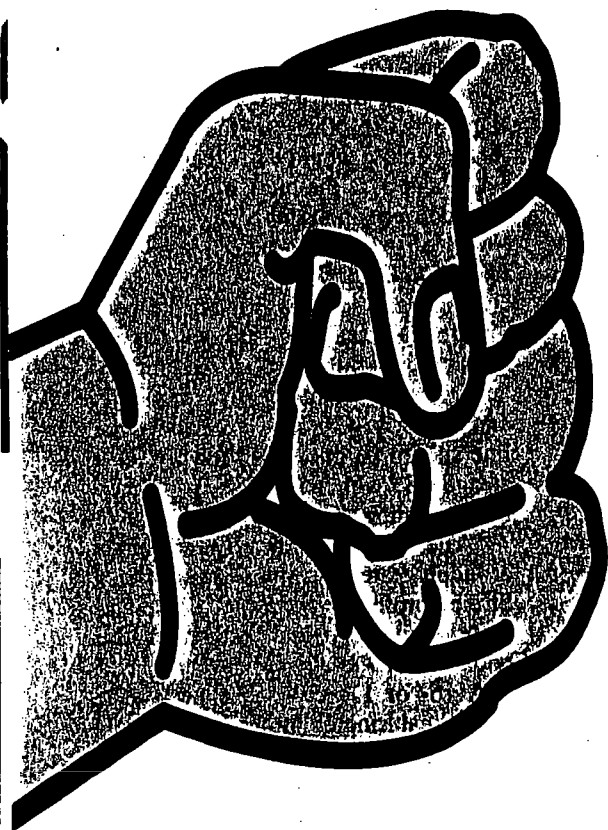
Many people also believe that young people have a much better chance of rehabilitation than adults. Look at Paula Cooper, they say. At the age of 15 she was convicted of brutally murdering an 85-year-old Bible teacher. Now 21, she is serving a lifetime prison sentence.

But since her life in prison began, Paula has completed her high school equivalency exams and taken college correspondence courses. She says she wants to help prevent other kids from making the mistakes she made.

—Leslie Fraust

Above: Wayne Thompson in 1988.

A Day In COURT



This is a crazy place," says a lawyer looking around one of the packed and noisy waiting rooms at Manhattan Family Court in New York City. It certainly looks chaotic, with babies crying, children chasing each other over chairs, families arguing, and lawyers dashing between courtrooms.

But step out of the waiting area into any of the small, modern courtrooms, and the atmosphere changes drastically. Indeed, few places in New York City are as solemn and formal as this one. The fates of children, teenagers, and their parents are decided here. Families are taken apart and reassembled. Teenagers—and often younger children—are tried for crimes like drug dealing, armed robbery, and murder. And neglected and abused children are taken away from their parents, often forever.

The judges, lawyers, social workers, and support staff who work here struggle with a staggering load of cases. Young court-appointed lawyers typically handle 70 or 80 cases simultaneously. Case workers for the Child Welfare Agency, which investigates thousands of cases every year, say they are swamped with work.

Cases can take months to creep through the overloaded system. And when they finally do arrive in court, they are often resolved with dizzying speed. The average teen offender is in front of a judge for about three minutes.

Juvenile justice systems vary from state to state. In New York State, all juvenile cases are heard in Family Court. In some particularly violent cases, however, teens are tried as adults.

There are no juries in Family Court; cases are decided by judges. Usually there are no onlookers. But in March, *UPDATE* was invited behind the scenes as a guest of the Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Division, whose lawyers represent children. We discovered a world of great complexity and often terrible sadness. But we also met many inspired and committed people. What you'll see on the following page are four of the scenes we witnessed. The names and some of the details have been changed. But each one offers a snapshot of life in Family Court.

—Lauren Tarshis

Courtroom 2B: Selling Crack

Fifteen-year-old Michael was arrested for dealing drugs. But before he can go on trial, a judge must determine whether the officers who arrested him had "probable cause" to make the arrest: whether they had strong reason to suspect that Michael had actually committed a crime. If the judge finds probable cause, Michael will come back next week for an actual juvenile-delinquency hearing.

Michael, who looks several years younger than 15, is accompanied by his mother, who has the same baby face as her son. She can't afford a private attorney. So the court has appointed one, a young woman who has a good reputation but is overworked and clearly tired. The prosecuting attorney isn't "L.A. Law" slick, either. But he's obviously more prepared than Michael's lawyer, as he questions the two arresting officers, one after another.

Both officers testify that they watched Michael sell four vials of crack to a young woman on a crowded Manhattan street corner. They were undercover at the time, standing just five feet away from him. Michael listens quietly, with his eyes fixed on the desk in front of him. His mother looks bewildered and frightened.

The hearing lasts about 20 minutes. The judge rules that the officers did indeed have probable cause for making the arrest.

Michael's lawyer asks that Michael be released in his mother's custody until next week's trial. The prosecuting attorney disagrees, telling the judge that Michael's mother is currently under investigation for child neglect. Michael, he says, hasn't been to school even once all year.

The judge concurs, and orders Michael locked up. After Michael is led away in handcuffs, the judge leafs through the paperwork of his case. "They have him," he says, shaking his head.

Courtroom 1B: Parental Neglect

She is a crack addict, and so is her husband. Two years ago, they were found guilty of child neglect and their 2-year-old son was placed with a foster family. Last year they had another son, born addicted to crack. He, too, was taken away from them. Today, a judge will decide whether to terminate their parental rights, which would free the children for permanent adoption by their foster families.

Such cases are among the most serious to come before a Family Court judge. If he decides to terminate parental rights, the couple will no longer be parents in the eyes of the law. They might never see children again. Yet neither parent has shown up for today's hearing—not a good sign.

A Child Welfare Agency social worker has been dealing closely with the parents for the past two years. In his testimony, he says that he had urged the couple to seek counseling and drug treatment, and to beef up their basic parenting skills. Both parents obviously love their children and miss them deeply, he says. But neither one took his advice, despite repeated warnings that they could lose their children.

The social worker also reports that the couple rarely saw their children on visits arranged by the Child Welfare Agency. And on the one visit they did attend, the agency was disturbed by what it saw. The mother didn't know how to diaper the baby or hold a bottle. The father, sensing that his infant was hungry, offered him Doritos and Sprite.

Since the children's natural parents are not present in the courtroom, the judge wastes little time. Parental rights are officially terminated. The lawyers and social workers leave quickly to make room for the next case, also a parental-rights termination case, which is about to begin.

Courtroom 5A: Subway Mugging

The girls are sisters. Theresa is 14 and Michele is 15. And both of them have babies. They're here today because they were found guilty of mugging another teenage girl in a Manhattan subway station. They grabbed the girl's purse and ripped her heavy gold hoop earrings from her ears and escaped onto the streets. They were caught hiding in a nearby restaurant, arrested, and convicted in a hearing held last week.

Today they're in court for sentencing, both crisply dressed in Levi jeans and high-style sheepskin coats. Michele sits proudly and looks directly at the judge as he speaks. Theresa wipes tears from her eyes and clutches the hand of her young aunt, who has accompanied the girls today.

Their court-appointed lawyer recommends a light sentence: probation for one year. This would require them to attend high school and meet with a probation officer once a month. The lawyer tells the judge that both girls are doing well in a support group for new mothers held at their high school.

A social worker for the Child Welfare Agency and the girls' probation officer recommends "strict" probation for 18 months: weekly probation meetings and possible restrictions on their social lives.

Michele gets the lighter sentence: probation for 12 months. But Theresa, who exhibited what her lawyer later calls "an attitude" during last week's trial, gets 18 months of strict probation. "I'm letting you walk out of here today," the judge says sternly before dismissing them. "But if I see you back here for anything, I'm locking you up, understand?"

The girls nod and are told to wait outside to talk to their probation officer. As their lawyer rushes down the hall to another case, the girls chase after her. "Thank you!" they yell in unison.

Legal Aid Society: Children's Rights

David Waldman has been a lawyer for the Legal Aid Society for 23 years. He is currently the head attorney in the Manhattan office of Legal Aid's Juvenile Rights Division, which provides lawyers to serve as "legal guardians" to children involved in Family Court hearings. Their current roster of clients includes infant victims of child abuse and neglect, and teenage drug dealers and armed robbers.

There are 31 Legal Aid lawyers working in Manhattan Family Court. Many are just out of law school. They work long hours for roughly one-third the salary they would earn at a corporate law firm.

They spend their days rushing from courtroom to courtroom, clutching huge stacks of files. "Most of them are here because they want to be here," Waldman says. "They want to work with children. But it takes a lot out of them."

Waldman moves through the court building with the comfort of a seasoned insider, chatting with officers and fielding problems faced by his less experienced staff members.

In the midst of this flurry, he takes some time out to interview a new client: Terry, an 8-year-old boy whose foster family wants to adopt him. His natural mother was found guilty of "permanent neglect," and her rights were terminated a few months ago. But before beginning adoption proceedings, Waldman wants to determine what Terry wants for himself. He takes the boy into his office. "I'm your personal lawyer," he tells Terry. "Do you know what a lawyer does?" Terry sits in Waldman's chair. "A lawyer makes things right," he says. The two meet privately. Waldman learns that Terry is comfortable in his foster home. His one wish relates to his younger sister and brother, who live in separate foster homes. "I'm going to Disney World for my birthday," he says. "I want them to come with me."

Laurie Steiner



LIFE ON THE INSIDE

UPDATE spends the day under lock and key with teen drug dealers, armed robbers, and murderers.



TO A FIRST-TIME VISITOR, the Lloyd McCorkle Training School in Skillman, New Jersey, looks like a typical high school. The classrooms are bright and sunny. The library is well-stocked and decorated with posters of Michael J. Fox, Oprah Winfrey, and other celebrities urging students to read. And between classes, students clad in up-to-the-minute jeans and sneaker styles laugh and joke with each other and their teachers.

But McCorkle isn't typical, and neither are its students. The school is a prison for young offenders: murder-

ers, rapists, drug dealers, and armed robbers, among others.

There are 180 kids here, 175 boys and 5 girls, all between the ages of 13 and 17. They attend regular classes and after-school clubs like graphic arts, football, and basketball. But the classroom doors are locked from the outside and guarded by uniformed officers. And no one goes home after school.

Inmates live in the school's small compound in "cottages" that sleep 20 and are guarded around the clock. Most are serving sentences ranging from six months to two years. Many are here for the second or third time.

But despite the serious crimes many

inmates have committed and the fierce reputation of "reform schools" like McCorkle, both staff members and inmates agree that the atmosphere is as calm—if not quite as quiet—as the hills and small towns that surround the school.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

McCorkle's staff maintains order through a sometimes awkward combination of strict discipline and positive reinforcement. Inmates follow an inflexible daily program that includes classes, meals, cleaning, sports, and activities. Troublemakers are saddled with extra cleaning duties: four hours of floor buffing or toilet scrubbing. Others are barred from receiving visitors or from attending Friday night movies.

Inmates who cause serious problems—particularly violent ones—are locked up for a day or two in one of the cells on the far end of the compound. Repeat offenders are usually shipped out to more secure facilities.

A rigid routine and code of behavior is critical to keeping McCorkle peaceful. "Keep them busy from 7:00 in the morning until 8:00 at night and they don't have time to beat each other and make trouble," says Director of Education Beth Robbins.

But Robbins doesn't believe that discipline alone is the right way to handle young criminals. "A lot of these kids have been abused all of their lives: physically, mentally, and sexually," she says. "They have no self-esteem; they think they're nobody. We might be the first people in their lives who actually do what we say we'll do. We have to establish a bond of trust with them. And then they can start to develop with us."

SELF-WORTH

Since joining the staff seven years ago, Robbins has instituted programs and policies designed to help kids gain a sense of self-worth and control over their lives. Without both, she believes, "her kids" are doomed.

Every morning kids meet in small groups to discuss their problems and concerns. The staff encourages bat-

Above: "Robert" ponders life outside.

ting inmates to resolve their problems themselves. "We'll break up a fight, but then we'll get the two of them together to talk," she says. "You have to realize that on the streets they had to act with violence for their survival. Here we try to teach them how to talk."

Good behavior is rewarded with shortened sentences and expanded privileges. They include weekend trips home, group outings, vocational classes at a nearby technical school, or paid jobs at the Dunkin' Donuts or Burger King in town.

But the most significant facet of McCorkle's system is its state-accredited academic program. Inmates now get credit for the classes they pass, credit that can be applied toward a diploma at their home high school.

"Three years ago, I had my first graduate," she says. "He stood up on the stage and we announced that he was a high school graduate and that he had a diploma not from us, but from his own school. This was a high-status kid, very popular here, in for murder. When he got his diploma, he got a standing ovation, and after that it was like, 'Miss Beth, can I get my diploma too?' It really turned the tide here."

"NOT WASTING MY LIFE"

Tony, a convicted drug dealer, agrees. "Going to school and having structure makes it feel like I'm not wasting my time and my life," he says. This is Tony's second stint at McCorkle and, at age 17, he's one of the older inmates. He talks about the place with the wisdom of a tired veteran. "The staff treats you like you treat them. If you treat them right, they'll treat you right. If you treat them wrong, they'll treat you wrong," he says.

Serving time has been easier the second time around. "You know what to do," he says. "If you're smart and just do your time, you'll get out

quick. If you act like a plaything, you're going to get played with. If you act too tough, you're going to get in fights."

Serious fights and violent outbursts are uncommon at McCorkle. This is, after all, a minimum-security training school. McCorkle's windows don't have bars, and its guards don't carry guns. The most hardened criminals are sent to one of New Jersey's more secure—and less friendly—facilities.

But fights do break out and life can be rough for younger, less expe-

sey cities. Sixteen-year-old Robert's story is fairly typical. The youngest child in a large, poor family, he was convicted of selling crack. He says his friends roped him into the drug trade, and that he slowly worked his way up from a drug courier to a dealer earning \$400 a day. Although he wears the confident and guarded expression of most McCorkle inmates, he was shy and polite as he talked about his future plans of finding a legitimate job, getting married, and buying a house. "It won't be easy with just a regular job," he says. "But I'll just have to do without. That's life."

"KEEP COMING BACK"

Robbins doesn't know how many of McCorkle's inmates succeed on the outside. The system often loses track of young criminals. But there's no doubt that a great many get in trouble again, and often wind up back at McCorkle. "I've watched a lot of kids grow up here," she says. "They keep coming back. They come in as little tykes and every time they come back they're a little bigger. Some of them say to me, 'I just can't make it out there.'"

After spending more than three years of his youth at McCorkle, Tony is confident that when he is released this spring, he will make it. "I don't think a place like this can make you do good. It has to come from you. I live far from here and it's hard for me to get people to come and visit. But it's better that way, that I'm alone. Because you have to have time to think about your life and to open your mind. I've made up my mind to go home and do right."

Tony listened patiently as his visitors noted McCorkle's pleasant facilities, caring staff, and relaxed atmosphere. Is this place really so bad? "It looks OK and the people aren't bad if you know how to behave," he says. "But it doesn't look bad to you because you can leave. We can't."

—Lauren Tarshis



Inmates live in the school's small compound in "cottages" that sleep 20 and are guarded around the clock. Many are here for the second or third time.

rienced kids. On the morning of *UP-DATE*'s visit, two kids scuffled in class. And on the previous Sunday, three kids jumped a guard, grabbed his keys, and escaped into the night. As of this writing, they had not been caught.

But Beth Robbins firmly believes that many inmates prefer McCorkle to home. "Here they get three square meals, a heated bedroom, they have something to do all day long. Here they can wake up in the middle of the night with a nightmare and there's someone to talk to who cares about their well-being."

Most of the inmates come from poor neighborhoods in Newark, Camden, Atlantic City, and other New Jer-

PUNISHMENT OR REFORM?

JUVENILE JUSTICE IN U.S. HISTORY



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH YOUNG people who break the law? Lock them up like adult criminals? Or give them care tailored to the needs of children?

Americans have been asking these questions ever since our nation began. U.S. lawmakers and reformers have long

searched for the best solution to the problem of dealing with what was once called "wayward youth."

The following timeline traces that long search, from the birth of the very idea of "juvenile justice" to the difficult challenges facing our justice system today. As you'll see, our nation hasn't found it easy to balance the goals of punishment and understanding.

1600s-1700s: Harsh Colonial Law.

Early American laws treat young criminals as severely as adults. In some cases, children face especially tough sentences. In 1648, for instance, the colony of Massachusetts passes a law calling for capital punishment for any child over 16 who "shall curse, or smite their natural father or mother."



Bettmann Archives

1825: Reform Begins. New York lawyer James W. Gerard leads the movement to reform—instead of punish—young criminals. He argues that children forced to serve harsh sentences alongside adult criminals only fall deeper into a life of crime.

As a result of Gerard's efforts, the New York Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents opens the House of Refuge, America's first juvenile reformatory. The school aims to reform delinquents through rigorous days of prayer, work, and study—carried out almost entirely in silence. Its founders believe that "the young offender should, if possible, be subdued with kindness." Still, they often

resort to whipping, solitary confinement, and leg irons instead (see left).

1826-1855: Reform Schools Spread.

Reformers experiment with different approaches to rehabilitating juvenile offenders. For example, the Boston House of Reformation, founded in 1826, puts some inmates in charge of disciplining their peers. The Children's Aid Society of New York, beginning in 1854, takes young vagrants out of urban gangs and places them with rural families. The Massachusetts State Reform School for Girls pioneers the "family system" in 1855. It aims to re-create a family atmosphere in small groups of girls living together under the guidance of a supervisor.

These new approaches to rehabilitation, however, are no help to the many inmates who have not been convicted of a crime. Judges often put children in reform schools for behavior problems such as "idleness," "incorrigibility," "mischievous propensities," or "associating with vicious persons." Parents can commit their children without a reason.



Bettmann Archives

1880s: Social Conditions. A massive wave of immigration to the U.S., beginning in 1880, adds to the problem of youth crime (photo, below center). In Chicago, more than 70 percent of youths on trial are children of immigrants, struggling with poverty, disrupted homes, and a foreign culture.

In 1899, Benjamin Lindsey (photo below, seated), a judge in Denver, Colorado, convicts an immigrant boy caught stealing coal. Lindsey visits the boy's family and finds them in dire poverty. He concludes that the convict is "not a criminal, not a bad boy, merely a boy." Harmful social conditions, Lindsey says, cause youth crime. His philosophy becomes a cornerstone of the juvenile justice system.



Culver Pictures

1899: First Juvenile Court Established.

Cook County, Illinois, becomes the home of the first juvenile court. The court's goal is not to punish young offenders, but to rehabilitate them with treatment and supervision. The court becomes a "substitute parent," stepping in to save children from the negative influences that lead to crime. Unlike adult courts, which hold trials

and sentence the guilty to prison, juvenile courts hold informal hearings and send "offenders" to training schools. Lindsey, a strong advocate of juvenile courts, helps spread the system nationwide. By 1925, juvenile courts exist in 46 states.

1930s: Vagrancy. Because of harsh economic conditions created by the Great Depression, many young people leave home. More than 250,000 juveniles, nearly all boys, wander through America's cities in search of food and shelter (below). Their "crime," called vagrancy, strains the resources of the new juvenile justice system.



Robstein/Library of Congress

1960s: Fighting Poverty. Experts argue that antipoverty efforts, not reform schools, will reduce teen crime. The U.S. government launches a so-called War on Poverty, establishing manpower and community-action programs, many of which are directed at creating jobs for and training young people in poor neighborhoods.

1967: Juvenile Justice Under Attack. A Presidential commission calls the juvenile justice system a failure. Juvenile courts, the commission says, focus mostly on petty offenders, while others literally get away with murder. Meanwhile, social critics charge that children are denied their right to fair treatment under the law because of the secrecy that surrounds juvenile court proceedings.

A landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, *In Re Gault*, extends many adult rights to young criminals. A neighbor had accused 15-year-old Gerald Gault (above center), of making an obscene phone call. At Gault's juvenile court hearing, he was denied a lawyer and his accuser failed to appear. Still, the judge sentenced him to detention until age 21.



AP/Wide World

The Court rules that juvenile offenders have the right to know the charges against them, to have a lawyer, to confront witnesses, and to be told of their right not to testify against themselves.

1970s: Focus on the Individual. New research contends that crime is not solely caused by harmful social conditions. Experts note that most low-income youths are law-abiding, and even the wealthiest neighborhoods are not free from crime. Juvenile justice experts begin to focus less on social problems like poverty, and more on individual motivations for crime.

1972: Reform School Failures. Many state reform schools have become so large, overcrowded, and understaffed that experts believe they function as training grounds for criminals. The state of Massachusetts, in a radical move, closes all five of its reform schools, moving most offenders to small, community-based programs, many of them privately run. Two years later, the U.S. Congress passes laws encouraging all states to make similar efforts.

1977: Juvenile Justice Gets Tough. Responding to the public cry to get tough on young offenders, many juvenile courts are recast in the mold of adult courts. The State of Washington, breaking the traditional ban on punishment for juveniles, introduces sentences linked to the severity of the crime.

A year later, New York State

passes a law mandating that all 13-year-olds charged with murder and all 14- and 15-year-olds accused of a felony are to be tried in criminal courts.

1986: Standard Sentences Introduced. A U.S. Justice Department study recommends that states adopt standard penalties for all juveniles convicted of crimes. Previously, juvenile courts looked at the offenders' personal histories—not their crimes—to determine sentences. This means that two young people, charged with the same crime, could receive very different sentences.



AP/Wide World

1988: Drugs Pose New Challenges. New studies show that half of the juveniles held in state detention facilities committed their offenses under the influence of drugs or alcohol (above). The evidence that drug abuse plays a major role in juvenile crime poses new challenges to the juvenile justice system.

