

## Chapter 5

# Violence

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Gain a sense of the extent of violence in the United States.
2. Understand the human consequences of violent behavior.
3. Identify the factors that lead people to be violent, including societal factors that impinge on the violent individual.
4. Explain the consequences for the victim of both completed and attempted rapes.
5. Know the varied causes of rape.
6. Suggest ways to deal with violence, including rape.



#### • “I FELT GUILTY”

The trauma of rape is described by Tammi, a 20-year-old woman who was raped while walking to the parking lot of a college:

*It happened about 10 P.M. I had been doing some research at the library and I was in a hurry*

*to get home because I wanted to see a movie on TV. I was standing next to my car, looking in my purse for my keys. I didn't see the man or hear him until all of a sudden he grabbed me from behind and had me on the ground before I knew what had happened. He held a knife to my throat and told me to do what he said and I wouldn't get hurt. I was too scared to move anyway because I could feel the knife pressing against my neck.*

*He was disgusted that I had on jeans and made a derogatory remark about the way girls dress today. He made me take off my pants and perform oral sex on him. Then he raped me. He kept asking me if I liked it, but I was too scared to answer him. He got angry because I wouldn't answer him and he hit me in the breast with his fist. I started crying and he got off of me and let me get dressed. He told me if I told anyone he would come back and rape me again. He said that he knew who I was and where I lived. I started crying harder and shaking all over. He patted me and told me to grow up, that he'd done me a favor and that I was old enough to enjoy sex with a man. He finally left and I got into my car and went home.*

*I felt so dirty I took a shower and scrubbed myself all over and got into bed. At 12:30 my roommate came home and I told her what had happened. She insisted I call the police, so I did. Two policemen came to our apartment. They asked such things as where did it happen, and what did he look like, and what time did it happen. They acted like I made it up when they found out it happened two hours ago. The young cop asked me if I had an orgasm and if he had ejaculated. I didn't know what to say as I didn't know, since this was my first encounter with sex. I don't think they believed that either. They told me to come down to the station the next day if I wanted to press charges, but that since I had taken a shower and waited so long I probably didn't have a case. No one told me to go to the hospital to be treated for V.D. or that they could give me something to prevent pregnancy until I talked to a friend the next day. She went with me to the emergency room of a hospital and they told me they didn't treat rape victims. I started crying and she took me home. I was pretty shook-up. For three or four days I stayed in bed. I cut all my classes. Finally, I went back to school and everything seemed to be fine until I saw a story about rape on TV. I got so upset my roommate called the Rape Crisis Center and*

*had me talk to them about my feelings. I called them eight or nine times in all.*

*I felt guilty. I thought it was my fault because my mother had been against my leaving home to go to college and against my having an apartment. She had also warned me never to go out alone at night. I didn't tell her I had been raped because I was afraid she'd make me leave school and come back home. So instead of blaming the guy