1989: The Death Penalty for Juveniles Heath Wilkins and Kevin Stanford were 16 and 17, respectively, when they committed murder. Both were sentenced to death. Their lawyers argued that the execution of juveniles constituted "cruel and unusual punishment," a violation of the U.S. Constitution. But in *Stanford v. Kentucky*, the Supreme Court upheld their sentences, explicitly allowing the execution of 16- and 17-year-olds (see *Government*, page 13).

—Leah Eskin



A SHOT THAT ECHOED

To Kevin Gant, crime and violence were never "cool." They wound up being deadly.



GROWING UP ON THE tough streets of his Brooklyn, New York, neighborhood, 16-year-old Kevin Gant was well acquainted with the world of teen crime. A top student from a tight-knit family, Kevin stayed out of trouble himself. But some of his friends were involved in the area's rampant drug trade. Others stole cars or mugged people for spending money.

Although Kevin didn't condemn his friends, the idea of teen crime deeply troubled him. "Kids don't seem to care what happens to them," he wrote. "In their community, this is cool."

So during his junior year in high

school last year, when he joined a New York City internship program at the Educational Video Center (EVC), teen crime was the issue he wanted to explore in his group's video project. Not all of his 25 fellow EVC interns agreed. But by the end of their first planning meeting, Kevin had convinced them.

"His persona was this very cool, very handsome character," says EVC director David Murdock. "But he got up and gave this really moving talk. He spoke from the heart about why kids get involved in crime. What he said really affected the group."

The video, "Youth Crime: Who's to Blame?" took the group five months to complete. The finished

product features Kevin and other EVC interns talking to teen criminals, crime victims, and concerned New Yorkers. They pass no judgments. But the mosaic of interviews presents an honest, vivid, and chilling account of teen crime in the city.

LITTLE SYMPATHY

Most teen criminals, Kevin and his friends found, have little sympathy for their victims, and little concern over where their life of crime might take them.

The video's most powerful scene features one of Kevin's friends, a teenager Kevin introduces as "into mugging, stealing cars, and dealing drugs for fun, popularity, and extra money." With his back to the camera to conceal his identity, Kevin's friend fidgets nervously as he recounts his criminal escapades, like hot-wiring Jeep Cherokees and stealing from anyone "who has something I want."

At one point Kevin asks him why he doesn't simply stop committing



Kevin Gant.

crimes. "You get attracted to the money and the fun," his friend responds. "Because most times, it is fun."

The video, which is currently being shown in classrooms around New York City, has won wide praise from critics, educators, and young people.

A TRAGEDY

But Kevin never heard any of the glowing reviews. On June 14 last year, just two weeks after he finished working on the tape, he was walking home in his neighborhood and saw two kids fighting over a skateboard. He was trying to mediate the fight when one of the kids, 15 years old, pulled out a gun and shot him dead on the spot.

The news of Kevin's death shattered his family and friends. Kids flocked to Kevin's home to be with his mother and stepfather. "I knew the kids looked up to him, but I didn't know how many until they all started

coming over," says Gail Gant.

Kevin's EVC friends were particularly hard hit by his death. "It was a real setback, really devastating," says David Murdock. "Here was someone who did all the right things and lived the right way, and violence still caught up with him. There was a real sense of wanting to do something to see that Kevin survived in some way."

So within a few months of Kevin's death, his friends at EVC were at work on another video about crime and violence, this one dedicated to Kevin. The tape, "Hard Times in Cy-

I would say things are getting worse in this generation. The attitude of kids today has completely changed. The kids do not seem to care what happens to them, and in their community this is "cool." Many more kids are being shot by other kids their age, and they have no pity.

To kids today, going to jail is something they get praised for by their friends. When they get out of jail, they get more "respect" from their peers.

Too many young children are turning to crime for fun, but in the long run they find that it is hard to get away from it. Every crime you can think of, there are kids from the age of 10 to 15 who can master it.

It is said that children are the future. If most of the children are juvenile delinquents, what is the future going to be like?

Excerpts from an essay Kevin wrote on teen crime.

prus Hills," focuses on Kevin's close friend, 18-year-old Quanla Morris, who lives in the crime-ridden housing project called Cyprus Hills. It also features Kevin's family talking about the loss of their son.

"REALLY CARED"

"It's not always easy talking about what happened," says Gail Gant. "But we didn't want Kevin to be just another statistic. This was something he really cared about. I wanted to let other kids know that Kevin was someone who was trying to do something with his life, someone who wanted to let other kids know that violence isn't the only way."

—Lauren Tarshis



JOINING THE FIGHT

No one is closer to the problem of teen violence than teens themselves. Here's how you can help.



TEENS CAN PLAY A VITAL role in battling the plague of juvenile crime. In fact, there's probably a youth organization up and running in your community. If not, you might consider starting your own with the help of one of several national organizations. Either way, you have several strategies to choose from.

FIGHTING CRIME

One way to hit the front lines is to join a crime-watch group. As of last year, there were more than 20,000 of them across the country. These

groups mobilize people of all ages to sweep crime and drugs from their blocks, neighborhoods, and schools. As a member of a crime-watch group, you and other members serve as extra sets of eyes and ears for local police, scoping out hallways or streets for drug dealers, robberies, vandalism, and any other suspicious activity.

To find out if there's a group in your area, contact the National Association of Town Watch.

National Association of Town Watch
P.O. Box 303
Wynwood, PA 19096
(215) 649-7055

If there's nothing in your area and you'd like information on how to start your own group, check with the National Crime Prevention Council. They'll provide you with information and advice about crime prevention programs. Be sure to ask for their free handbook, *Reaching Out: School-Based Community Programs*.

National Crime Prevention Council
733 15th St. NW
Suite 540
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 393-7141

STOPPING HATRED

Kids are often better than adults at stopping fights before they happen. In many schools, the idea of peer mediation—students helping other students resolve their conflicts nonviolently—is catching on. The Community Board helps high schools set up peer mediation centers and teach kids how to settle conflicts without involving school staff.

The Community Board
149 Ninth St.
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 552-1250

Also, the Center for Democratic Renewal conducts in-school workshops to help teachers and students develop positive responses to racism and intolerance. They can tell you how to organize a workshop at your school.

The Center for Democratic Renewal
P.O. Box 50469
Atlanta, GA 30302
(404) 221-0025

HELPING OTHERS

Many teens who commit crimes do so because they come from troubled families, have drug problems, or suffer from abuse. If you'd like to help them, contact the local United Way in your area, or call the national headquarters to find the office nearest you.

United Way of America
701 North Fairfax St.
Alexandria, VA 22314-2045
(703) 836-7100

Above: Solitary confinement in Indiana.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

DIRECTIONS

STEP #1: Find and circle the terms hidden in the graph to the right. Hint: They are listed in the glossary below in boldface.

STEP #2: Find the secret message. In the spaces below the word graph, write down the remaining letters, starting with the first uncircled letter on the first line of the graph. They will form a sentence about the theme of this issue. We will print the message in the next issue of *UPDATE*.

—James Earl Hardy

GLOSSARY

Adjudicate: Literally, "to pass judgment on." In juvenile court cases, offenders are not found to be "guilty" of crimes, but are "adjudicated" to be delinquent.

Appeal: A legal request for a higher court to review a lower court's ruling.

Arraignment: A legal proceeding at which a person accused of a crime stands before a judge and pleads guilty or not guilty.

Bail: Money deposited with a court to obtain the release of a person under arrest, until he or she is brought to trial.

Death penalty: A sentence condemning a convicted felon to be executed for his or her crime.

Detention center: A place where juveniles are held when awaiting trial or serving a sentence.

Felony: A grave crime under the law, such as murder, that is usually punished by imprisonment.

Hearing: A court proceeding for an offender.

Incorrigible: A legal term for a juvenile who becomes a ward of the court due to behavior that is beyond the disciplinary control of his or her parents.

Juvenile delinquent: A minor who commits an act that would constitute a crime if committed by an adult, but who is not criminally responsible by reason of his or her youth.

Offender: In legal terms, a person who commits a crime.

Parole: An early release from prison.

Probation: A sentence in which a court official is assigned to monitor an offender's behavior.

Restitution: The payment a court orders an offender to make to the victim(s) of the crime for any losses caused, property damage, or medical treatment.

Status offense: An act, such as truancy or running away from home, which violates juvenile law but is not considered criminal under adult law.

Ward: A minor under the supervision and protection of a guardian or a court.

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R	R	L	E	A	N	L	I	I	P	Z	Y	I	E	T
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THE SECRET MESSAGE IS:

LAST ISSUE'S WORDSEARCH MESSAGE IS:

"All this bull about thinking of your mother, your sweetheart, your wives is emphasized by writers who have never heard a hostile shot or missed a meal."

—General George S. Patton, on the horrors of combat, as quoted in *Patton: Ordeal and Triumph*, by Ladislav Farago.

Raising Peaceful Kids in A

Violent World

How far
children
can be safe
in a
survival

It was riot night in Los Angeles, the day after the Rodney King decision was announced. And it was a parent's nightmare. "The kids could hear helicopters circling overhead, and they saw the smoke of the fires," recalls Spencer Eth, a father of three in the Venice community of Los Angeles. "We did our best to reassure them that the fires wouldn't spread to our block and that the rioters were hitting stores, not homes." But the evening news had become all too real as violence struck close to home.

In a palpable sense, that terrifying situation may not be so very different from the reality experienced by young children everywhere who watch the evening news. James Garbarino, Ph.D., a psychologist and the president of Chicago's famed Erikson Institute—a research center for advanced study in child development—notes that in the minds of small children, what they watch on the local news—a riot or fire, a murder or kidnapping—may as well be down the block.

According to Garbarino and other experts, this is but one small part of a growing climate of violence that is changing the reality of childhood, no matter where parents live, no matter how safe their immediate neighborhood might be.

This atmosphere is made all the more overheated by the increasingly graphic "make-believe" violence children see in films and on television. By the time children enter seventh grade, they have witnessed on TV an average of 8,000 murders and 100,000 other acts of

violence, according to a study reported in February, 1992, by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Even the new wave of toys reflects the climate of violence, with sales of increasingly authentic-looking toy weaponry.

But what is a parent to do? Can we protect our children without making them insecure or paranoid?

No news is good news.

Some of the answers are coming from parents themselves. Spencer Eth, the Los Angeles parent mentioned above, is a child psychiatrist and one of the nation's leading experts on the effects of emotional trauma on children. As a parent he has set strict limits on TV viewing for his three children: Warren, ten; Simon, six; and Naomi, three.

Instead he encourages reading, watching selected videos, and other activities he deems appropriate. "I keep the kids away from most TV, especially the six o'clock news—because that's bringing real violence into the living room," says Eth. This no-news policy, Eth feels, makes the most sense for children up to around age seven or eight. "News of murders, kidnappings, children burned in fires—these all make kids more fearful. Young children have no sense of distance. If it's here in L.A., it may as well be next door for them."

Preschoolers, by virtue of their age and developmental stage, are the most vulnerable to the effects of exposure to violence, notes Betsy McAlister Groves, director of the Child Witness to Violence Project at Boston City Hospital. They are also least able to communicate their feelings of vulnerability.

The mind of a young child is like a fun-house

JEFF CADGE
NBC NEWS ARCHIVES

"I Felt Rage—and Then Fear"

BY BEBE MOORE CAMPBELL

Maia, my fifteen-year-old daughter, was the first person I thought of on April 29 as I stared at my TV set in disbelief, listening to the last "not guilty" verdict in the Rodney King beating trial. Not guilty! I wanted to scream out my rage! And my fear. My husband and I have never shielded Maia from the harsh realities of being black in America. Yet for the most part, Maia's encounters with both black and white Americans have been positive. Now her good feelings were threatened by events that I couldn't govern, any more than my father could control the Whites Only signs that were storm clouds over my childhood summers in North Carolina.

I couldn't justify the jury's decision to myself. How could I explain it to

my bright, opinionated teenager?

That day, it was my turn to carpool. Maia and her four friends were waiting in front of their school to be picked up.

The kids had heard the verdict, and as I drove them home, they bombarded me with their questions and opinions: "Did the jury really believe the police weren't guilty, or were they just being racist?" "Why weren't there any black people on the jury?" "They tried the case in Simi Valley because they hate black people there." I listened, understanding the us-versus-them mentality but disturbed by it.

I didn't try to minimize the verdict's message, but I did strive to present both sides. I told them that cases were often tried away from the scene of the crime and

that sometimes this practice had helped black people. I informed them that there were plenty of times when people didn't agree with the outcome of a trial and that sometimes even black people got away with crimes.

I was angry about the verdict, but I was also afraid of what it might mean: a green light for police abuse in the black community. I heard myself telling them—the boys especially—that when they got their driver's licenses, they would have to be extra careful in dealing with the police, particularly if they drove a new car. "If the police ever stop you, do just what they tell you to," I said, my words sounding hollow, even to me. The two boys giggled about hiding under the seats of their cars if they

were ever stopped. The laughter didn't completely camouflage their fear. I know they were scared that Rodney King's beating could happen to them.

At home, as my husband, my daughter, and I sat in the family room watching the news, which showed mostly black people looting, Maia said, "Burning and stealing are so stupid. Why are they doing this?"

Later it would be discovered that there were also Hispanic and white looters, but as our family watched the news, we saw many people who looked like us running out of stores.

"Maia," I said, "some of what you see reflects anger about Rodney King. Some of it is rage and frustration about being poor. And there are some people who are just taking advantage of

a chaotic situation. People need to learn to show their anger in responsible ways." I hoped I wasn't sounding too preachy.

To my surprise, Maia replied, "Yeah—like having demonstrations. Everybody could go march at the police station or city hall. Or hold a general strike, like in South Africa." "And people can show their dissatisfaction by voting," I put in. Maia nodded.

The media's depiction of African Americans as opportunistic criminals isn't the image that I want my child or godchildren to have of their people. And four white men beating a black man isn't the image of America that I want Maia to embrace. But whether I like it or not, these are the impressions that bombard my child. There is racism and hatred in America, and sometimes they come out.

There is poverty and anger, and at times they explode. If I am to guide Maia into adulthood, I have to give

her tools for negotiating real life.

In the aftermath of the King verdict, the instrument of healing was a broom. On Friday morning, Maia, some of her friends and their parents, and I began cleaning one of the damaged shopping centers in our neighborhood. As we picked up debris and swept, we were joined by white and Hispanic people. There was a spirit of camaraderie and purpose as people worked together. Within hours the area was clean, and for the first time in three days, my daughter was smiling.

Perhaps this was the best lesson of all: that hidden in the ruins of devastation and trampled dreams, there is the possibility of healing and rebirth, for a people and for America.

Bebe Moore Campbell is a novelist and the author of *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine* (Putnam).

Violent World (Continued)

mirror, explains Eth. "Some things loom much larger than life, while others seem much smaller. And violence is one of those things that get larger and more frightening." For that reason, he adds, parents should try to evaluate material—whether a television show, a scene in a movie, or a storybook—through their child's eyes.

How can a parent know whether something is too scary for a particular child? One way, says Eth, is to ask children what they dreamed about the night before. Reports of scary dreams are often a sign that something the day before was too anxiety-provoking. Kids aren't always able to talk about their dreams, but parents can suggest drawing them on paper or play-acting them. "That way you can see what's frightening to children and whether you can make a change, like shutting off a certain TV show," he notes. It's also an opportunity for parents to draw closer to their children, he adds, to clear up misconceptions, and to help them work through anxieties.

Does TV make kids aggressive?

While most of us worry about the fears induced by violence, others are concerned that violence may cause their children to become more aggressive, turning them into junior Ninjas and Cat Women.

Of course, many parents who, like myself, remember watching westerns—and other films rife with violence—as children, did not grow up to be particularly aggressive. So it is reasonable for us to have doubts that the violence on Saturday-morning cartoons or action series that our children watch really makes much difference.

But scientific data challenge this blasé attitude.

particularly for children with a preference for violent TV. Perhaps the strongest evidence that such exposure to television violence can make children more aggressive is a landmark 30-year study conducted by Leonard Eron, Ph.D., chairman of the APA's commission on Violence and Youth.

In testimony he gave to Congress last March, Eron was blunt: "We have come to believe that a vicious cycle exists in which TV violence makes children more aggressive, and these more aggressive children turn to watching more violence."

Eron's study started early in 1960, with interviews of 875 eight-year-old boys and girls and most of their parents. The study was originally intended to look at the link between parental discipline and aggressivity. But an unexpected finding sent the study in another direction: For boys especially, the more violent the programs they watched, the more aggressive they were in school.

That single relationship did not tell Eron which was cause and which effect: after all, more aggressive boys may simply be choosing to watch violent programs. But ten years later, in late 1970, he again interviewed about half the boys and girls. He found that watching violent TV shows at age eight was strongly related to how aggressive the boys were at nineteen.

Most significant, boys who were not particularly aggressive at eight but who had a strong appetite for violent TV had become highly aggressive at nineteen.

Once again, in 1981, when most of the children had now reached age 30, Eron tracked down 409 of them. He found that the heaviest viewers of TV at age eight were now those who had been convicted of the more serious crimes, in-



Bebe Moore Campbell, far left, with her husband, Ellis Goodman Jr., and daughter Maia.

"Why Is This Happening, Mom?"

BY CHARLENE MARMER SOLOMON

Just when I think that my children's lives have returned to normal, something happens to remind me that the Los Angeles riots have left scars.

Months after the melee, my eleven-year-old son startles when he hears a car backfire. My six-year-old daughter has intermittent nightmares. In subtle ways they have changed.

I was born in L.A. and have always loved this city. My children, Andrew and Elizabeth, go to public school within walking distance of our house. Their school is a model of the best of America: White, black, Hispanic, and Asian children all learn together side by side.

But that peace was shattered on April 29, 1992.

I was driving Elizabeth and her friends home from ballet class when I heard the Rodney King verdict on the radio. I rushed home and turned on CNN. I encouraged Elizabeth to go into her room and play as my son and I watched a man being pulled from his truck and beaten. Later we saw people setting buildings on fire.

"Why is this hap-

pening, Mom?" Andrew asked. "That's not going to make things better."

I could think of many reasons that people would be this angry, yet it was too complicated to explain to my child. And underneath it all I agreed with his simple, childlike truth: Violence wouldn't make things better.

"You're right," I said. "This isn't the way to make their feelings known."

At bedtime, Elizabeth was obviously upset. I read to her, and before I tucked her in, I reassured her, "We're all safe here."

Thursday dawned smoky. The kids' elementary school began to feel the effects. The African-American children from the central city didn't come. There was too much chaos at the bus pickup locations. By the end of the day, the principal was worried about sending the Korean children home because she didn't know what conditions they'd encounter.

That night was very eerie. It was dead quiet. Every once in a while we'd hear a helicopter, presumably the police. The city was under siege—as was my little girl's sleep. She

began having nightmares.

My friends and I had been talking constantly after the verdict. The day before, we'd talked about justice and equality. Now we talked about safety. Was it paranoid to have the kids sleep in our room? One friend moved her daughter from a front bedroom because she was worried about gunfire.

The schools closed Friday. It was the first time my kids weren't overjoyed by a vacation day. For Elizabeth it was especially devastating; I was to bring cupcakes to school for her birthday party.

We encouraged our kids to share their feelings. "I think the verdict was racist," ventured Andrew. "Why didn't they have any black jurors? Why do some people get away with crimes and others don't?" How could I explain a situation that seemed unfair to me, without destroying his faith in the "system?"

"Our system of justice isn't perfect," I told him. "But it never justifies harm-

ing innocent people. Violence is wrong."

"I'm worried about the kids in my class who live near the riots," he said. "Will they be all right?"

The only reassurance I could offer was to tell him that his classmates' parents were taking care of them just as we were taking care of our children.

On Monday when school reopened, I sat in on the sixth-grade class discussion. The verdict had angered the children, but the violence scared them.

"I can understand why they did it at first," said one, "but after a little while, it just seemed like all they wanted was something for free."

"One mother brought her baby," said a girl. "I felt bad for the baby."

"What could people have done instead?" asked Fern Goldstein, the teacher.

The children talked about gun control and racism. They talked about equality and fairness. In the end they talked about how they would make life different as they grew up. ●

Charlene Marmer Solomon writes about psychology and relationships.

Below: the author with her children, Andrew and Elizabeth, and husband, Alan.

Violent World (Continued)

cluding crimes of violence, and who were most likely to use physical force in disciplining their own children. Most remarkably, their children were now showing a stronger preference than most others for more violent TV shows.

If the relatively mild violence of 1960's TV shows could produce this link to aggression, consider what today's might do. "Today there is more portrayal of real destruction, more blood and gore, and more fusion of sex and violence in movies and action TV shows than in those of the 1950's and 1960's," according to Matthew Schiff, M.D., a child psychiatrist in Long Branch, New Jersey.

What parents—and schools—can do.

Schiff points out that an even more important message than what children watch is the model their parents offer, especially as disciplinarians. "My two boys are twenty months apart," says Schiff. "I set a rule in my house that there would be no hitting in anger. Play wrestling was okay, but not real fights."

Research at Yale University, in New Haven, Connecticut, bears out the importance of a parent's example. "The kid who watches action-adventure violence and whose parents themselves use physical violence—that's the kid who will be most aggressive, hitting other children and destroying others' property," says Dorothy Singer, Ed.D., a professor of psychology at Yale University, who has studied schoolchildren rated by their teachers as the most aggressive. "Children imitate what they see."

But the news is not all bleak. Perhaps the most encouraging development is that schools are beginning to take on the task of helping children learn ways to

Make-believe violence has far less emotional impact on a child than being in the presence of actual violence. Whether it's seeing a fight, a shooting, or an auto accident with someone seriously injured, witnessing such violence is traumatic.

The signs that a child is suffering from the effects of posttraumatic-stress syndrome include:

- Repeatedly reenacting the violent scene during play or in drawings;
- Nightmares about the violent events;
- Startling or crying more easily than before;
- Fearfulness of things related to the violence (e.g., the sounds of sirens);
- Being afraid to sleep in a room alone;
- Unwillingness to go

handle their own aggression more constructively and to settle disputes peacefully.

Typical is the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, developed by Educators for Social Responsibility, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The program is now taught in different parts of the country, including many of the most violence-plagued New York City public schools. "We help kids short-circuit conflicts by teaching them skills like active listening. At the start of an argument, one kid acknowledges the other's feelings—and tells him her own, without putting him down. It de-escalates the moment," says Linda Lantieri, who is director of the New York City program.

The program, tailored to any grade level from kindergarten through high school, teaches kids that when they are pushed or hit, or called a name, if their next move is a violent

places associated with the violence.

If these symptoms continue for more than a week or two after the violent event, a child needs help from a professional therapist who specializes in working with children. Even if the symptoms disappear, however, children will need opportunities to talk over the experience at any point.

"If the child's home is otherwise secure, the news is good," says James Garbarino, Ph.D., of the Erikson Institute, and author of *Children in Danger* (Jossey-Bass). "Psychological first aid should produce a quick recovery."

The "first aid" involves the following steps:

- Persuade your child that what has happened

was highly unusual, an aberration in an otherwise safe and predictable world.

● Be a patient listener, letting your child retell the incident as often as she needs to, and offering the same reassurances each time she does.

● Clarify any misapprehensions that your child may have about what happened. "Kids will have distortions that can fan their fears," says Garbarino. "It helps to ask them, 'What did you think happened? Is there something you're afraid of now?' Provide accurate, age-appropriate information in terms they can understand."

● Spend extra time together, and pay special attention to the traumatized child in order to make him feel protected and safe.

—D.G.

When Violence Hits Home What to do when a child is a witness.

vises that parents:

● Carefully screen violent images in the media for young children.

● Reassure them that the dangers they hear about are not likely to hurt them.

● Be realistic, but give a balanced picture. "Don't emphasize only the dangers, for instance, of kidnappers. You want your child to feel that if he needs help, most people can be trusted."

● Preserve time together with children, and fight its erosion in your schedule. Parental absence can feed a sense of vulnerability.

● Give your child a sense of regularity and routine. "Children who learn that the world is a predictable place create a secure social map," says Garbarino. "This security in itself makes it easier to deal with any trauma." ●

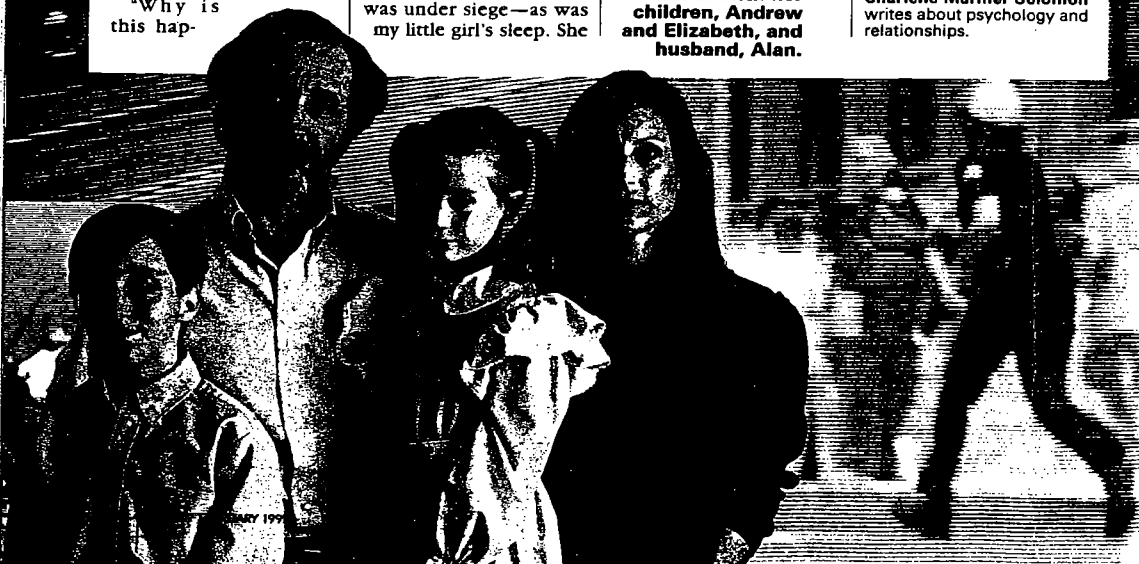
Daniel Goleman, Ph.D., covers psychology for *The New York Times*. He is coauthor of *The Consumer's Guide to Psychotherapy* (Fireside/Simon & Schuster).

Kinder, gentler kids.

But what can parents do on their own to raise secure and gentle children in a violent world?

"Kids are not prepared for the violence of the world by being treated harshly," says James Garbarino, of the Erikson Institute. A loving home and a secure childhood are the first line of protection.

More specifically, he ad-



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COVER Optical image of a 6.0-micrometer-thick single-crystal diamond film grown by chemical vapor deposition, together with gem-cut natural diamonds. Strain in the crystal causes the various colors in polarized light. Such films may form the basis for new kinds of electronic and optical devices. See Editorial, page 1637, and Molecule of the Year, p. 1640. [Diamond film made by A. Badzian and T. Badzian, micrograph by Barry Scheetz, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802; photograph of gem-cut diamonds by Randy Duchaine/The Stock Market]

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Mechanisms in the Cycle of Violence

KENNETH A. DODGE, JOHN E. BATES, GREGORY S. PETTIT

Two questions concerning the effect of physical abuse in early childhood on the child's development of aggressive behavior are the focus of this article. The first is whether abuse per se has deleterious effects. In earlier studies, in which samples were nonrepresentative and family ecological factors (such as poverty, marital violence, and family instability) and child biological variables (such as early health problems and temperament) were ignored, findings have been ambiguous. Results from a prospective study of a representative sample of 309 children indicated that physical abuse is indeed a risk factor for later aggressive behavior even when the other ecological and biological factors are known. The second question concerns the processes by which antisocial development occurs in abused children. Abused children tended to acquire deviant patterns of processing social information, and these may mediate the development of aggressive behavior.

IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT CHILD MALTREATMENT HAS occurred since the beginning of civilization (1), it was only several generations ago that modern society finally began to recognize the enormity of this problem (2). Testimony before the U.S. Congress indicates that in the United States alone, billions of dollars are spent every year in the medical, psychosocial, and social service treatment of physically abused children (3). Little is known

empirically, however, of the long-term consequences of early abuse or of the mechanisms by which abuse might have an impact on behavioral development.

It is now becoming established that being the object of physical harm by an adult is a risk marker for the development of violent behavior toward others later in life (4). Early retrospective and clinical case studies are being supplanted by prospective, controlled studies to demonstrate this risk (5, 6). For example, Widom (7) reported that individuals who had been identified by juvenile courts as abused or neglected during childhood were 42% more likely than controls to perpetuate this cycle of violence by obtaining a criminal record of violence as adults. Methodological problems aside, this literature has yet to resolve two major questions regarding this cycle of violence. These questions are considered in this article, and empirical findings are reported that shed light on this topic.

What Is the Risk Factor in Child Abuse?

The first question concerns possible related factors that might account for the increased risk that is associated with early physical harm. Almost all prospective studies in this area have followed children who have been brought to the attention of juvenile courts or human service agencies (5, 7). These studies confound the experience of abuse with subsequent actions by these agencies, which usually involve separation of the child from her or his parents, foster home placement, labeling of the child and family, or other drastic measures that might account for the reported increased risk in this population. Also, by relying on agency reports, such studies include only a small, biased portion of all children who are physically harmed in early life. Interviews with national probability family samples reveal that a full 18% of children have been the object of a "severe violent act" (more serious than spanking or slapping) (8) by

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parents at some time in their lives, with 11% experiencing an event in the past year (9). What is needed is a prospective study of children who have been severely physically harmed in early life but who have not necessarily been identified by public agencies. The study reported here has those characteristics.

It is also known that abuse is likely to occur in an ecological context of other risk variables (10). By this context, it is meant that abuse is more common among lower socioeconomic classes (11), among single-parent families (12), within stressful environments (13), and among families in which there is marital conflict or interspousal physical violence (14). To date, no study has assessed the impact of child abuse on later violence while taking into account these variables (15); thus, it is not clear that the experience of physical harm *per se* is responsible for later antisocial development. In fact, most studies have confounded the experience of physical abuse with child neglect, a more general problem of inadequate parental care. We focus on physical abuse and distinguish abuse from other risk variables.

Yet another possibility is that certain biologically based characteristics of the child lead adults to engage in physical harm toward that child, and it is those characteristics that are also responsible for the child's later violence. According to an extreme "child effects" (16) model, physical abuse is a marker of risk but does not contribute to the risk. There is clinical evidence that child temperament (fussiness, unadaptability, and resistance to control) is associated with physical abuse (17) and that children with health problems at birth (such as prematurity or low birth weight) are at risk for abuse (18). No study has controlled these factors while examining the possible aggression-inducing effects of abuse on children.

Through What Intrapersonal Mechanisms Does Abuse Have Its Effect?

If it is established that physical harm does lead to later aggression, a separate goal must be to understand how this effect occurs. Widom has argued that "the goal should be further knowledge of the processes involved. . . . Research should be directed at understanding how these early experiences relate to later violent behavior" (7, p. 165). Theory and empirical findings point toward social-information-processing factors as mechanisms of child aggressive behavior. According to several models (19, 20), individuals ordinarily respond to environmental stimuli by first encoding relevant cues, interpreting those cues, accessing possible behavioral responses from long-term memory stores, evaluating the consequences of possible behaviors, and finally selecting and enacting a behavior. Aggressive children, relative to average children, have been found to display chronic biases and deficits in the processing of provocation stimuli. These children display deficits in attending to and encoding relevant social cues (19, 21) and biases and errors in over-attributing hostile intent to others (22). They access many aggressive responses and few competent responses from repertoires stored in memory (23, 24), and they tend to evaluate the outcomes of aggression as interpersonally and instrumentally positive (25). These processing patterns build on each other such that a comprehensive assessment of all these patterns yields a stronger prediction about the likelihood of aggressive behavior (19, 24).

It is hypothesized that abusive socializing experiences will lead to chronic aggressive behavior by having an impact on the development of social-information-processing patterns. The two major intrapersonal theories of the effects of child abuse, attachment theory (26, 27) and social learning theory (28), both posit that physical abuse could have such effects. According to attachment

theory, insecure attachments associated with abuse may lead a child to develop internal working models of the world as a threatening place. In social-information-processing terms, these children may fail to develop appropriate attention to interpersonal interactions (that is, they fail to encode relevant social cues) (29) and may become hypervigilant toward hostile cues. Crittendon and Ainsworth noted that "such vigilance resulting from internal models of conflict and dominance could easily lead the abused child to misinterpret the behavior of others and to respond with aggression himself" (27). Social learning theory posits that the experience of physical abuse will lead to later aggression to the extent that it makes aggressive responses salient in one's response repertoire and leads one to evaluate aggressive responses as efficacious in leading to positive outcomes (30).

These theories suggest a model of the development of violence in which the experience of severe physical harm is associated with later chronic aggressive behavior, but the mechanism through which this association operates is the acquisition of a set of biased and deficient patterns of processing social provocation information. Four hypotheses are posited in this model: (i) The experience of severe physical harm will increase a child's risk of later chronic aggressive behavior, above and beyond the risk that accrues from related environmental and temperamental characteristics. (ii) The experience of severe physical harm in early life will predict the later development of biased and deficient patterns in the processing of social information. (iii) Biased and deficient processing patterns will predict the occurrence of chronic aggressive behavior toward others. (iv) Social-information-processing patterns will mediate the relation between early physical harm and later aggression; that is, this relation will become nonsignificant once patterns of social information processing are taken into account.

The Multi-Site Child Development Project

To test these hypotheses, a descriptive longitudinal study was conducted in which a representative sample of 309 four-year-old children was identified at the time of kindergarten pre-registration and then followed over time. Three kinds of information were collected on each subject: child physical harm and related family experiences (in early life); child social-information-processing patterns (at age five); and child aggressive behavior (in school 6 months after collection of processing pattern data).

Children were selected for participation from three geographical regions: Nashville, Tennessee ($n = 103$; midsize urban community, with one-fourth of the selected sample living in federally subsidized housing); Knoxville, Tennessee ($n = 100$; Appalachian rural and small urban, mixed socioeconomic status); and Bloomington, Indiana ($n = 106$; small city and semi-rural, with much of the sample from working class backgrounds). At the time of kindergarten pre-registration in April 1987, parents of matriculating children were solicited (in person at the child's school or by mail) at random to become involved in a longitudinal study of child development. About 70% agreed. Interested parents were then visited at home by research staff, who explained the project in detail and obtained written permission for all phases of data collection. Families were paid \$20 each for participation.

The sample was demographically diverse and representative of the geographic regions (53% male, 47% female; 83% white, 16% African-American, 1% other). The parents of 18% of the sample were not married at the time of the child's birth, and 29% of the children lived in single-parent households at age four (three children lived in foster care). The mother's mean age at the time of the child's birth was 27 years ($SD = 5.0$; range, 17 to 39), and the father's

mean age was 29 years ($SD = 5.6$; range, 18 to 50). The mother's median education level was 12 years ($SD = 2.4$; range, 5 to 20), and the father's was 13 years ($SD = 2.9$; range, 6 to 20). The Hollingshead four-factor index of social status (based on job status and education) ranged from 14 to 66 (possible range is 8 to 66), with a median of 38.5 ($SD = 14.1$). Eight percent of subjects came from the lowest socio-economic class, with 16%, 28%, 30%, and 18% from the other classes, in ascending order.

Assessment of physical harm and related variables. Mothers were interviewed privately in their homes in a 90-minute session (31). Following a "comfort-inducing" preliminary period, mothers were asked to recall the era between the child's birth and 12 months ago (32). They were asked questions about child misbehavior and discipline practices and then were asked whether the child had ever been physically harmed by an adult. Immediately following a detailed discussion, the interviewer rated the probability that the child had been physically abused, using a criterion of visible bruises or medical attention. Next, the mother was asked to consider the past 12 months and was asked the same questions. The interviewer then completed a rating for this era (33). Children were categorized as physically harmed if the interviewer had rated the likelihood of physical harm as probable or higher in at least one era. Forty-six children (15%) were so classified (34–35).

During the same standardized interview, additional questions were asked to assess factors that have been hypothesized to co-occur with abuse, including early family ecological and child biological variables. To assess the former, each mother was asked to describe her relationships with spouses and boyfriends during the child's life, particularly any physical conflicts to which the child might have been exposed. The interviewer then rated on five-point scales the degree to which the child had been exposed to adult physical conflict in each of the two life eras, and these ratings were averaged (36). Assessments of family marital status and socioeconomic status at the time of the child's birth and later were also made from standardized questions. To assess biological variables, the mother was asked to recall her pregnancy, particularly any health problems experienced by the child and herself during birth and delivery. Mothers reported that 6% of children had major health difficulties at birth, with an additional 21% having minor health difficulties at that time. Mothers experienced major health problems during delivery in 7% of cases, with an additional 20% experiencing minor health problems during delivery. Responses were scored on two three-point scales (0 if no problems, 1 if minor problems, and 2 if major problems). Each

mother also completed a retrospective version of the Infant Characteristics Questionnaire (37), rating child temperament in infancy. Three reliable scale scores were derived from this instrument: fussiness, unadaptability, and resistance to control.

Assessment of child social information processing. Using videorecorded and cartoon stimuli, a trained adult (blind to the child's status as abused and to all knowledge of the child's behavior) assessed the child's characteristic patterns of processing social information during a home visit. Each of 24 vignettes was presented on a portable television monitor to each child, who then answered questions about each story. The child was asked to imagine being the protagonist in each vignette, which depicted a negative event for the child (either a direct provocation such as having one's building blocks knocked over by a peer or rebuff from an attempt to initiate play with one or more peers). The intention of the peer provocateur in each vignette systematically varied as hostile, benign, or ambiguous.

To assess the child's ability to attend to appropriate and relevant social cues, the child was asked to recall what had happened in the story. Responses were scored as 0 (not at all relevant), 1 (partially relevant), or 2 (fully relevant), and were averaged across the 24 vignettes.

As an assessment of the child's tendencies to attribute hostile intent to others, each of eight hypothetical ambiguous provocation stimuli were presented in cartoon-format. The child was asked how and why the peer might have acted the way that he or she did. Responses were scored as 0 (benign intent) or 1 (hostile intent), and were averaged across the eight stories.

To assess the child's response accessing tendencies, after each of the 24 video vignettes was presented, the child was asked how he or she would respond if the provocation had actually occurred. Responses were scored as aggressive, withdrawn or inept, or assertive and competent, and the proportions of each type across the 24 vignettes were computed. Because the score for withdrawal responses was redundant with the other two, it was dropped from analysis. To assess the child's ability to generate numerous behavioral responses to social problems, each of eight hypothetical social problems was also presented. The child was asked to generate as many behavioral solutions as possible (up to 10). The mean number generated per problem was computed.

To assess the child's response evaluation tendencies, after each video vignette was presented, each of three possible behavioral responses (aggressive, nonaggressive-inept, and competent) was also presented, in random order. The child was asked to evaluate the probable outcomes of each response on a four-point scale (1, very bad; 2, bad; 3, good; 4, very good). Relative endorsement scores for aggressive and competent responses were computed as the score for each type of response divided by the total score (38).

Assessment of child aggressive behavior. Six months (± 2 months) following the maternal and child interview, the child's aggressive behavior in the school peer environment was assessed by teacher ratings, peer nominations, and direct observation. The teacher completed the widely used teacher's report form of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) (39). The aggression scale score was computed. Peer nominations were also collected because of their utility in predicting current and later violent behavior (40). In individual interviews, every peer in the child's classroom for whom parental permission was obtained (41) was asked to nominate up to three children as fitting each of three behavioral descriptions of highly aggressive behavior (starting fights, getting angry, and being mean toward others). Scores were tallied for all children in the classroom as the standardized (by z -score) number of nominations received for each item, and then averaged across items, yielding one peer-rated aggression score for each child (42).

Table 1. Family demographic variable mean scores of physically harmed and not harmed children.

Variable	Subject group		$F(1,300)$	p
	Harmed ($n = 46$)	Not harmed ($n = 258$)		
Hollingshead socioeconomic status score (range, 14–66)	33.9 (2.2)*	41.4 (0.9)	10.36	0.001
Family status at child's birth (% with mother living alone)	30	16	4.84	0.028
Family status since birth (% ever divorced)	47	26	7.72	0.006
Marital violence rating (range = 1–5)	2.54 (0.21)	2.05 (0.05)	15.02	0.001

*Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Direct observations of aggression were conducted by trained observers using a focal-child, event-based system on the playground and in the classroom. Each child was observed for 12 5-min periods, broken down into 10-s intervals, in which the observer noted each occurrence of aggression by the child. Scores were computed as the rate of aggressive acts per hour (43). The three aggression scores were positively correlated ($r = 0.61, 0.19, \text{ and } 0.20$; each $P < 0.001$).

Findings

Effects of abuse on aggressive behavior. The first hypothesis was tested by multivariate analysis of variance, in which early physical harm and sex were factors and the three aggression scores were dependent variables (44). A statistically significant main effect of abuse [$F(3, 298) = 4.01, P < 0.008$] indicated that children who had been physically harmed in early life became more aggressive toward peers than did those who had not been harmed. Univariate analyses revealed statistically significant effects of harm for the teacher rating [$F(1,300) = 11.90, P < 0.001$] and for the peer rating [$F(1,300) = 4.77, P < 0.03$]. As shown in Fig. 1, the teacher-rated aggression scores of harmed children were, on average, 93% higher than those of non-harmed children. The peer-rated scores averaged one-fourth of a standard deviation higher (meaning that about twice as many peers nominated harmed children as aggressive as they did non-harmed children), and the observed aggression rates averaged 30% higher. These findings were similar for girls and boys.

To test the hypothesis that these differences would hold even when family ecological variables and child biological variables are taken into account, multivariate analysis of covariance was conducted, with physical harm and child's sex as factors and nine variables as covariates. Four of these were family ecological variables: the Hollingshead socioeconomic status score, family status at the child's birth (parents married or living together = 1, and mother alone = 2), family status since birth (parents married = 1, and parents ever divorced = 2), and marital (or mother-boyfriend) physical conflict and violence (interviewer rating noted above). Five covariates were child biologically related variables: mother's health problems in pregnancy or at birth (scale noted above), child's health problems at birth (scale noted above), and the three scales of maternal recollections of child temperament in first year of life (fussiness, unadaptability, and resistance to control). These variables did correlate overall with the occurrence of physical harm to the child [$F(9,292) = 2.94, P < 0.002$], with all four family ecological variables predicting harm to the child (Table 1). None of the five child biologically related variables predicted harm to the child.

Even when all nine of these variables plus child's sex were controlled statistically, the multivariate main effect of physical harm on the child's aggressive behavior was still statistically significant [$F(3,289) = 3.18, P < 0.024$], indicating that physical harm is predictive of later child aggressive behavior, above and beyond any correlated contribution that family ecology and child biologically related characteristics might make.

Effects of abuse on child social information processing. The second hypothesis was tested with harm and child's sex as factors and the seven processing variables as dependent variables. As hypothesized, physically harmed children developed different processing styles than non-harmed children [$F(7,294) = 2.10, P < 0.043$]. Harmed children (relative to non-harmed children) came to be significantly less attentive to relevant social cues, more biased toward attributing hostile intent, and less likely to generate competent solutions to interpersonal problems (Table 2). These findings were similar for girls and boys.

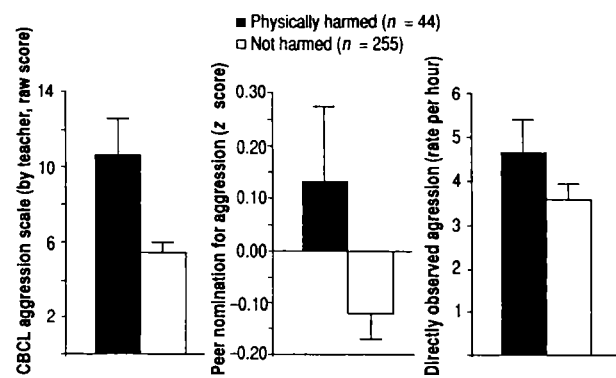


Fig. 1. Teacher-rated, peer-rated, and directly observed aggressive behavior in groups of physically harmed and not harmed children. Bar represents the group mean with the standard error.

Relation between early child social information processing and later aggression. Multiple regression analyses revealed that the seven processing variables significantly predicted later aggression (the third hypothesis), as assessed in all three ways: as rated by teachers [$R = 0.24, F(7,294) = 2.51, P < 0.017$], as rated by peers [$R = 0.25, F(7,294) = 2.70, P < 0.01$], and as directly observed [$R = 0.29, F(7,294) = 3.86, P < 0.001$] (45). Bivariate correlations indicated that teacher-rated aggression was predicted by poor encoding of cues ($r = 0.16, P < 0.006$), accessing of aggressive responses ($r = 0.16, P < 0.007$), and a failure to access competent responses ($r = -0.17, P < 0.003$). Peer-rated aggression was predicted by poor encoding of cues ($r = 0.13, P < 0.027$) and accessing of aggressive responses ($r = 0.19, P < 0.001$). Directly observed aggression was predicted by hostile attributional biases ($r = 0.14, P < 0.018$), generating few solutions to interpersonal problems ($r = -0.21, P < 0.001$), and evaluating aggression as leading to positive outcomes $r = 0.16, P < 0.005$). Thus, a child's patterns of processing social information at age five appear to predict that child's aggressive behavior patterns at a later date.

Table 2. Social information processing mean scores of physically harmed and not harmed children.

Variable	Subject group		$F(1,300)$	P
	Harmed ($n = 46$)	Not harmed ($n = 258$)		
Encoding of relevant cues (z-score)	0.19 (0.13)*	-0.04(0.04)	5.07	0.025
Hostile attributional bias (% hostile attributions)	0.47 (0.06)	0.25(0.04)	6.00	0.015
Number of responses generated to each social problem	4.16 (0.32)	4.48(0.14)	<1	NS†
Proportion of aggressive responses	0.49 (0.05)	0.40(0.02)	2.84	NS
Proportion of competent responses	0.10 (0.02)	0.16(0.01)	4.33	0.038
Positive evaluation of the outcomes of aggressing (z-score)	0.26 (0.15)	-0.06(0.07)	3.28	NS
Positive evaluation of the outcomes of acting competently (z-score)	-0.18 (0.19)	0.02(0.08)	1.03	NS

*Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

†Not significant (NS).

Social information processing as a mechanism in the effect of early harm on aggressive behavioral development. To test the fourth hypothesis, physical harm and child sex were factors, the three child aggression scores were dependent variables, and the seven child social-information-processing variables were covariates. As hypothesized, when child processing was covaried, early physical harm no longer had a statistically significant effect on later child aggression [$F(3,290) = 2.16$]. On the other hand, when stepwise regression analyses were conducted and physical harm was covaried (by first entry), the seven processing variables continued to predict later aggression: for teacher-rated aggression, $F(7,294) = 2.11$, $P < 0.043$; for peer-rated aggression, $F(7,294) = 2.20$, $P < 0.035$; and for directly observed aggression, $F(7,294) = 3.76$, $P < 0.001$. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that early physical harm has its effect on a child's aggressive behavioral development largely by altering the child's patterns of processing social information.

Conclusions

Our findings offer evidence that the experience of physical abuse in early childhood is a risk marker for the development of chronic aggressive behavior patterns. A full 36% of the children defined as "harmed" received teacher-rated aggression scores in the deviant range (defined as >1 SD above the mean), in contrast with just 13% of other children. This almost threefold increase in risk held even when the nine demographic and child biological variables were first considered. Even though nonexperimental data such as these can never be used to prove a causal relation, the current evidence indicates that the risk is not due to co-occurring family ecological factors (low socioeconomic status, single parenthood, marital dissolution, and marital violence) or child health problems and temperament. Because the cases of harm had generally not involved interventions, the risk is not likely to be due to treatment by social service agencies. Thus, this prospective study provides stronger evidence than ever before to support the hypothesis that physical abuse leads to a cycle of violence.

Analyses indicate that child abuse is relatively likely to occur in a context of poverty, deprivation, and marital conflict, even though instances of abuse were reported in all family contexts. But it appears that the experience of physical abuse raises one's risk for developing chronic aggressive behavior problems beyond the risk afforded by these other factors (46). It is still possible, however, that the risk afforded by child abuse is due to some other co-occurring family or environmental factor that was not assessed.

In contrast, child health problems and perceived temperament were not correlated with physical abuse at all. The child's contribution to her or his own physical abuse is a matter of controversy (13, 47). Although child "difficultness" has been shown to have short-term effects on parental reactions (48) and has been speculated, on the basis of case studies, to raise the chances of abuse, the current findings indicate that child factors do not account for the occurrence of child abuse. There is no evidence in our data for blaming the victim of abuse.

Our findings also offer initial support for a theory of how physical harm has its effect on child development. We found that harmed children are likely to develop biased and deficient patterns of processing social information, including a failure to attend to relevant cues, a bias to attribute hostile intentions to others, and a lack of competent behavioral strategies to solve interpersonal problems. These patterns, in turn, were found to predict the development of aggressive behavior. Moreover, the path between early physical harm and later child aggression appeared to go through

these processing patterns. The findings are consistent with the hypothesis that the experience of physical harm leads a child to conceptualize the world in deviant ways that later perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Several caveats must be expressed about these findings. Our measure of abuse is maternal report, which is subject to inaccurate recall, lack of knowledge, and lying. Alternate measures, such as official records, are equally subject to inaccuracies and biases, however, and may also be associated with subsequent confounding variables such as stigma, intervention, and self-fulfilling prophecies (7). Our logic for relying on maternal report is that we doubt that mothers would over-report abuse (thus, our "abused" group is probably accurately labeled), and under-reporting of abuse (false negatives in our control group) would serve only to weaken any correlation that we could find between abuse and later outcomes. Also, any bias in reporting by mothers is probably equally represented in mothers' reports about marital violence and child temperament. Abuse was found to predict later child aggression even when these variables (and, therefore, maternal reporting bias) was controlled. Thus, to the extent that our measure of abuse is invalid, our estimates of the magnitude of the effects of abuse may actually be underestimates.

Another limitation is our use of child behavior in kindergarten as the outcome. Numerous studies have indicated remarkable stability of aggressive behavior across time, with estimates as high as the stability of the intelligence quotient (40, 49); however, we did not assess aggressive behavior in adolescence or adulthood. One cannot conclude from this study that physical abuse has effects on child behavior that persist over many years. This question awaits further longitudinal follow-ups.

A third limitation is that we do not mean to suggest that the mediating variables that we have studied are the only possible mechanisms in the abuse-aggression cycle. It is also possible, for example, that early physical abuse has an effect on the child's physiological reactivity (either by emotional trauma or by direct physical impact to the brain), and this acquired overreactivity mediates later aggressive tendencies. We are intrigued by such a theory, but it does not contradict the current perspective. In fact, physiological explanations require cognitive counterparts and vice-versa.

Finally, one must not conclude that the effects of abuse are limited to behavioral outcomes of aggression. Even though our study focused on aggression, our findings indicate that abused children, particularly girls, are also at risk for the development of internalizing problems, such as withdrawal and isolation, that have been hypothesized to be precursors of depression. Teacher-reported internalizing problems (measured by the CBCL internalizing scale score) were 19% higher in harmed boys (mean $\pm$ standard error, 4.85 ± 1.37) than non-harmed boys (4.05 ± 0.39) and 87% higher in harmed girls (6.46 ± 1.17) than non-harmed girls (3.46 ± 0.38), a statistically significant effect of harm [$F(1,294) = 6.67$, $P < 0.01$]. It is interesting that our hypothesized mediators of aggressive outcomes, namely processing patterns of hostile attributional biases and aggressive problem solving, did not mediate internalizing outcomes. The main effect of physical harm on the CBCL internalizing score remained statistically significant after controlling for the seven social-information-processing variables [$F(1,286) = 6.27$, $P < 0.013$]. We would not expect the mediators to be the same for both types of outcomes; in fact, we suspect that internalizing outcomes of early physical abuse may be mediated by the development of a different set of processing patterns (including attributions of self-blame and expectations that aggression would not succeed in eliminating negative outcomes). Why some children follow a path of hostile attributions and aggression and other children a path of self-blame and depression awaits further inquiry.

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31. Parents were informed of the range of questions to be asked and were told of the legal and ethical obligation by staff to report any suspicion of physical danger to the child. This statement was made in the context of wanting to help the family.
32. The child's life was originally segmented into the periods birth to age 1, age 1 to 12 months ago, and the past 12 months in order to help the mother recall specific events and because of staff fears that mothers would be less revealing about current physical harm than about past behavior. The first two eras were combined, yielding two eras. In this way, mothers could reveal past abuse without fear of being reported to authorities, as long as the danger was not current. (This is consistent with local reporting laws.) In spite of this procedure, three mothers reported current abuse (by the father or a boyfriend).
33. Ratings from the two periods were positively correlated ($r = 0.56, P < .001$), and the rating averaged across the two periods was reliable, with the coefficient $\alpha = 0.72, P < .001$.
34. This proportion is similar to that found in national probability samples by Straus and Gelles (8).
35. As a check on this classification, mothers also completed the conflict tactics scale, the most widely used written instrument to assess physical abuse (8). Parent-to-child aggression scale scores for each of the two age periods were significantly greater for mothers of physically harmed children than for those of non-harmed children (each $P < 0.001$). Interview ratings, rather than CTS scores, were used to classify children because the interviewer's probes offered an opportunity to clarify actual harm and severity, thus limiting the number of abuse cases.
36. The reliability of this score was computed as the coefficient α of the two constituent scores and was found to be high (0.85, $P < .001$). As a check on these ratings, mothers completed the conflict tactics scale for spousal relationships. Aggression scale scores for husband-to-wife and wife-to-husband aggression correlated significantly with interviewer ratings ($r = 0.47$ and 0.41 , respectively, each $P < 0.001$).
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42. The reliability of this score was significant, 0.87 ($P < 0.001$) by coefficient α .
43. Interobserver agreement on this score was evaluated by having a second observer code the child's behavior at the same time, for 130 observation sessions. Agreement on occurrence [no. agreements/(no. agreements + no. disagreements)] was 96%, and the κ was 0.63 ($P < 0.001$).
44. For all analyses, the problem of missing data was resolved by substituting the population mean score. This is a common resolution that is conservative because between-group differences will be reduced. This strategy was taken because, even though missing data were rare (fewer than 3% of cases), casewise elimination of a subject with any missing data would have reduced the n significantly. Also, all analyses were replicated with a single child aggression score that was the mean of the three standardized aggression scores. All reported findings held up with this alternate score.
45. The incremental prediction from processing variables at time 1 (t_1) to aggression at time 2 can best be assessed by holding the child's level of aggression at t_1 constant. Because the child was not yet in school at t_1 , our only measure of aggression at that time was the mother's report (assessed by the aggression scale of the CBC). When this score was covaried (by first entry in hierarchical regression analyses), the seven processing variables still tended to predict later aggression, as rated by teachers [$F(7,280) = 1.96, P < 0.06$], peers [$F(7,279) = 1.90, P < 0.07$], and directly observed [$F(7,275) = 3.50, P < 0.002$].
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LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 1 STORY

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HEADLINE: Our Violent Kids;
A rise in brutal crimes by the young shakes the soul of society

BYLINE: BY ANASTASIA TOUFEXIS;
Reported by Mary Cronin/New York, Melissa Ludtke/Boston and Sylvester Monroe/Los Angeles, with other bureaus

BODY:

Beating. Rape. Murder. Screams in the night. Bricks in the face. Sirens drowning out the crying. These are the images of violent crime -- the crime generally associated with the most depraved individuals. No one is shocked any longer to hear of atrocities committed by mobsters, drug pushers or psychopaths. But the boy next door? That harmless-looking kid in biology class? The captain of the football team?

It is hard to believe, and harder still to comprehend, but it is true. Some atrocious crimes in America are being committed by those who should be the most innocent -- the young. Recent weeks have brought news of two particularly brutal acts: the gang rape and near murder of a jogger in Manhattan's Central Park by a group of youths 14 to 16, and the alleged sexual assault on a mentally impaired girl by high school students in affluent Glen Ridge, N.J. These crimes have awakened the country to the beast that has broken loose in some of America's young people.

The Central Park and Glen Ridge attacks are only the most highly publicized of the cases occurring across the U.S. More and more teenagers, acting individually or in gangs, are running amuck. In the Central Park incident, young toughs said they were "wilding," which apparently means marauding with no purpose in mind but to create havoc and hurt people. In Philadelphia packs of youths chant "Beat, beat, beat" as they roam the streets looking for victims.

To be sure, teenagers have never been angels. Adolescence is often a troubled time of rebellion and rage. From West Side Story to Rebel Without a Cause, the violence of youth has been chronicled on stage and screen. But juvenile crime appears to be more widespread and vicious than ever before. "Burglars used to rob a house and then run away. Now they urinate or defecate in the home or burn it up before leaving," says Shawn Johnston, a forensic psychologist in Sacramento. "Thieves mugged a person and ran off. Now they beat their victims." Or rape or murder them.

Statistics show an upsurge in the most violent types of crimes by teens. In part, this trend may result from better reporting, but some experts believe it reflects a true increase in violence. According to the FBI, between 1983 and 1987 arrests of those under 18 for murder jumped 22.2%, for aggravated assault 18.6% and for rape 14.6%. Those figures may not seem dramatic, but they should be seen in the context of a 2% decline in the total number of teenagers in the

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U.S. since 1983.

Many of the tales behind the numbers are horrifying. In Springfield, Mass., last April, a 13-year-old girl was walking through a park with a girlfriend when she was allegedly attacked by five boys no older than 16. They fondled her breasts and appeared to be preparing to rape her when her screams brought help. Last September a 15-year-old Houston boy raped and murdered a 66-year-old woman, then burglarized her home. In May a 15-year-old Detroit boy was charged with killing another teenager with a sawed-off shotgun, apparently in a dispute over a stolen bicycle. Ten months ago, a 16-year-old boy drove 150 miles from his home in Princeton, Ky., and shot to death a woman he did not know. The boy, who came to be known as "Little Rambo" to his schoolmates, told police that he "just wanted to get away and kill somebody."

Adolescents have always been violence prone, but there are horrendous crimes being committed by even younger children. In Detroit last April, an eleven-year-old boy was charged with joining a 15-year-old in the rape of a two-year-old girl. The two allegedly left their victim in a garbage Dumpster. When he was only ten, a boy in San Antonio began sexually abusing three of his four younger sisters and continued until he was caught at 16.

The teen crime wave flows across all races, classes and life-styles. The youths who went on the Central Park rampage were blacks and Hispanics from Harlem, but they were not desperately poor. Three of the five suspects charged in the Glen Ridge sexual assault were idolized football stars, and two of them were co-captains of their high school team. Eight other Glen Ridge High School students, including the son of a local police lieutenant, allegedly stood by and watched the assault. In Denver a 16-year-old boy charged with first-degree murder in a stabbing death was a high school honors student.

The offenders are overwhelmingly male, but girls too are capable of vicious crimes. In Escondido, Calif., a 16-year-old girl and three teenage boys went on an arson spree last March. The group set four fires at three schools, causing damage that will cost more than \$1 million to repair. A 16-year-old girl from Cape Cod, Mass., who had been drinking stabbed her male cousin, severely injuring him.

What is chilling about many of the young criminals is that they show no remorse or conscience, at least initially. Youths brag about their exploits and shrug off victims' pain. A Chicago case in which four teenagers raped and killed a medical student was solved because of good police work and what Pat O'Brien, Cook County deputy state's attorney, describes as "the defendants' inability to keep their mouths shut" about the crime. "It was a badge," he explains. "It was something they talked about as if it gave them status within that group of guys." Youngsters offhandedly refer to innocent passersby caught in the line of gunfire between two gangs as "mushrooms." "That is callous," observes Edward Loughran, commissioner of the Massachusetts department of youth services. "Alienated is too weak a word to describe these kids."

How could this be happening? The experts offer a raft of reasons, everything from physiological and psychological abnormalities to family and cultural decay. By themselves, none of the explanations are wholly satisfactory. But each of these factors may contribute to at least some of the violence. Generalizations are difficult because every case is unique. Each young criminal has his own genes, his own family background and his own response to the many forces in

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modern culture that encourage indiscriminate sex and violence.

A frequently advanced -- and hotly disputed -- theory is that aggression is a biologically rooted impulse of young males. Some experts suggest that there may be a genetic component to hostile behavior; others attempt to tie it to levels of different chemicals that circulate through the body and brain. One of them is testosterone. Production of this male sex hormone rises dramatically during puberty, a period usually marked by intense sexual desire and strong aggressive tendencies. Some studies indicate that particularly rough athletes or violent prisoners have higher than normal testosterone levels.

Violent youths frequently have neurological problems and learning disorders, many of which result from brain injuries inflicted in beatings by parents and others. Some suffer from paranoia and hallucinations, and others experience seizures. Some of the most violent children tend to have grossly abnormal electroencephalograms.

But it is too easy to say that biology is destiny and that all violent youths are simply captives of their physiology or "raging hormones." Society has generally been able to control and channel aggressive impulses through its basic institutions -- home, schools and church. But these moral pillars are crumbling.

Too many children are growing up in families headed by one overburdened parent, usually the mother. Even when two parents are present, both often have demanding jobs and are absorbed in their own concerns. Sometimes the parents are strung out on alcohol or drugs. The result is that children do not get the nurturing, guidance or supervision necessary to instill a set of values and a proper code of behavior.

Children normally learn to trust and develop attachments to people within the first two years of life. By then they have also acquired a sense of compassion and empathy for others. And they have begun to be taught the difference between right and wrong and that hurtful actions have consequences. Many youngsters, though, fail to acquire those early curbs on conduct. Later on, when children misbehave, indulgent parents make excuses and forgo punishments. Young boys who grow up with absent or uninvolved fathers suffer doubly in that they often fail to develop a healthy sense of masculinity.

The neglect is frequently compounded by outright abuse. Says Dorothy Otnow Lewis, professor of psychiatry at New York University: "Kids are being raised by more and more disturbed parents. And what this lack of parenting breeds is misshapen personalities." Parents punch each other verbally and physically -- and frequently do the same with their children. In fact, the large majority of violent kids have been physically, and often sexually, abused by parents, relatives or others. One mother, reports Lewis, broke her son's legs with a broom; a father threw his child down a set of stairs.

As a consequence of indifference and abuse, children are left emotional cripples, self-centered, angry and alienated. And fated to repeat the chilling lessons they have learned. "These children are dead inside," says psychologist Johnston. "For them to feel alive and important, they engage in terrible types of sadistic activity."

Their innocent victims are usually surrogate targets; the parents may be the ones they really hate. A 17-year-old boy who is now in a treatment program in

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San Bernardino, Calif., began sexually molesting younger members of his family when he was about twelve. He himself had been molested at the age of six, first by his father and then by a twelve-year-old friend. Says the boy: "My father used to beat my mom all the time. That makes me kind of angry. He was always out partying, getting high. My fantasy is making him suffer. First I'd shoot him in the kneecaps and let him suffer for about an hour, screaming. Then I'd shoot him in the nuts and let him suffer some more, and then I'd put a bullet through his head."

Signals of violence surface early but frequently go ignored or denied. Serial killer Ted Bundy's family insisted for years that he had a normal childhood, points out psychiatrist Lewis. It was only recently revealed that "by the time he was three, he was putting knives in his aunt's bed." The youngster who taunts siblings, bullies schoolmates, tortures pets or peeks in windows is sending up warning flares.

Children abandoned physically or emotionally by their parents look elsewhere for companionship, acceptance and values. Odell Edwards, a 20-year-old serving time in a Ventura, Calif., juvenile facility for attempted murder and other offenses, recalls that by the age of 14 he was spending most of his time away from home and hanging out with a group of friends that he called his "homeboys." Says Edwards: "I never really had anyone to talk to. My father was gone. I had no one to turn to when I was in trouble, except my homeboys. They became my family."

Members of a group learn about sex from one another, experiment with drugs together and look to their friends for a sense of belonging and approval. Notes Alan Morris, chief of the adolescent unit of the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute in Chicago: "Some kids, especially younger adolescents, have an exquisite sensitivity to what their peers think. They won't go to school if their shoelaces are the wrong color."

But the group's influence is often treacherous. Explains young Edwards: "It's peer pressure and wanting to be accepted by your friends and trying to prove yourself in the best way you know how, which is being violent." Gangs allow even the most cowardly and impotent to feel brave and powerful. And they override inhibitions and diminish any feelings of guilt. Violence becomes contagious. Some youngsters revel in the mayhem; others, too weak to break away, become trapped and are swept along.

In many instances, the violence is fueled by easy access to guns, alcohol and drugs, particularly crack. Users often "fall into a sadomasochistic ritual after smoking together," says Terry Williams, a senior research scholar at the New School for Social Research. "They are angry, hallucinating, and get into violent fights." Crack can also leave users sexually aroused. When they do not find a willing partner, Williams asserts, they may be tempted to rape.

If teenagers often get their values from peers, then just what are those values? In American society today, the emphasis is less on caring for others than on getting money and instant gratification. Notes Arnold Goldstein, director of the Center for Research on Aggression at Syracuse University: "We are a nation whose role models, Presidents and leaders on Wall Street have set a tone in the country -- 'I'm going to get mine.' " If the big-shot investment banker can take what he wants, often by illegal means, then a teenager may think he should be able to grab the spoils in the only way he knows how. Declares

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Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles: "Our culture accentuates instinct instead of inhibiting it."

The entertainment media play a powerful role in the formation of values. Today's children, unlike those of earlier generations, are fed a steady diet of glorified violence. Television cartoons feature dehumanized, machinelike characters, such as the Transformers and Gobots, engaged in destructive acts. But viewers see no consequences. Victims never bleed and never suffer. Youngsters mimic the behavior with toys based on the shows. Later they graduate to TV programs and movies that depict people killing or degrading other people. By the age of 16, the typical child has witnessed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence, including 33,000 murders. Inevitably, contend many experts, some youngsters will imitate the brutality in real life. In a 22-year study, researchers tracked the development of 875 third-graders from a rural community in New York. Among the discoveries: those who watched the greatest amount of violent television at the age of eight were the most likely to show aggressive behavior at 19 and later. About one-quarter of the students were considered violent at 30 -- they had been convicted of a crime, had multiple traffic violations or were abusive to spouses.

Rock music has become a dominant -- and potentially destructive -- part of teenage culture. Lyrics, album covers and music videos, particularly in the rock genre called heavy metal, romanticize bondage, sexual assaults and murder. The song Girls L.G.B.N.A.F. by Ice-T contains the words "Girls, let's get butt naked and f." Or consider these lyrics from Motley Crue's Girls, Girls, Girls, an album that reached No. 2 on the Billboard chart and has sold more than 2 million copies:

The blade of my knife
Faced away from your heart
Those last few nights
It turned and sliced you apart . . .
Laid out cold
Now we're both alone
But killing you helped me keep you home.

Guns N' Roses put out an album called Appetite for Destruction, which has sold more than 6 million copies. The jacket cover, featuring a robot looming over a woman in torn clothing, was so repellent that some record stores refused to carry the album. Says Tipper Gore, co-founder of the Parents' Music Resource Center and a longtime critic of rock lyrics: "Music companies are cultural strip miners, profiting from the sex and violence and ignoring the scars."

Even today's comic books are not immune from the violent trend. While parents may fondly remember the dating shenanigans of Archie and Veronica or the wholesome exploits of superheroes, their children are now being offered a titillating blend of sadism and sex. A stripper was crucified in one issue of Green Arrow. Superman, in a story called Bloodsport, battled a deranged Viet Nam veteran who was shooting people at random on the streets of Metropolis with a gun in each hand.

Among the most offensive purveyors of brutality to women are slasher films. The movies that inaugurated the trend, including Friday the 13th, Halloween and Nightmare on Elm Street, are now tame compared with such opuses as I Spit on Your Grave or Splatter University. The main features: graphic and erotic

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scenes of female mutilation, rape or murder. Slasher films are widely shown on cable TV, and video shops do a booming business in rentals, especially among eleven-to-15-year-olds. Youngsters watch three or four at a clip at all-night "gross-out" parties. In some fraternity houses on college campuses, slasher movies play continually in lounges, along with pornographic films.

Sexually explicit movies may lead some young men to reaffirm the all-too-common male attitude that when a woman says no she really means yes. Many experts believe that such films may be a contributing factor in date rape, one of the most common adolescent sexual crimes. "Teenagers are only doing what they are told to do," says sociologist Gail Dines-Levy of Boston's Wheelock College. "They are being conformists, not deviants."

In some cases, poverty can help spur violent crime. Many ghetto residents have little sense of hope or opportunity, and feel they have little stake in preserving society. Boys often have trouble forging a masculine identity without one of the primary accompaniments -- a job. Teen unemployment is endemic among poor youth, running more than 40% in many communities. Meanwhile, welfare and social programs suffered drastic cutbacks during the Reagan era. Says Chicago psychiatrist Carl Bell: "Violence is the weapon of the powerless." Agrees Professor Leah Blumberg Lapidus of Columbia Teachers College in Manhattan: "It relieves boredom and makes a statement, like graffiti, that says, 'Notice me.' "

But a life of privilege can also be corrupting. Children who have everything given to them may come to believe that they are entitled to anything, that they are above their fellow human beings and above the law. And yet their busy, overachieving parents may not be giving pampered teens what they need most: attention and supervision. "Neglect is abuse," says Randa Dembroff, an official of the Los Angeles County Bar Association. "A workaholic parent is just as abusive as one who physically abuses his children."

Can anything be done about violent youngsters? Many Americans are calling for stronger laws and punishments. They argue that juveniles should be prosecuted as adults and that prison sentences should be longer. "These kids are getting away with murder," declares Robert Contreras, a police detective in Los Angeles. "They are not afraid, have no respect for anything and joke that in jail they'll at least get three square meals a day." Syracuse's Goldstein surveyed 250 juvenile delinquents for their solutions to violence and found that they too favored harsher sentences. Many thought that jail was too "cushy."

Others have offered an even more radical idea: locking up parents. California is trying to do just that. Under an eight-month-old statute, parents can be held responsible for the criminal activity of their offspring. In April, Los Angeles police arrested a woman whose 15-year-old son has been charged with participating in the rape of a twelve-year-old girl by a dozen members of a street gang. If she is convicted of violating the parental-responsibility law, she faces a maximum penalty of a year in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

Such solutions offer only illusory security. Parents contend that they cannot control their children. And most youngsters are eventually released from jail. Many return more hardened than before. "You need to break delinquents from the group where antisocial behavior is reinforced," explains psychologist Michael Nelson of Xavier University in Cincinnati. "But we're caught in a catch-22 dilemma. We place delinquents in reform schools, where they have more access to individuals who are poor role models."

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An unpopular but more sensible approach, say experts, is to offer rehabilitative treatment. Various communities across the U.S. are trying such programs -- with considerable success. The programs call for individual and group therapy for the offender and sometimes for his family as well. The strategy is to get violent youngsters to recognize the inappropriateness of their actions and to accept responsibility for them. That is a difficult task, particularly with sexual offenders, who are often imitating what was done to them.

In some programs, youngsters discuss or write up their own cases in an effort to identify the behavior patterns or situations that are liable to trigger hostile actions. For example, sexual offenders are advised to avoid baby-sitting. In the program operated by the Justice Resource Institute in Massachusetts, members concentrate on overcoming aggressive thinking patterns -- for instance, assuming that they are the butt of the joke whenever people are laughing.

The treatment centers also try to elicit a sense of empathy. At Giddings, a maximum-security facility for juveniles in Texas, murderers keep a daily journal of their feelings and act out their crime, taking the roles of both their victim and surviving family members. Sexual offenders meet with groups of victims every few months. At its prisons and work camps, the California Youth Authority runs voluntary classes in which inmates study property crimes, domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, homicide and victims' rights. Some offenders do eventually express remorse. Says one Giddings boy, a middle-class 15-year-old from Austin who raped his eight-year-old neighbor: "I realize how society really looks at rape. Sometimes at night I sit up crying. I look back and say that could never have been me."

Such programs are clearly valuable, but the treatment is costly. Therapists say the optimum time needed for counseling sex offenders ranges from twelve to 18 months. (It can take about six months just to break through the denial phase.) Follow-up and outpatient therapy are also necessary. As a result, not enough youths get treatment.

No matter how effective the programs are, they are indisputably too late. Violence-prone youths need to be identified and helped before they explode in rage. Reporting of physical and sexual abuse in particular should be encouraged. The earlier the intervention, the greater the chance of success. All youngsters could also benefit from improved sex-education programs that explore the emotional as well as the mechanical aspects of sex. Some schools have begun offering special courses in preventing violence. A ten-session curriculum, designed by Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, the Massachusetts commissioner of public health, is being used in several high schools in Boston, Detroit and Denver. "We tell them anger is potentially constructive but they need to learn how to handle it," explains Prothrow-Stith. Students examine how fights begin and analyze videotapes of arguments.

Yet the lessons learned at school can easily be undermined by today's popular culture. The messages that blare from stereos, TVs and movie screens amount to a second education for the young. And much more money goes into the development of this after-school curriculum than goes into education. Rock stars earn millions, but a high-school teacher is lucky to get \$30,000 a year.

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A growing band of activists is lobbying TV, movie and record producers to reduce the level of sex and violence in entertainment. Terry Rakolta of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., the mother of four children, has started a group called Americans for Responsible Television. She has suggested that networks devote the first two hours of evening programming to family shows and has also asked major advertisers to avoid sponsoring programs that the group finds objectionable. One of Rakolta's first targets was Married . . . With Children, a racy prime-time sitcom. Parents' Music Resource Center, meanwhile, has successfully pressured the Recording Industry Association of America to create a rating system that alerts parents to sexually explicit lyrics. Warning labels are now printed on record jackets. The group also provides printed lyric sheets and encourages parents to complain to radio and TV stations about raunchy and violent programming.

Even the activists admit, however, that removing all sex and gore from the media would make no more than a small dent in the teen crime problem. Much more fundamental changes in society are needed. Government at all levels should step up the battles against drugs, poverty and racism. Far more money should be poured into education, day-care and recreational opportunities for the young. Youngsters need more of their parents' time, and they need to know that society cares about them.

Above all, parents should take a long, hard look in the mirror. The values of today's youth are merely magnified reflections of the values of their elders. Parents should remember the words of the father in Harry Chapin's song Cat's in the Hat, when he comes to a sudden realization about his insensitive, uncaring son:

He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me.

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LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 1 STORY

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Time

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SECTION: INTERVIEW; Pg. 16

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HEADLINE: Why Johnny Might Grow Up Violent and Sexist;
Social philosopher MYRIAM MIEDZIAN argues that boys are being raised in a culture that discourages nurturing and leads many of them to denigrate and beat women

BYLINE: By DANIEL S. LEVY;
Myriam Miedzian

BODY:

Q. Do sports make men cruel?

A. Not all sports, but unfortunately, in this country a lot of sports aimed at the young emphasize competition and winning at any cost. In high school football, boys are often taught to "take out" players from the opposite team. Taking out a player means injuring a player so badly that he can no longer play. I would say that is cruel and entirely inappropriate. There have been studies that indicate that instead of learning sportsmanship and fair play, boys who are involved in competitive sports demonstrate less of these qualities than boys who are not involved.

Q. Aren't you overreacting? I played sports as a kid. I learned positive competitiveness and camaraderie. What is so wrong with wanting to push our sons and our daughters to excel?

A. I am in no way saying every team is obsessed with winning to a really outrageous degree. I am saying it happens much too often. It sounds like it didn't happen to you. My research reveals it is frequent enough that it is a serious problem.

One problem is that there are coaches who are obsessed with winning. Often parents, particularly fathers, literally push their sons to such a degree that some boys play really badly, because they want to get kicked off the team because they are under so much pressure from their fathers to win.

Parents should become aware that an extreme level of competition is just not good for a seven- or eight-year-old boy. What I recommend is that parents make sure the coach is not someone who is obsessed with competitiveness. At every level it is important that parents find out what is going on and do something about it. I advocate regulation of youth sports. There are 30 million American children involved in youth sports programs, and there is absolutely no control over who the coaches are or what is going on.

Q. How can you seriously expect more regulation in a period of budget austerity?

A. Anything is possible. We have gone through a period of extreme deregulation, and we are suffering greatly as a result. The fact that regulation isn't fashionable now doesn't tell us anything about five or 10 years from now.

Q. But isn't the inappropriate behavior you speak about isolated to the

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playing fields?

A. No, not at all. It isn't. What athletes learn on the playing fields is often carried on in the outside world. They learn to win at any cost. They are taught to be enormously concerned with dominance and conquering the other team. Having learned those kinds of lessons, it is very hard to cut that off when you are in the outside world, so it is not surprising that they carry it with them to their relations with women. That is not to say some athletes don't make a distinction, but many don't.

From the youngest age in Little League, there is often a denigrating attitude toward girls and women. The worst insult a boy can yell at another boy in Little League is to call him a "wuss." If you combine the emphasis on winning at any cost with the negative attitude toward women, it is not at all surprising that approximately one-third of the sexual assaults on college campuses are by athletes.

Q. Isn't the level of sexual assaults just a reflection of better reporting of a phenomenon that has been going on for a long time?

A. I don't think there are any hard statistics on that, but my guess is there has been an increase. There has been an enormous increase in violent crime in this country in the past 30 years. Homicide rates have doubled and continue to soar. There is such a culture of violence now that surrounds young people that I would suspect violent rates in all areas would be going up.

Boys are constantly being subjected to so-called adventure films, which are really nonstop violence films with Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Terminator and Jean-Claude Van Damme doing blood sport, and slasher films in which people are dismembered, burned alive, skinned. By the time American kids are 18 years old they have watched 26,000 murders on television alone. Heavy-metal and rap lyrics often encourage rape and bigotry. It is contrary to common sense and research to think you can create such a culture and not have any effects.

Q. Recently, several members of the lacrosse team at St. John's University in New York were accused and then found innocent of sexually assaulting a woman. If, as they claim, the woman freely consented, why are their actions still so disturbing?

A. I find it disturbing that these young men want to do this kind of thing -- that they think it is fun to have group sex with an inebriated young woman. No one denies that she was drunk. The definition of rape in most states includes having sex with someone who is not in the position to give consent. But even if they thought she was somehow consenting to this, why do they think it is fun to slap her face with their penises?

Why do a bunch of boys in Glen Ridge, N.J., all of them on the high school football team, think it is fun to shove baseball bats and broom handles into the vagina of a retarded girl, a girl with an I.Q. of 64? This isn't sex. It is violence. The Glen Ridge case hasn't been decided yet, but it doesn't really matter what is ultimately decided. What bothers me is why they think that is fun.

Q. In your book, Boys Will Be Boys: Breaking the Link Between Masculinity and Violence, you argue that parents should be more forceful about insisting that society help rather than hinder them in the overall raising of children.

A. Both parents and educators can start to pressure their schools to introduce conflict-resolution programs so young people from the earliest age can begin

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to realize that there are alternatives to violent behavior. In these programs, children act out scenarios in which they learn to defuse confrontation; for example, boys might be taught how not using insulting language can help resolve a dispute over the ownership of a basketball. For many boys who go through these programs, violence goes from being a first reaction to a last resort. Parents should also urge schools to conduct child-rearing classes. While schools teach almost every complex skill that people need to know, we omit what is the most important one -- how to be a good parent.

Q. Won't child-rearing classes just encourage pregnancies?

A. No. Absolutely not. I recommend that we start teaching the classes in fifth grade at the very latest because girls are getting pregnant at the age of 12. Once the kids understand what an enormous responsibility it is to be a parent, they don't want to do it anymore. They begin to respect the needs of the child. Another thing these programs do is encourage caring and sensitivity in young boys. They encourage boys to view themselves as future nurturing fathers. There is very little encouragement of nurturant fathering in this society. We have had a 350% increase in births to single mothers in the past 30 years. We have a soaring divorce rate, with half or more divorced fathers not seeing their children. Research reveals that boys raised without caring and involved fathers in the home are at a higher risk for violent, antisocial behavior than those who have such a father.

Q. How do you stop the violence?

A. Children have to be removed from the commercial market and treated as a precious national resource. We have made the mistake of allowing the enculturation of American children to be in the hands of businesspeople, whose primary interest is not in these children's well-being or even in the well-being of the nation. These people are perfectly ready to exploit the worst possible human potentials. Parents, teachers, educators, social workers, should get involved to try to bring some regulation to this.

Many European countries have much more serious restrictions on what movies children can see than we do in the U.S. We have these theoretical restrictions like the R rating. But the R rating is a joke. I went to see slasher films, and the movie theaters were filled with young kids. Some parents bring their children to see slasher films. When I went to see A Nightmare on Elm Street Part 4, there was a little girl sitting in front of me whom I estimated to be three years old. We need to educate those people to begin to understand what the effects are of viewing these kinds of films.

Q. Toy-store aisles now look like mini-arsenals. Do you want to control that too?

A. Yes, and that is also done in some of the European countries.

Q. But that violates a youngster's right to buy whatever toy he wants.

A. No, it doesn't. Does the fact that a 12-year-old can't go into a bar and order a scotch on the rocks, does that violate his or her rights? It is the same thing. We have a history of regulations for the protection of children. A 15-year-old boy cannot buy the same girlie magazines that his father can buy. There are laws to protect children from alcohol. There are laws to protect children from working at an early age.

Q. But a G.I. Joe toy is not an issue of Playboy. Kids have always played with such toys, and who are you to tell parents what their kids can play with? That

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violates the parents' right to let their child grow up the way they see fit.
A. But then aren't we violating parents' rights when we don't allow their children to go into an X-rated theater and see pornography?

Q. One is pornography, the other the right of parents to buy their child a toy.
A. We have a complete double standard in this country with respect to sex and violence. Why is it that on a Saturday morning it would be unthinkable to put a porno movie on regular network TV, yet it is O.K. to put on a show in which 87 people are killed an hour? Isn't killing people at least as inappropriate for a young child to see?

Viewing this endless violence encourages violent behavior. We let our kids watch this stuff, and then we are surprised that we have the highest violence rates of any industrialized country. We talk a lot about freedom, but what kind of freedom is it when a child's worst potential is being encouraged by people who are interested in making money? Where is the freedom of a boy who has watched endless slasher films and goes out and commits acts of rape or other violent acts?

Parents should do everything to protect their boys from these films, but they are being put in an unfair position. It is completely unrealistic to expect parents to constantly monitor everything their child is watching. But parents do have some options. They can install lock boxes on their TVs, which allow them to program their sets so they can control what their children can watch. Parents also should be writing letters to their member of Congress, asking for the creation of a children's public television network dedicated to prosocial, nonviolent programming. This is not to say I have in mind goody-goody, boring programming. You can have entertaining, interesting programming that doesn't have to be filled with gratuitous violence.

Q. How do you turn the Sylvester Stallones into Gandhis?

A. You have to redefine masculinity. We have to begin to encourage boys from the youngest age to be empathetic, to get in touch with their own feelings, to tell them they can be nurturing and masculine at the same time.

Q. As a mother of two girls, why did you write this book about boys?

A. The book focuses on boys for the very simple reason that approximately 89% of violent crimes in the U.S. are committed by males. If you are trying to deal with the problem, you deal with those who are at the center of the problem.

Otherwise, I was drawn to this topic in part because I am a Holocaust survivor. I was three years old when the Second World War started. I was born in Belgium and was forced to leave a very peaceful environment. My family and I became refugees, sleeping in schoolyards and running from bombs.

When my father turned 80, he sat down and counted how many of his relatives had been killed in the Holocaust. The number totaled 135 people. I think my ability to see that masculinity does not have to equal violence comes out of having grown up with a father for whom the values of the masculine mystique meant cossacks raping the women and looting the homes. It meant Nazis gassing his family. Because I grew up with a role model for whom violence was not at all a fun and exciting thing, it was clear to me that there is no necessary connection between masculinity and violence. This is a very different angle from which many women might arrive at this subject, because it is from my own positive experiences that I know that a man can be strong, determined,

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courageous and adventurous without being violent.

GRAPHIC: Picture, NO CAPTION descColor: Myriam Medzian., DOUG WILSON FOR TIME

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HEADLINE: Hope Seen for Curbing Youth Violence

BYLINE: By DANIEL GOLEMAN

BODY:

Although statistics show that violence is rising among American youths, a panel of psychologists released a report yesterday offering an optimistic view of what might be done to reverse the bloody tide.

The escalation in violence among young people is captured in statistics like these: a 61 percent increase in the 1980's in shootings committed by Americans 15 to 19 years old, and a 1,740 percent rise in the number of children and teen-agers treated for knife and gunshot wounds since 1986 at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington.

But the American Psychological Association's Commission on Violence and Youth said in the report that other data found in its survey of earlier studies showed that a variety of efforts could help reverse the trend.

"Psychology has a message of hope: violence is preventable," said Dr. Ronald G. Slaby, a psychologist at Harvard University who is one of the commission's 12 members. "Violence is learned, and we can teach children alternatives."

Early Intervention Encouraged

Intervening at an early age, especially from 4 to 8, before children's habits of aggression are fixed, was among the commission's main recommendations. Violence "is learned very early in life, and learned well," said the commission's chairman, Dr. Leonard Eron, a psychologist at the University of Michigan. "Interventions work best if they are started early. The longer you wait, the harder it is to change."

The commission recommended efforts aimed at the family, the classroom, the community and the media. The report described as particularly effective programs in the schools that teach social and emotional skills like managing anger, negotiating, adopting another child's perspective and thinking of alternative solutions to disagreements. Children who are already aggressive can benefit from special tutoring along these lines.

The report saw television as one vehicle for teaching children positive alternatives to violence. It called on the Federal Communications Commission to make license renewal for broadcasters depend in part on their providing programs that counter violence, and it asked that violence be sharply curtailed in the hours that children watch television most.

The New York Times, August 11, 1993

"Television has great teaching potential," Dr. Eron said. "It's just been teaching the wrong things."

Another recommendation is that laws be changed to require anyone who purchases a gun to be of voting age and pass a background check and a test on firearm safety. "It should be at least as hard to get a gun as to get a driver's license," Dr. Slaby said.

'Not an Insoluble Problem'

The report concluded that many of the factors that lead to violence in youth were "within our powers to change."

Dr. Eron said, "Youth violence is not an insoluble problem."

In tracing the many factors that could help produce a violent youth, the commission noted certain kinds of behavior by parents, especially rejection of the child, a lack of supervision and violent fights between mother and father.

The report singled out parents who harshly and regularly punished children physically, saying that they are only feeding a cycle of violence. While such punishment might make children obedient in the short run, the report said, it led children to become aggressive themselves.

"You first learn violence within the family," Dr. Eron said.

In a 22-year study of 875 boys and girls first observed at age 8, Dr. Eron found that those whose parents used the harshest discipline were most likely to be most violent with their playmates, starting fights and shoving for no good reason. As 30-year-olds, the more aggressive children had grown into violent adults with criminal records, and as parents they were also most likely to use harsh physical punishment with their children, he said.

No Single Cause Is Found

But no single factor could be blamed for a child's turning to violence, the commission concluded. "Youth violence is like heart disease, where many factors build to create the problem," said Dr. Alan Kazdin, a psychologist at Yale University who was also a member of the commission. "All the factors matter, but none means a child will necessarily become violent. Many different paths can lead to trouble."

Among the other factors that contribute to children's becoming violent, the report said, were learning to handle frustration by lashing out, or doing poorly in school and then feeling stigmatized as "dumb," or having trouble learning social cues, leading some children to become social outcasts because they failed to pick up signals that could allow them to interact smoothly with playmates.

Violence on television came in for its share of criticism. "Viewing violence increases violence," and leads to emotional desensitization toward violence, the report said.

In Dr. Eron's study, for example, 8-year-old boys who watched the most violent television programs but were not particularly aggressive themselves at school still grew up to be as violence-prone as other 8-year-olds who had been

The New York Times, August 11, 1993

the most aggressive schoolyard bullies.

Growing up in impoverished neighborhoods with a sense that opportunities are closed because of discrimination against one's group can also lead to violence. The report said discrimination damaged children's self-confidence and laid "a foundation for anger, discontent and violence."

Copies of the report may be obtained by writing Violence and Youth Report, American Psychological Association, 750 First St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4242.

SUBJECT: CRIME AND CRIMINALS; RESEARCH; CHILDREN AND YOUTH; VIOLENCE; FAMILIES AND FAMILY LIFE; EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS; NEWS AND NEWS MEDIA

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HEADLINE: In America;
Violence And the Young

BYLINE: By BOB HERBERT

BODY:

Last summer the "Munecas," an all-girl Little League softball team in Camden, N.J., won a championship behind a power-hitting 11-year-old named Samalica Ortiz.

This year the "Munecas," which means "Little Dolls," made it to the finals but lost the championship game, 14-13. Samalica was not there. Last Nov. 22 she was shot to death at a friend's birthday party.

The bullet was not meant for her. It was fired in a gunfight that erupted outside the house where the party was held. But Samalica was sitting by a window and the bullet struck her in the head. Thus she joined the enormous and growing cadre of children who are lost to us suddenly and forever because of violence.

Why the nation is not trembling with outrage over this, I don't know. Perhaps it is denial. Perhaps ignorance. Maybe other reasons. In any event, our epidemic of violence is having a devastating effect on the young. The American Psychological Association, in a report on "Violence and Youth," cited a study of first and second graders in Washington:

"Forty-five percent said they had witnessed muggings, 31 percent said they had witnessed shootings and 39 percent said they had seen dead bodies."

First and second graders. Little kids no longer have to make up monsters, we provide them with the real thing.

With no concerted effort to check it, violence has spun way out of control. More Americans have been murdered already in the 1990's than were killed in all the years of Vietnam. According to the F.B.I., there were more than 24,000 homicides in the United States in 1991 and an estimated 23,000 last year.

In growing numbers, children and teen-agers are among the killers as well as the killed.

In Kansas City last week a 15-year-old boy pulled out a gun in a movie theater and shot his mother to death.

In El Monte, Calif., police reported that two young men riding around on a bicycle (one was on the handle bars) shot two people to death and wounded a third on Tuesday night.

The New York Times, August 15, 1993

Over and over we are hearing the lament of Joanne Ackie, who cried out, "I can't believe this is happening" after her 17-year-old son Kareem was shot in the back and killed in Harlem last month.

On Wednesday President Clinton announced his effort to put more police on the streets and tighten gun-control measures. It will not accomplish much. The truth is, law enforcement alone cannot stem the ferocious tide of violence in the United States. A much more comprehensive approach -- a national campaign against violence -- is necessary.

Last Sunday the National Medical Association, which represents 16,000 black physicians, held a special session at its convention in San Antonio on "violence reduction in the African-American community."

The consensus, according to the association's president, Dr. Leonard Lawrence, "was that we've really got to teach our young people that there are alternative ways of problem solving," and "that there is some value in being disciplined."

The doctors did not want to understate the degree to which poverty, poor schooling, racism, drug and alcohol abuse, the availability of guns and other factors contribute to violence among the young. But you can get a handle on violent behavior, Dr. Lawrence said, "if you begin to teach youngsters the positive aspects of discipline at a very early age, teaching them how to achieve, how to learn, how to interact with other people."

Adults -- parents and others -- have to spend more time with youngsters, he said. And he urged successful African-Americans to serve as mentors to boys and girls struggling to grow up in difficult environments.

There is no reason to limit the consensus of the doctors to the black community. Young people everywhere are full of energy and enthusiasm and the desire for excitement. There is always danger when that energy is not channeled by adults.

Tougher law enforcement is essential but it's not nearly enough. By the time the police are called, something terrible has already happened.

The black physicians are on to something, and others have reached similar conclusions. There are many programs operating around the country to defuse violence. A national campaign against violence would find out what is working best and what more is needed.

Right now it's a lot more.

TYPE: Op-Ed

SUBJECT: CRIME AND CRIMINALS; VIOLENCE; CHILDREN AND YOUTH; BLACKS (IN US); URBAN AREAS

ORGANIZATION: NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSN

NAME: HERBERT, BOB

LEVEL 1 - 2 OF 2 STORIES

Copyright 1993 The New York Times Company
The New York Times

August 18, 1993, Wednesday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 19; Column 5; Editorial Desk

LENGTH: 682 words

HEADLINE: In America;
Michael's Chance

BYLINE: By BOB HERBERT

BODY:

The youngsters on the basketball court on the Upper West Side of Manhattan were trying to figure out a way to pull a kernel of opportunity from the death of James Jordan.

The afternoon was appropriately gloomy, a sullen gray, humid. The ball rattled off the backboard and into the hands of Dyam Jennings, who is 15. A moment later, standing beside the court, he and a few friends asked how Michael Jordan was doing and said they worried that he would have a hard time next season when he will have to go onto the court without his father nearby.

"I feel real sorry for him," said Gabe Leibowitz, who is 14.

"He's my favorite player," said Jose Toro, 15.

Although a few years younger, the boys on the West Side -- good kids -- looked as if they could have been playmates of Larry Demery and Daniel Green, the North Carolina teen-agers accused of murdering Mr. Jordan. They had the baseball caps turned around backward, the baggy shorts and gaudy T-shirts, the slouching nonchalance of adolescence.

Besides appearance, they all have at least one other thing in common -- they are growing up in the new era of violence in the United States. The amount of violence is astounding. Thousands of youngsters go to sleep serenaded by gunfire. The Commission on Violence and Youth of the American Psychological Association reported that a 17-year-old girl in Boston told a state task force that she had been to the funerals of 16 friends who had died by violence.

I wrote not too long ago about a small high school in Brooklyn that had four students who were killed in separate incidents over one summer. The students' classmates did not think that was strange.

Some schools have rooms permanently reserved for mourning.

Something is wrong.

The boys playing basketball in Manhattan seemed worried about the possibility that James Jordan's death might have been pointless. They recoiled from that.

"Maybe," said 14-year-old Adam Hulse, "-- maybe Michael could go around and make some speeches about how guns are never the right answer. Maybe he could

The New York Times, August 18, 1993

try to convince kids by showing how guns affected him."

This was thought to be a good idea. Gabe Leibowitz nodded excitedly. "Sure," he said. "He could go to different schools and lecture. Kids would listen to him."

"He could make a video," said Jose Toro.

Dyam Jennings had remained quiet. Now he spoke. "He could deliver the message that violence and murder are not fun. That vandalizing cars is not cool. That killing somebody is not something you should be proud of."

The boys stood around now, quiet. The only noise was traffic going by on Columbus Avenue and every now and then a low roll of thunder. It looked as if it would begin to pour at any moment.

Charles Barkley, who revels in the outrageous (he once suggested he had been misquoted in his autobiography), has said: "Professional athletes should not be role models. How the hell does an athlete qualify for the job? If the only qualification is that you have to be able to dunk a basketball, then I know millions of people who could become role models. Hell, I know drug dealers who can dunk. Can drug dealers be role models, too?"

Sure, they can. They are. The dealers led the way in establishing ever more brutal levels of violence. They helped turn murder into acceptable behavior for thousands upon thousands of young people. The result has been an explosion of violence and grief.

The boys who murdered James Jordan were enthusiastically following the drug dealers' lead. The boys in the West Side playground want their peers to be shown the alternatives.

The toll is growing. Authorities in Robeson County, North Carolina, said Mr. Jordan was awake and frightened just before he was killed. It's a hideous kind of fear -- a cold terror laced with dread -- that is known to millions of crime victims.

The boys in the playground believe Michael Jordan could make a difference. They may be right. He could be a powerful influence against violence.

It might even be better if he were joined in some kind of effort by his skeptical friend Charles Barkley.

TYPE: Op-Ed

SUBJECT: MURDERS AND ATTEMPTED MURDERS; FIREARMS; BASKETBALL; CHILDREN AND YOUTH

NAME: JORDAN, JAMES; JORDAN, MICHAEL; HERBERT, BOB

LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 1 STORY

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Newsweek

March 22, 1993 , UNITED STATES EDITION

SECTION: THE COLUMNISTS; George F. Will; Pg. 78

LENGTH: 1383 words

HEADLINE: ' Medicine' for ' 724 Children'

BYLINE: GEORGE F. WILL

HIGHLIGHT:

Children have similar stress disorders in the war-torn West Bank, Cambodia -- and Chicago

BODY:

Herewith an understated introduction to the practice of pediatrics in the inner city: "The young child's attempts to master the age-appropriate fears of monsters under the bed are severely undermined when the child needs to sleep under the bed to dodge real bullets or attempt to screen out the violent fights of his or her caregivers."

That is from a recent article in The Journal of the American Medical Association, which reported a survey of elementary school-age children in New Orleans: 90 percent had witnessed violence; 70 percent had seen a weapon used; 40 percent had seen a corpse. An estimated 10 to 20 percent of Los Angeles homicides are witnessed by children. And a study at Boston City Hospital found 10 percent of the children treated in the pediatric primary care clinic have witnessed a shooting or stabbing before they are 6, half at home, half in the streets.

BCH has been serving Boston since 1864, when Sherman was burning Atlanta. Today there are war conditions, and war effects, in many urban neighborhoods. A recent study found similar post-traumatic stress disorders in children in war-torn Mozambique, Cambodia, the West Bank -- and Chicago. The disorders include inability to concentrate, persistent sleep disturbance, flashbacks, sudden startling and hypervigilance, nihilistic and fatalistic orientation toward the future, leading to increased risk taking. To be a witness to violence is to be a victim of violence.

Small wonder that Boston has its share of what are known, in the grim argot of today's cities, as "724 children" -- children kept at home, indoors, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, because of the epidemic of violence. Some of the fortunate ones come into contact with the doctors and social workers at BCH, a hard-used hospital that gives new meaning to the phrase "family medicine." Children are patients but families, such as they may be, are treated.

BCH's youngest patients often ask why the adults in their lives -- thier parents, teachers, police -- can't keep them safe. BCH physicians and social workers -- a commingled group -- regard as a treatable health problem the consequences of traumatically learning at an early age that the world is dangerous and unpredictable. A pervasive sense of danger, according to BCH doctors, causes people to make decisions that seem inexplicable to people more

Newsweek, March 22, 1993

safely situated. For example, some women who are HIV-infected will still purposely get pregnant even though there is 20 to 30 percent risk of having an infected child. Doctors say those odds do not seem so daunting when considered against the odds of being shot, raped, mugged . . . Besides, for the HIV-infected mother, childbirth is an affirmation of normality, of the fact that life goes on. Similarly, for a young inner-city male who sees death before 20 as common on the streets, a baby as an heir is an attractive idea.

A child who learns early to fear the world is apt to lose his or her natural proclivity for exploration of the world. A "724 child" may need to be taught how to participate in normal socializing play that other children learn naturally when growing up where civil peace prevails. Because we are apt to parent as we are parented, many unwed mothers or others from the culture of poverty need to be taught -- and are movingly eager to learn -- about talking, playing and reading with children. So BCH doctors have given children 9,000 books. Reading together can be therapy for families under the stress of crowding in apartments where children are kept on beds to prevent them from crawling on floors flecked with fragments of lead paint.

'Not a quick fix': A BCH notes that it is common to hear grandmothers living in poverty say of young children, "They're smart when they're little. They get dumb when they get older." There is a sad wisdom behind such statements. The children of the poor are apt to be developmentally on a par with middle class children until, say, 2. Then apparent cognitive deterioration, relative to other children -- actually, failure to attain potential -- is apt to become noticeable. This is a result of various traumas and emotional and cognitive deprivations, in the withering of or failure to articulate parental expectations. This deterioration is neither necessary nor irreversible, but preventing it requires intense, unremitting one-on-one contact where-by a person with the coping skills necessary for flourishing in an urban setting imparts such skills to someone who lacks them. "We know how to do this," says a BCH doctor. "It is flexible. It is just not a quick fix."

It doubtless seems anomalous, and may be in some ways inefficient, for so many social services to be dispensed through the urban health care system. But an inner-city hospital often is, for its poorest patients, the point of entry into the system of social services. So BCH's staff find themselves arranging with the employers of patients for time off for hospital visits; or dispensing basic nutritional counseling; or encouraging families to talk about everything from goals to heroes; or suggesting strategies of urban prudence.

This last, especially, can be urgent for health: an inner-city person who becomes a victim of violence has a 40 percent chance of becoming a victim again. This not only because of where he or she lives, but because of an inability to step away from the "bad vibes" of someone else's ugly intent; or because of an inability to get angry -- which is normal -- without acting out the anger, actions being the articulateness of the streets; or because a victim often looks like a victim. Social workers here say that of the appalling numbers of children carrying weapons to school most are not aggressive but frightened. (According to a 1990 survey by the Centers for Disease Control, 1 of every 5 high school students had carried a weapon and 1 in 20 had carried a gun in a 30-day period.) And many of the aggressive ones have been so desensitized by urban life that they feel alive only when enjoying a "rep" (reputation), something most quickly acquired by instilling fear.

Newsweek, March 22, 1993

So BCH's staff does a lot that is not, strictly speaking, medicine. "But," says one doctor, "it's all health." Says another, "This is not like trauma surgery, where you leap in, stop someone's bleeding and are a hero in an instant." Yes, but what BCH does is much more than medicine, and does much for the dignity of doctoring, and although it does not deal in instantaneous drama, it has its own heroism.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Date: 11/06/94 Time: 12:29

Eight-Year Study to Determine Causes of Violence Begins

CHICAGO (AP) One balmy August evening, police say, 11-year-old Robert Sandifer gunned down a teen-ager. Days later, his own gang executed him for the heat the shooting generated.

Across the city, 16-year-old Corey Palmer model student, athlete and hospital volunteer eagerly prepared for another straight-A year.

Two poor neighborhoods, two radically different lives.

Why?

A \$4 million, eight-year study of 11,000 young people living in low-, middle- and upper-income white, black and Hispanic neighborhoods in Chicago aims for an answer.

"We're looking not only at how individuals shape their environments, but how their changing social and physical environments shape them," said project director Felton J. Earls, a child psychiatrist and professor of human behavior and development at Harvard University's School of Public Health.

It's no ivory tower question, according to Robert Sampson, a sociology professor at the University of Chicago and one of the designers of the study.

"Prevention is the strategy we should be using when it comes to crime," Sampson said. "Current policy is after the fact. More police, more prisons. If we can pinpoint the causes of crime and anti-social behavior we can act to prevent it."

The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, which began in September, scrutinizes the lives and surroundings of its randomly chosen subjects, who range in age from newborn to 24. Half are male, half female.

Once a year, interviewers will visit the subjects, or their caregivers, to query them on their beliefs, conflicts, influences, peer pressures, role models, health and relatives.

The 52 interviewers will also examine housing in each of the 80 neighborhoods, along with streets, parks and recreational facilities, the condition of schools and such signals as the presence of crack houses or uncollected garbage and whether children play in the streets.

They will even scrutinizing neighborhood billboards to see if they encourage drinking or smoking.

"We're studying development in the settings in which it naturally occurs: family, school, neighborhood, and the community at large," Earls said.

Also, randomly-chosen activists, teachers, merchants and others will be questioned three times over the life of the study to give researchers a sense of how schools, courts, police and other institutions affect the subjects.

The researchers picked Chicago for its variety and its well-defined, stable neighborhoods.

"There is no dominant ethnic group," said John K. Holton, a psychologist and the program's site director. "It has three major groups, black, white and Hispanic, and there is diversity in the Hispanic population. And ... the various groups influence the city."

The first report is due in a year. The study has funding for the next four years from the Chicago-based MacArthur Foundation and the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Justice Department.

"Our knowledge of what leads to anti-social behavior is incomplete," said Laurie Garduque, a program officer at the

MacArthur Foundation. ``The more we know, the better able we will
be able to come up with solutions.''
APNP-11-06-94 1228EST

Date: 10/14/94 Time: 08:39

Children's Defense Fund Decries Deaths of 50,000 Children by

WASHINGTON (AP) The Children's Defense Fund is stepping up its anti-gun campaign, suggesting the deaths of 50,000 children by gunfire over the past 15 years should be enough to send thousands into the streets in protest.

"So where is everybody?" the group asks in a public service announcement introduced Thursday by its president, Marian Wright Edelman. She said ABC, CBS and NBC have agreed to air the ad, which, along with five print ads, is part of a new public education campaign against gun violence.

"Every parent, religious, political and community leader and caring adult must ask why we have allowed violence to grow like a malignant tumor ... and why our public policies place a higher priority on protecting guns and profits than on protecting children," she told a news conference.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, meanwhile, reported that the homicide rate among young men 15 to 19 more than doubled between 1985 and 1991. The rate was 13 per 100,000 in 1985 and 33 per 100,000 in 1991, the CDC said. The nation's highest homicide rate 41 per 100,000 is among men ages 20 to 24, the CDC said.

Guns claimed the lives of 88 percent of the 15- to 19-year-olds killed in homicides in 1991. From 1985 to 1991, 97 percent of the increase was attributed to guns.

Researchers attributed the rise to the recruitment of younger members by drug gangs and increased use of guns to settle disputes.

"When it comes to violence, in the past what may have led to fistfights now leads to gunfire," said Dr. David Satcher, CDC director.

The Children's Defense Fund counts suicides and accidental shootings as well as homicides to come up with 50,000 gun deaths of children through age 19 in the past 15 years.

In 1991, the last year for which detailed information is available, the fund said, there were 5,344 such deaths, including 3,264 homicides, 1,436 suicides and 549 accidents.

Guns in the home vastly increase the danger to those who live there, Edelman said, adding that even toddlers can pull a trigger.

Supporting the new campaign were the mothers of two youngsters whose names appear in a print ad listing 600 who died in the past two years.

"It's a void that will never be filled in my life" said Alice Thomas-Norris, whose 14-year-old daughter, Rolanda Lakesia Marshall, was shot Aug. 28, 1993, in a Chicago restaurant. "Not only did they kill my child, but they killed me and they killed my family." No one has been arrested in the murder of the girl, she said.

Edelman and religious leaders called attention to this weekend's third annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. Congregations nationwide are expected to conduct special services and programs focused on preventing violence against children.

"If we fail to get a handle on the violence in our midst, nothing else we do will really matter," said the Rev. H. Michael Lemmons, executive director of the Congress of National Black Churches.

John Snyder, spokesman for the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, said he had not seen the new ad but said the group "doesn't take into consideration the fact that many, many children may have been saved by adults using a firearm to protect

their children from other adults.''

He said the campaign also ``doesn't show how many children have died by other reasons during that same period of time,' ' such as non-firearm accidents.

APNP-10-14-94 0840EDT

Date: 10/13/94 Time: 17:38

Homicide Wiping Out Entire Generation of Teen-Agers

ATLANTA (AP) The homicide rate among young men ages 15 to 19 more than doubled between 1985 and 1991, and researchers attribute the rise to drug gangs' recruiting of younger members and increased use of guns instead of fists.

``When it comes to violence, in the past what may have led to fistfights now leads to gunfire,'' Dr. David Satcher, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said Thursday.

The homicide rate for males 15 to 19 jumped from 13 per 100,000 in 1985 to 33 per 100,000 in 1991, a 154 percent increase, the CDC said. The nation's highest homicide rate 41 per 100,000 is among men ages 20 to 24, according to the CDC.

``We've got to get guns out of the hands of these kids it's an epidemic,'' said Alfred Blumstein of the Heinz School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. He contributed to the CDC study.

Blumstein said drug gangs are recruiting teen-agers because the youngsters have little sense of the risks and consequences.

Guns claimed the lives of 88 percent of the 15- to 19-year-olds killed in 1991. From 1985 to 1991, 97 percent of the increase was attributed to guns.

``You have kids transforming bloody noses into shootings,'' Blumstein said.

Homicide's ranking as the No. 2 cause of death among males ages 15 to 19 has changed little since 1963, said Dr. Kenneth Powell of the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Accidents are the leading cause of death and are responsible for 32 percent of deaths in that age group.

APNP-10-13-94 1739EDT

Date: 07/25/94 Time: 08:45

Justice Department: Serious Crime Up Among Juveniles

WASHINGTON (AP) Juvenile court cases involving serious crimes grew tremendously from 1988 to 1992, according to the Justice Department, and a criminologist says the problem is bound to worsen as the population of teen-agers increases.

According to a Justice Department study released Sunday, of 118,700 serious crimes, aggravated assault cases increased the most, up 80 percent to 77,900 in 1992. Homicides increased by 55 percent to 2,500, robberies went up by 52 percent to 32,900, and forcible rape cases rose by 27 percent to 5,400.

James Alan Fox, dean of criminal justice at Northeastern University, said declines in the adolescent population over the past few years is bottoming out. If the problem is not addressed, crime among juveniles is bound to increase ``because we'll have a tremendous growth in the number of juveniles.''

``Even though there are fewer kids now, there's a small core group that is committing violence at an unprecedented rate, the young and the ruthless,' ' Fox said.

That is what has prompted a 68 percent increase in the number of juvenile court cases involving the offenses of murder, aggravated assault, robbery and forcible rape, he said.

Overall, juvenile court cases increased by 26 percent to 1.5 million, said the study by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

``Criminals are getting younger, victims are getting younger,' ' said Wesley Skogan, a political science and urban affairs professor at Northwestern University. ``It's a combination of bravado, hopelessness, access to firepower and the allures of the drug market.''

The report demonstrates the need for quick passage of the crime bill, said Attorney General Janet Reno.

``We have to fight crime with every tool we have,' ' Reno said in a written statement. Among other things, she said, the nation must ``begin turning juvenile crime around before we are faced with a lost generation with crime bill initiatives like boot camps, anti-gang initiatives, a ban on gun possession by minors, safer schools and prevention programs that will help steer young people away from a career of crime.''

Past federal reports showed the homicide rate among those age 14 to 17 leaped by 124 percent between 1986 and 1991. Other federal statistics have shown a one-third increase between 1988 and 1992 in the number of people under age 18 arrested for homicide, up from 1,765 to 2,343.

The new report showed one area of decline: a 12 percent decrease in the number of drug law violation cases handled by juvenile courts from 1988 to 1992.

But Andrew Chishom, a University of South Carolina professor of criminal justice, said that may be misleading, as young people involved in the drug trade may be entering juvenile court because of drug-related assaults and homicides instead.

``Even though there may be a decrease in the number of arrests for drug-related offenses, on close inspection, we will still find a lot of crime of violence among young people related to drug activities,' ' Chishom said.

The report found an increased willingness to transfer cases from juvenile court to adult criminal court, decisions ``usually based on the seriousness of the offense, the juvenile's prior record, and the juvenile's amenability to treatment,' ' the report said.

Transfers to adult court increase by 68 percent to 11,700 between 1988 and 1992, the report found. One-third of those transferred cases involved an offense against a person, 45 percent a property offense and 12 percent a drug violation.

The 1,471,200 total juvenile court cases included:

301,000 offenses against people, 21 percent of 1992's total, and an increase of 56 percent over 1988.

842,200 property offenses, 57 percent of the total, a 23 percent increase.

255,900 public order offenses, 17 percent of the total, a 21 percent increase.

72,100 drug law violations, 5 percent of the total, a 12 percent decline.

The study based its findings on data from more than 1,500 courts that had jurisdiction over 57 percent of the U.S. juvenile population in 1992.

APNP-07-25-94 0844EDT

Date: 07/18/94 Time: 08:48

Violent Crimes Against Juveniles Increasing, Report Says

WASHINGTON (AP) Young people account for nearly one of every four victims of violent crime in America, and the numbers are rising, the Justice Department says.

``These statistics are disturbing, and they are compelling proof that we must get the crime bill to President Clinton's desk,'' said Attorney General Janet Reno. ``The crime bill's combination of policing, punishment and prevention will give us the tools we need to help reduce this grim toll.''

One juvenile in 13 was a victim of a violent crime during 1992, the year the statistics were gathered, up 23 percent from 1987, when one juvenile in every 17 was a victim.

The crime bill now before Congress calls for 100,000 more police on the street, a ``three-strikes-and-you're-out'' measure to lock up repeat criminals and boot camps for young offenders.

``Disturbing figures about violence in America are released so often we treat them as if they were a box score from yesterday's baseball game,'' said Rep. Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on crime.

``Our country has to take radical action to counter this trend of violence,'' he said.

In 1992, there were about 6.6 million violent crimes in the United States and about 23 percent of the victims were juveniles. The rate was 74.2 cases per 1,000 juveniles, compared to 13.9 per 1,000 people age 35 and older.

Assaults accounted for 83 percent of the violent crimes against juveniles, and about 56 percent did not involve weapons or serious injury. But there were about 420,000 aggravated assaults against those 12 to 17 years old.

``These figures show that the nation's young people face a significant risk of harm,'' John J. Wilson, acting administrator of the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention said Sunday. ``The trend is sharply up and this is greatly troubling.''

APNP-07-18-94 0847EDT

Date: 07/17/94 Time: 14:40

For Release at 5 p.m. EDT, set by source

WASHINGTON (AP) Young people ages 12 through 17 are the most common victims of violent crime in America, being raped, robbed or assaulted at five times the rate for adults 35 and older, the Justice Department said Sunday.

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APNP-07-17-94 1439EDT

Treating Teen-Agers as Adults in Court: A Trend Born of Revulsion

By LAURA MANSNERUS

In Denver, a child visiting the zoo last summer was hit by a bullet intended by one teen-ager for another. In Salt Lake City, a 17-year-old was kicked, then shot to death by a knot of high-school students. Along a Florida interstate highway, a British tourist was killed after pulling into a rest stop; among the suspects, a 13-year-old.

As if the gunshots summoned them, legislators in Colorado, Utah and Florida met in special sessions this fall and enacted measures making it easier to prosecute teen-agers as young as 14 as adults. A half-dozen other states took similar steps earlier this year, and many more are considering them.

"Juveniles have become more violent and deadly, and kill at much younger ages," said Chuck Quackenbush, a Republican in the California State Assembly who has introduced a bill to lower the age at which one can be tried in adult court from 16 to 14 in murder cases. He cited the latest State Attorney General's report, showing that 18.7 percent of homicides in California were committed by juveniles, up from 9.8 percent in 1986.

Mr. Quackenbush said he was moved to act by the case of a youth in San Jose, Calif., who, one month shy of his 16th birthday, hacked a child to death with a meat cleaver for no apparent reason. Not subject to prosecution as an adult, the teen-ager must be released by state youth authorities at age 25.

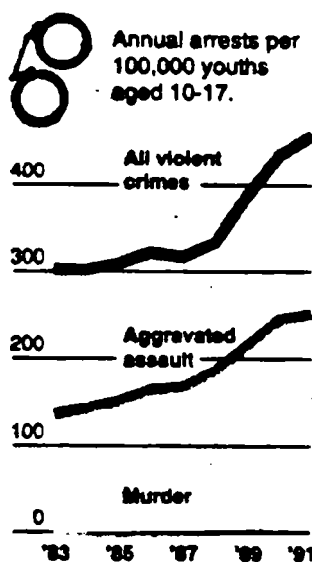
It was the kind of crime that made many people wonder whether some adolescents are beyond redemption, just as the murder in England of a 2-

year-old by a pair of 10-year-olds raised questions about the innocence of fifth graders.

The mission of juvenile courts, which ordinarily handle defendants under age 18, is not to punish offenders but to help them become law-abiding members of society. A consensus among legislators nationwide, however, holds that some crimes are horrific enough that no matter how old the criminal, the courts should focus on the nature of the offense rather than the nature of the offender.

"What the law has told juveniles is, 'Go ahead, commit the crime, you don't have to do the time,'" said Florida State Representative Carlos Manrique, a Miami area Republican. "Now we're saying, 'Do the crime, do the time.'"

Youths and Violence



Source: National Center for Juvenile Justice

Mark Soler, executive director of the Youth Law Center of San Francisco, says California and Florida are "just following a trend." He said he does not object to giving certain brutal young offenders long sentences. But he worries that public fury over a few isolated cases will push larger categories of youths, most of them neither evil nor unreachable, into a system where they have no chance of rehabilitation.

"I don't think a blunderbuss approach is going to do it," he said. "We need intensive follow-up; we need after-care, otherwise what's the point of putting kids in the adult system? The recidivism rate is astronomical."

Homicide Defendants

Even a majority of homicide defendants should probably be treated as juveniles, said Charles Patrick Ewing, a professor of law and psychology at the State University of New York at Buffalo and the author of "Kids Who Kill" (Lexington Books, 1990). He estimates that 10 to 20 percent have killed a family member.

"Unfortunately, these provisions apply across the board," Professor Ewing said. "An abused kid kills his abusive father and he's going to be charged as an adult? You're going to put him in with the most vicious kid, the one who walks into the 7-Eleven and blows the clerk away for \$15?"

At the heart of the debate is the notion of criminal responsibility: questions of whether a person should be punished for his or her actions. The question, said Barry C. Feld, a criminologist and a law professor at the University of Minnesota, is, "Does the person know the nature and consequences of his act and that it is wrong?" The same question is asked in the common law insanity defense, he said.

Knowing Right From Wrong

Professor Feld says setting 14 as the age of criminal responsibility is a return to 400-year-old common law standards and an idea that is supported by modern psychological research.

But Stanton E. Samenow, a psychologist who has written several books on criminal behavior, sees little

difference between the thinking of a 12-year-old criminal and a 30-year-old one. "I'd say 14 or 16, 13 or 12, these kids know right from wrong," Dr. Samenow said. "But at the time they're committing an act, they're able to shut off such considerations to do what they want to do. That's the chilling thing."

"Kids develop conscience in the Oedipal years. That's 3 to 5 years of age."

Marvin Wolfgang, the University of Pennsylvania criminologist who has studied juvenile delinquents over generations, said "a child at 14 does have a sense of right and wrong similar to an adult's" but has fewer defenses against violence all around him. "He's in a subculture in which violence is expected, tolerated and in some cases required," Professor Wolfgang said. "The 25-year-old may be in the same situation but has been exposed to more environmental chances of disrupting that connection."

Handling Young Offenders

In sentencing, however, the experts believe in drawing distinctions between juveniles and adults. Professor Feld, for example, favors "a youth discount," because teen-agers experience time differently from adults and "because we recognize that to some degree young people are different in their judgment, in their ability to appreciate the future consequences of their behavior."

Legislators care more about their constituents than about issues of criminology. "I don't care where he goes, as long as he's off the streets of

(cont.)

my town," Mr. Quackenbush said of the youngster who wielded the meat cleaver.

In pushing down the age of criminal responsibility, New York was a leader. In 1978 the state, already one of only a handful with adult court jurisdiction beginning at age 16 rather than 18, extended it to 14- and 15-year-olds charged with serious felonies; for murder cases the age was lowered to 13.

Since then, most other states have either allowed juvenile court judges to transfer certain cases to adult court or given the criminal courts original jurisdiction, usually permitting the transfer of a younger defendant to the juvenile system upon a showing that he is amenable to treatment there.

Many states have steadily brought more juveniles into the adult courts. Utah, for example, has long provided that any felony defendant 14 or older could be sent to adult court by a juvenile court judge. In 1981 prosecutors were given the option of initiating cases in adult court for serious offenses by those 16 years old or older. Under the new legislation, primarily a gun control package, a 16-year-old felony defendant can be charged in adult court if he has previously committed an offense involving a dangerous weapon.

When the Utah Legislature reconvenes next month, it will take up more proposals involving teen-age crime, said Reed M. Richards, chief deputy to the state Attorney General.

"It's become such a hot issue in Salt Lake — Salt Lake's not used to gang violence — I think anything you can imagine is going to be on the drawing board," he said, "particularly involving locking up juveniles."

One incident that shocked Utah residents was the killing of a 17-year-old who was dragged from his car after a rock concert on Sept. 1. Another 17-year-old, Asi Mohi, who police said was a gang member, has been charged with murder in the case in an adult court.

Rise in Violent Crime

Politicians are responding to a real increase in violent crime, especially homicide, by adolescents. The murder arrest rate among those ages 10 to 17 more than doubled from 1983 to 1991, from 5.4 arrests per 100,000 youths to 12.7 arrests, according to the National Center for Juvenile Justice, a research organization in Pittsburgh. By contrast, the center's data show fairly stable juvenile arrest rates for nonviolent crimes.

Most experts say that for offenses short of murder, sentencing juveniles as adults is at best useless. "No one ever believes that the adult court is going to do better than juvenile

court," said Howard N. Snyder, director of systems research at the National Center for Juvenile Justice. "That's never the argument. The legislators just want to make sure that the kids get put away for a long time."

That approach does not work, either, said Mr. Soler. He cited the example of Florida, which for 10 years has allowed the prosecution of many juveniles in adult court and, unlike many states, sends everyone convicted there to adult prisons. "If that's so effective, then why are we so worried about crime in Florida?" he asked.

Edward J. Loughran, who directs juvenile justice programs for the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial foundation, and who, until July, was commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, said small-scale programs for juveniles do show results, in the form of lower recidivism rates.

A Political Decision

Moreover, he said, "I think a juvenile court judge ought to be the person making the decision about amenability to treatment."

But Professor Feld, for one, says judges are no better than anyone else at predicting dangerousness. Determining the age of criminal responsibility is "a political decision about public safety," he said, and a legitimate exercise of the democratic process.

Professor Feld serves on a commission that is drafting legislative proposals in Minnesota, under which youths 16, 17 and 18 years old who are charged with serious, violent crimes would be presumed subject to criminal court jurisdiction, the burden of proof would be on the defendant to show that he should remain in juvenile court. By Professor Feld's estimate, such legislation would double or triple the number of older minors in adult court.

More such measures are in the making. Mark D. Steward, director of the Division of Youth Services in Missouri, said that since the arrest of a 13-year-old in the recent kidnapping and killing of a female college basketball star, the issue had brought his office "more calls than we've had in years."

As he spoke, Mr. Stewart had just returned from a meeting of judges, prosecutors and legislators. They discussed lowering the age of certification, he said, to 13 and possibly to 12.

Teen-Age Homicide Rate Has Soared

Annual Toll Rose 154% From 1985 to 1991, U.S. Study Shows

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

ATLANTA, Oct. 13 — At a time when the national homicide rate has not increased in several years, adolescent men are being killed in sharply rising numbers that have reached epidemic proportions, according to a study released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The study shows that from 1985 to 1991, the annual rate at which young men 15 to 19 years old were being killed jumped 154 percent, far surpassing the rate changes in any other age group. Virtually all of the increase in homicide, 97 percent, was attributable to the use of guns, the study found.

"This shows clearly and comprehensively that we have an epidemic of firearms death among young men," said Dr. Mark Rosenberg, the director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, a division of the centers that did the study.

The surge in homicide among 15- to 19-year-olds cut across all racial

groups, Dr. Rosenberg said, but the rates at which young black males were killed started at a higher base.

The new study suggests that the United States confronts not one but two trends of violence, said James Allen Fox, dean of the College of Criminology at Northeastern University in Boston. "People notice that the overall homicide rate is staying the same and think things may be getting better," he said. "Actually, what we have is a combination of two different murder rates going in opposite directions."

Homicide rates among men over 25 years old have been declining since 1985, he said.

The study, published today in the center's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, showed that while arrest rates for homicide among men aged 15 to 19 went up 127 percent from 1985 to 1991, they dropped by 1 percent for men 25 through 29, and 13 percent for men 30 through 34.

As a result, the report said, men from 15 through 19 are now more likely than those of any other age

group to be arrested for homicide.

The national homicide rate in 1992, the last year for which figures are available, stood at 9.3 per 100,000, the same as in 1990. It reached its highest level in the United States in 1980 when it was 10.1 per 100,000, according to the F.B.I.

The new report said it was unclear what had caused the enormous increase in homicide deaths among adolescent men. But it said one possible explanation lay in the work of Alfred Blumstein, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University.

Professor Blumstein said in a telephone interview that he had found that the sudden marked increase in homicide among young people took place in the mid-1980's along with the coming of crack. "I think it is the drug markets that recruit kids," he said, "and then the drug dealers give the kids guns. Guns are the tools of their trade."

Once this process started, Professor Blumstein said, the young people dealing drugs started carrying their guns around with them, to school and in their neighborhoods and then other teen-agers began copying them.

The wave of crack has now lessened, but the nation may now be in a second phase of the plague of young people with guns, Dr. Rosenberg suggested, where the process of younger and younger people arming themselves has become self-perpetuating.

Dr. Rosenberg said that today's report about the jump in homicide among adolescents might actually include some good news. The study, he said, shows that the wave of violence that has alarmed Americans "is not an epidemic of some vague evil, or immorality, but it is specifically a problem of firearms deaths among young people."

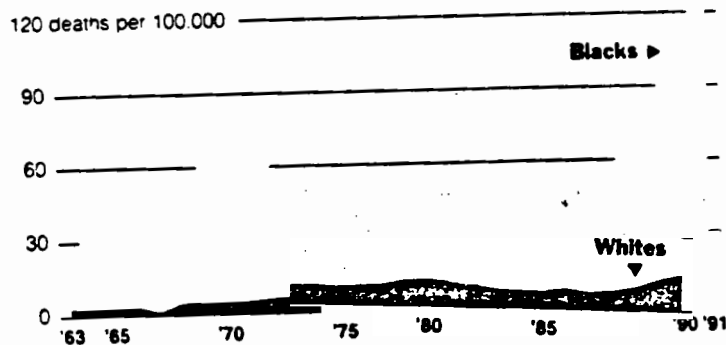
The study did not break down the increase in killings of young people by race. A major reason, Dr. Rosenberg said, was that the centers did not want to give the impression that "this is a racial problem."

"It is a national problem," he said, "with the same trends for whites and blacks, and the curve looks the same."

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

A Rise in Teen-age Homicide Victims

The homicide rate for both black and white men 15-19 years old has risen more sharply in the last decade than the rate for any other age group. The rate for young black men, however, remains disproportionately higher than that for whites.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

THE NEW YORK TIMES

PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

Lawyers and legal researchers are well-served by innovative private firms that provide quick and easy access to judicial interpretations of the law. Attorney General Janet Reno wants to take over this business so the government can subsidize its delivery to public interest law firms at a cost to taxpayers of more than \$100 million.

This proposal is ironic because the private firms that have created this market owe their existence to the government's inefficiency. It now takes more than a year for the U.S. Government Printing Office to publish Supreme Court opinions, but within hours of a ruling subscribers to Westlaw or Lexis can call up the opinion on their computer screens.

Other companies instantly distribute opinions by fax machine, and within days of a decision U.S. Law Week publishes the opinions along with editorial highlights. This vast private market is served also by many smaller firms and specialized newsletters.

It is egalitarianism run amok that Janet Reno wants a federally operated computer legal database because she doesn't think everyone can afford the fees charged by Westlaw and Lexis. Miss Reno's illogic could as easily apply to any reporting service, whether the Dow Jones Industrial Average or private credit reports, or, for that matter, to any privately produced good or service that Miss Reno thought was "too expensive" for all to enjoy.

There is much more at stake here than the government takeover of just another business. Reno Law strikes at the heart of fundamental privacy rights such as the attorney-client privilege.

Defense attorneys use Lexis and Westlaw creatively in preparing a defense of their clients. The users of Westlaw can be confident that opposing counsel can't monitor their use of the system to discover their intended defense. As is well known from the rampant abuse of taxpayer returns by Internal Revenue Service employees, no lawyer defending against a government case could be confident U.S. attorneys were not reading his mind by studying the information he was amassing from the government data base.

Judicial reporting ambushade

Moreover, government control over legal reporting would enable it to put its own spin on the interpretation of judicial rulings, thus shaping the law to serve its purposes. Rulings that went against the government might be explained away or dropped from the system altogether.

The whole notion of an impartial judiciary is potentially infringed. Unlike the government, which is a party to so many cases, private reporting companies have no vested interest in judicial rulings. To press its case for taking over private computer reporting services, Miss Reno has launched a strong-arm antitrust inquiry into the private industry.

The Justice Department in the last several weeks has been asking smaller firms for their complaints against the proprietary information system developed by Westlaw.

Many regard it as an effort to either intimidate Westlaw and Lexis into letting the government take over their businesses or, alternatively, into supplying their services at greatly reduced rates to



JANET RENO

clients favored by the Justice Department, including its own legal staff.

With government regulatory police increasingly targeting ordinary citizens for prosecution, a government-controlled legal reporting system makes us all vulnerable to being Big Brothered.

A person caught in the government's snare doesn't want his lawyer dependent on the government for his legal research.

In 1992, the Judicial Conference of the United States, comprised of all federal judges, rejected a proposal of a standardized federal reporting system on the grounds that it wasn't needed. But that didn't deter Miss Reno. You can bet your rights won't either.

Paul Craig Roberts is a columnist for The Washington Times and is nationally syndicated.

'Gun-toting 'epidemic' among kids

Murder rates soar for males 15 to 19

By Robert Davis
USA TODAY

The gun-filled drug culture is partly to blame for murder rates soaring over the past 30 years, a report out today says.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says males 15-19 are being killed six times more often than in 1963 — at a rate higher than men 25 to 34.

"Carrying a gun is the epidemic which is contagious among kids," says Alfred Blumstein, a study author. "If you're in a drug market, you've got to carry a gun."

With poor coping skills, "kids get into fights; it's what kids do." But he says the fights that led to nose bleeds in the 1960s now "can result in shootings."

Some findings in the report:

► The homicide rate for males 15 to 19 jumped 154% from 1985 to 1991.

► The highest homicide rate in the country: men 20 to 24.

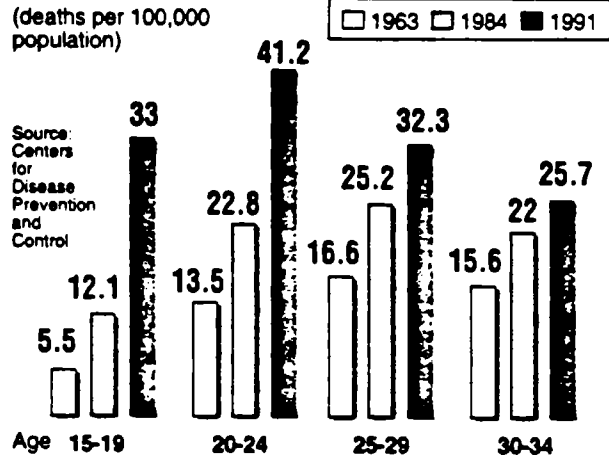
► Homicide is the No. 2 killer for young men, second behind accidental deaths. About 23,108, or 32%, of all deaths are attributed to accidents; 13,122, or 18%, are murders.

By comparison, 8,661, or 12%, die each year from HIV.

More young men are dying

How homicide rates for young men age 15-34 have risen:

(deaths per 100,000 population)



By Cliff Vancura, USA TODAY

“
Kids get into fights; it's what kids do. They used to escalate into fistfights and bloody noses. If these kids are carrying guns, they can result in shootings.
”

— Alfred Blumstein, study author

The centers' Kenneth Powell says, "Violence is something that has been with humans since time began," but adds, "changes in our society" have made things much worse.

The report calls for:

► Scientific strategies for youth violence prevention.

► Violence reduction efforts from infancy up; and using peaceful adult role models.

► Peace messages in many different settings, from clinics to schools; and addressing social ills such as poverty.

Blumstein of the Heinz School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh says: "We've got to get guns out of the hands of these kids."

7 P.G. Arrests Linked to Cali Cartel

By Joe Donnelly

Washington Post Staff Writer

Federal and local authorities said yesterday that they had broken up a Prince George's County drug ring that served as the main local distributor for Colombia's Cali cartel.

Drug Enforcement Administration and Prince George's police officials said they arrested seven people Wednesday who are involved in the drug ring, which distributed cocaine that came from cartel sources in New York. The local arrests stem from a more extensive, nationwide roundup last month of more than 100 drug distributors, authorities said.

Alleged members of the Kelly Organization arrested Wednesday included Edward Kenneth Kelly, 29, of the 1400 block of Dolbrook Lane, Mitchellville. Police described him as the ringleader of the Prince George's group, which was responsible for moving about 50 kilograms of cocaine a month through the Washington-Baltimore corridor.

The federal-local task force seized 3.5 kilograms of cocaine, which police said had a street value of \$700,000, plus \$322,000 in cash, 11 vehicles and 20 firearms, mostly semiautomatic handguns.

The local arrests and seizures were the culmination of a seven-month investigation by the Metropolitan Area

Task Force, a unit comprising members of local police departments and the Washington field office of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Police said members of the group arrested Wednesday were the primary local distributors in the Cali network. "We had direct contacts between the Kelly Organization and members of the Cali cartel located in New York City," said Maj. Robert Fuller, head of Prince George's County police investigative services. "They were not far removed from the cartel itself."

The Cali cartel, based in the Colombian city of Cali, distributes much of the world's cocaine, according to the DEA. The operation is estimated to smuggle \$60 million worth of cocaine into the country each week.

On Sept. 26, DEA agents and police in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, New Orleans and San Antonio arrested 166 alleged members of the cartel and seized six tons of cocaine and \$13 million in cash. The DEA also tracked cocaine seized in heartland cities such as Lincoln, Neb., to the cartel.

The two-year investigation, was called "Operation Foxhunt" after the Cali cartel's chief Los Angeles operator, who was known as "Zorro," Spanish for fox.

DEA spokesman Mark Johnson said the investigation produced the

best look yet at the highly centralized cartel. "We've disrupted this operation and gained a lot of intelligence as to how they do business," Johnson said. The information gathered in the investigation helped the local task force close in on the Kelly Organization, which authorities had tracked for years, Johnson said.

Fuller said that information helped the task force investigate local cocaine distribution from the top down rather than from the street level up, leading to the high-level arrests. "We dismantled this organization at the very top," he said.

Also arrested with Kelly and charged with conspiracy to distribute cocaine were Thomas Pennell Smith, 28, and Paul Mondell Kelly, 24, of Suitland; Von Eugene Miles, 25, of Bowie; Stephanie Elizabeth Kellogg, 29, of Greenbelt; and Kim Maurice Cooke, 23, of Forestville. Carlese Jeanette Williams, 31, of Capitol Heights, was charged with possession of cocaine with intent to distribute.

Fuller said closing down the ring would crimp the flow of drugs into the area but other groups would slowly try to fill in for the ring. "As large and sophisticated as this operation was, we anticipate a considerable amount of time to pass before that void can be filled," he said.

'94 Candidates Agree on 1 Goal: Curbing Juvenile Crime

But any crackdown could be just a warm-up to an even tougher clash when welfare reform is tackled

Call it tough love, common standard or fear and loathing, but one of the most powerful trends in campaign 1994 is the rising demand for a crackdown on juvenile criminals.

With juvenile violence rising more rapidly than adult violence, promises of boot camps, longer sentences, adult trials and curfews for teen-agers are ringing through campaigns around the country,

especially gubernatorial races. This is an agenda with an angry edge—filled with denunciations of punks and thugs and hoodlums. But even so, it may be only the warm-up for a more polarizing conflict next year, when the

theft. In the era of killers not yet old enough to shave, the stern new guiding principle appears to be that, whatever the defendant's age, "every criminal act of an offender must translate into a definite consequence," as Peter Ramirez of the New York City family court puts it.

Stiffer sanctions against violent juveniles, however, constitute only the first (and relatively less incendiary) step in a broader reassessment. A growing number of candidates in both parties, but especially Republicans, are linking the rise in juvenile violence with the growth in out-of-wedlock births and welfare dependency. Jeb Bush, the GOP gubernatorial nominee in Florida, puts it flatly: "The pathology of the welfare state is, I think, the primary reason why we have . . . juvenile crime."

In fact, research doesn't support such a blanket statement.

An exhaustive Justice Department review of sociological studies recently concluded that children from single-parent families are more likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behavior, and that crime rates are higher in neighborhoods with high proportions of mother-only families.

But millions of children grow up in single-parent households without becoming delinquents or criminals. The high rates of crime in neighborhoods with lots of single mothers could also reflect other factors, like racial segregation or poverty, researchers note. And other forms of dysfunction in "intact" families can also predict criminal behavior: child abuse, criminal activity by parents and marital discord.

"Not all children follow the same path to delinquency," the review concluded.

Still, the relationship between father absence and crime appears strong enough—especially in isolated inner-city neighborhoods—to force the issue of broken families into the juvenile crime debate. And that, in turn, is increasing discussion of what Princeton University criminologist John J. DiIulio terms the "most radical of radical social program

proposals": an increased effort by government to guide the upbringing of children raised fatherless and poor.

Put another way, what we are hearing is the opening notes of a movement to bring back the orphanage.

This call is coming from two directions. Social conservatives like William J. Bennett and Charles Murray see orphanages as a way to care for children who could otherwise be left destitute by their proposals to cut off all welfare benefits for single mothers, in the hope of discouraging illegitimacy.

More intriguingly, criminologists like DiIulio are pushing the idea of orphanage-like institutions as a means of removing children from surroundings that raise their risk of involvement in crime. The leader in this modest movement has been UCLA management professor James Q. Wilson. In an article last month in *Commentary*, Wilson

renewed his call for "group homes" with strict rules and supervision, where single, teen-age parents and their children could live in "the kind of structured, consistent and nurturant environment that children need."

In looking to modernize and adapt the orphanage, these writers are championing an institution long out of favor. For years, the clear preference of social welfare agencies has been to keep children in families, even those that only loosely deserve the name; the Census Bureau now counts fewer than 25,000 children living in long-term care facilities like orphanages.

Those numbers reflect the modern image of the orphanage as a close cousin to the prison. But that judgment is too sweeping. A study in the *Atlantic Monthly* of contemporary orphanages like the Children's Village in New York found many cheerful and effective: "An

WASHINGTON OUTLOOK



By Ronald
Brownstein

likelihood is that anxiety over youth crime will become intertwined with the racially charged effort to reform the welfare system.

The first stage of this process—suffering sanctions against violent juveniles—amounts to a tidal wave. At least 20 states this year moved to prosecute more violent juveniles as adults, thereby allowing courts to impose longer sentences.

In Texas, George W. Bush, the Republican gubernatorial nominee, calls juvenile violence the most important problem in the state; he wants to lower to 14 the age at which juveniles can be tried as adults. California Gov. Pete Wilson has already signed such a bill into law. In Colorado, Democratic Gov. Roy Romer led a special session last fall that created a new system of longer sentences and secure incarceration for juveniles.

Overall, this may represent nothing less than a rejection of the juvenile justice system erected at the turn of the century to protect and reform wayward young people charged with delinquency or petty

cont'd.

cause of a technical violation will still be shunned by the tribe since he has not had to pay for or reflect on his actions.

"You cannot confuse law with justice," says Mr. Kickingbird. "Laws may be followed to the letter, but that doesn't mean justice has been done. Tribes are interested in a larger sense of justice."

Community bonds

That larger sense of justice includes a deep, spiritual element. The separation of church and state has little place here: Tribal hearings are prefaced by prayer, and banishment is often used as a way of making a criminal reflect on his crime in a kind of extended meditation.

It also refers to an individual's relationship to the community; the close bond of a tribe is a strong deterrent and a powerful motivator to change. Indians rarely have to use extreme forms of punishment such as "outlawery" (out-right banishment with no hope of return) or the death penalty.

Under tribal justice systems, once restitution has been made and the punishment carried out, the tribe holds a "cleansing ceremony," and afterward the crime is erased from the collective memory as if it never happened.

For American Indians, the question of tribal justice is a key one in their ongoing struggle to reclaim their rights, paired with the desire by some to reclaim their lands.

But many are leery of granting any symbolic importance to this particular case, which has been surrounded by questions about Mr. James' legitimacy and about Tlingit customs themselves.

Rudy James is something of a shadowy figure. He has not lived in Klawock for almost 30 years, and his critics contend that he is not entirely knowledgeable about Tlingit culture.

"Rudy James made it up as he went along," insists Mr. Townsend. "He put together this hodgepodge of notions about Indian justice and came up with this tribal court and this banishment nonsense. Tlingits don't even have tribal courts, not the way other tribes do." (According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Tlingits do have federal-recognized procedures for implementing tribal courts but have never used them before.)

Small-town infighting

Some say that Mr. James is a well-known con man, noting that during the tribal hearings of Roberts and Guthrie, the courtroom received a fax from Mr. James' ex-wife, saying that she had her own case to bring before the tribal court — a claim that Mr. James owed her thousands of dollars in unpaid child support.

"I owe a lot of money, as the world knows by now. I've never hidden that," Mr. James acknowledges. "And a big reason why I don't have much money is that I've dedicated my whole life to working for Indian rights."

Mr. James' supporters say that even as a teen-ager, he was a prominent Indian-rights activist.

Dave Donaldson, a reporter for the Associated Press' Juneau bureau who has followed the case closely, says the debate concerning Mr. James comes down to small-town infighting. "Klawock is a tiny little village, where almost everyone is connected to either the BIA-type Indians or Mr. James and his family," he says. "Over the years, I've heard all sorts of accusations against James, but when you go to look for the facts, they just aren't there."

Mr. Donaldson adds, however, that questions about the tribal court itself are legitimate. Klawock is not exclusively Tlingit; it consists of two entirely separate tribes — Tlingits and Haidas.

The facts about Mr. James, Tlingit justice and the benefits of banishment are still up in the air. In the meantime, prosecutors Townsend and Magee have filed an appeal to overturn Judge Allendoerfer's decision and have the boys returned to Everett and to prison. They consider the case an example of judicial activism gone awry and question its constitutionality.

Mr. James has vowed that if they win, he will appeal directly to Washington Gov. Michael Lowry.

For American Indians around the country who are watching this case, the fallout could land just about anywhere.

Many believe that, at the very least, the case will open the public's eyes to the fact that Indian justice is every bit as sophisticated, rigorous and practical as American justice — if not more so.

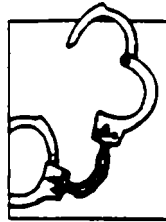
Others are more reserved in their assessment. "I only hope," says Mr. Kickingbird, "that this case doesn't create a backlash against tribal justice. Perhaps it does have some improprieties. I don't know, but if it does, these should not be used to justify a crackdown on tribal courts."

For his part, the man who set it all in motion, James Allendoerfer, continues to face his critics with aplomb. "I am pleased and proud of what I did. If it turns out well," he says, "I will do it again. And again."

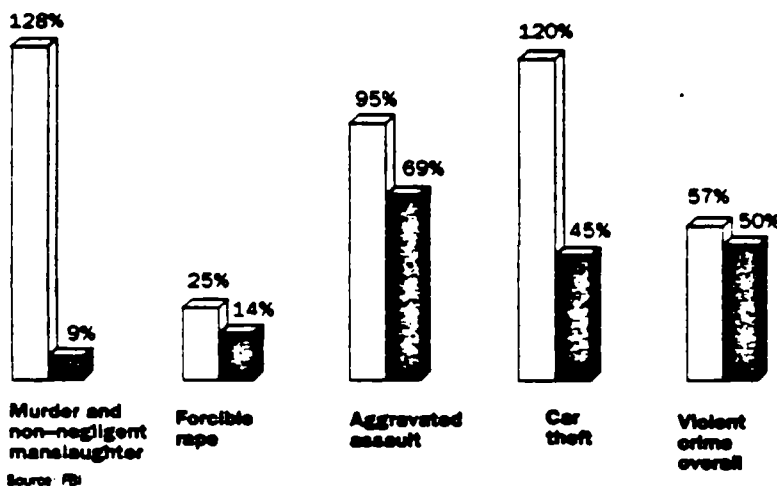
The Rise in Arrests

For most violent crimes, arrest rates for juveniles have been rising faster than the arrest rates for adults—fueling the nationwide turn toward toughening sentences for youthful criminals. In 1992, children younger than 18 committed more than twice as many murders as in 1983, and almost twice as many aggravated assaults.

Under 18
18 and older



INCREASE IN ARREST RATES, 1983 to 1992, JUVENILE VS. ADULT



Los Angeles Times

institution may be the first home some children have ever known," concluded Mary-Lou Weisman.

Even at this early stage, orphanage advocates are dividing into two camps: hard and soft. The hard side leans toward separating children from their parents, either by legal fiat or by eliminating the public assistance that parents need to keep their family together. That seems like a dead end. It is difficult to imagine Americans accepting a policy that coerces women in significant numbers to give up their children.

But the approach of soft-siders could offer more grounds for experiment and consensus. UCLA's Wilson says that, except in the extreme cases that require removal, the goal should be to keep young single mothers with their children—but to relocate both to a safer and more structured environment operated by private institutions like churches, with government financial support.

The left's initial reaction may be to recoil from such an idea as coercive itself; but liberals should think twice. While demanding more responsibility from young mothers (curfews, progress toward high school graduation), such institutions could also offer them more comprehensive services (health care, parenting classes, immunizations) than they now receive.

The rub is the cost. Mary Jo Bane, an assistant secretary at the Health and Human Services Department, says successful orphanages now spend from \$30,000 to \$50,000 annually per child—"as much as it costs to run a prison or nursing home." Even converting welfare grants into vouchers that could be used to buy such services for children, as Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Conn.) and conservative House Republicans are suggesting, wouldn't cover even a fraction of that bill, she notes.

Could institutions be designed that would provide comparable services at less cost? No one knows. That's one reason to proceed cautiously. But at a time when states are minting dollars to punish violent juveniles, it makes sense to at least experiment with new means of helping young people stay out of trouble in the first place.

The Washington Outlook column appears here every other Monday.

The Washington Post

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PAGE: A22

But Was He Telling the Truth?

LATE LAST month, Joseph Toft, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's chief in Colombia, ended his seven-year tour with a bang. In his first public comments about the awesome reach of Colombia's drug cartels, the now retired-drug agent told a Colombian television audience that theirs is a "narco-democracy" led by a president who had accepted "millions of dollars" in campaign funds from the notorious Cali drug cartel. "I cannot think of a single political or judicial institution that has not been penetrated by the narco-traffickers," he said. Not surprisingly, Mr. Toft's valedictory remarks outraged Colombian authorities and mortified American diplomats who rushed to disavow his statements. But questions of protocol and national hurt feelings aside, it's fair to ask if Mr. Toft got it right.

State Department, DEA and U.S. Embassy in Bogota statements on Mr. Toft's parting shots were noteworthy for what they didn't say. While they sought to reassure Colombians that Mr. Toft was speaking only for himself and was no longer on the U.S. payroll, they passed up the opportunity to say he wasn't speaking the truth. Perhaps that is because of the difficulty in viewing the situation in any other light. It strains credulity to believe that Colombia could have become headquarters of the Cali cartel's global, multibillion-dollar drug empire, and one of the

the world's top three heroin producers, or that the drug lords would enjoy the enormous power they have—without the help of massive drug-related corruption throughout Colombian society and at all levels of government. Mr. Toft charged that the Colombian drug trade thrives because too many people "prefer to close their eyes and look the other way."

Few countries have paid as dearly in the war against drug trafficking as Colombia. For that reason, Mr. Toft's remarks were taken as an unfair denigration of the nation. But Colombia is also a country where 80 percent of the cocaine that yearly floods American and European streets is processed.

Drug producing countries argue, correctly, that the drug problem is a two-way street. U.S. drug addiction does make Colombian drug kingpins possible. Colombia's new president, Ernesto Samper Pizano, went out of his way during a United Nations speech last week to drive that point home. In what some observers regarded as a swipe at former D.C. mayor and Democratic party primary winner Marion Barry, who has a cocaine conviction, the president complained, "We feel alone, very much alone, when we see popularly elected mayors who are avowed chronic drug users." In anger over Mr. Toft's parting shots, Colombian officials have decided to review the DEA's role in their country. They should review more than that.

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National Institute of Justice

Research in Brief

Jeremy Travis, Director

February 1995

Issues and Findings

Discussed in this Brief: An NIJ-sponsored nationwide survey of local prosecutors' approaches to gang prosecution, a review of the State legislation targeted at street gang activity, and case studies of prosecution efforts at four sites.

Key issues: The presence of gangs is becoming more widespread, and gang-related violence and gang drug trafficking are increasing. Most research on gangs has been about their formation and reasons for individual participation, while little research has looked at community and criminal justice responses. This study examined prosecutors' perceptions of gang-related crime, local definitions of gangs, criminal statutes used against street gangs, Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Acts, and problems dealing with gang cases.

Key findings: The study found that more than 80 percent of prosecutors acknowledged gangs were a problem in their jurisdiction and said they were vigorously pursuing prosecution of gang crimes. Ultimately, however, prosecutors believed that early intervention with children and youths and more effective services designed to strengthen families were necessary to prevent gang violence and crime. Additional findings include:

- Definitions of "gang" and gang-related crime varied widely from State to State and were established either by State statutes or operationally by police departments, prosecutors, and administrators of

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Prosecuting Gangs: A National Assessment

by Claire Johnson, Barbara Webster, and Edward Connors

Street gangs have been part of America's urban landscape for most of the country's history and a subject of research since at least the 1920's. But most street gangs in the first third of the century were small groups involved in delinquent acts or relatively minor crimes, primarily fights with other gangs. As the year 2000 approaches, there are many more different types of street gangs. Individual members, gang cliques, or entire gang organizations traffic in drugs; commit shootings, assaults, robbery, extortion, and other felonies; and terrorize neighborhoods. The most ambitious gang members have spread out from their home jurisdictions to other cities and States. An increasing number are supported by the sale of crack cocaine, heroin, and other illegal drugs, and they have easy access to more firepower than the average patrol officer. Further, in many impoverished and transitional neighborhoods, children are born into or must contend with second- and third-generation street gangs.

Until recently, research on gangs centered on exploring reasons for gang formation and participation, with a related emphasis on public policy that deters vulnerable youths from joining gangs. But the destruction and fear generated by today's street gangs have elevated the importance of research on effective com-

munity and criminal justice responses to them. Communities overwhelmed by violent gangs must have relief from the terror before revitalization, initiatives to strengthen families, school improvements, and other desired interventions can succeed. Prosecutors throughout the country are striving to help give communities breathing room by building strong cases that remove violent gang members from the streets. It is only in the last few years, however, that federally sponsored research has begun to look at the gang problem from the prosecutors' perspective and to explore the strategies they use.

NIJ research on gangs and gang prosecution

The legal options available to prosecutors to combat gangs vary considerably, as do the strategies they employ and the policy choices they make. To learn more about gang prosecution at the local level, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) sponsored a National Assessment on Gang Prosecution, which was conducted by the Institute for Law and Justice.¹ This project, like other NIJ-supported national assessments in the past few years, was designed to obtain baseline information in a subject area in which comparatively little research had been done. It was one of six NIJ projects on gangs initiated in FY 1992; they included studies on gangs and migration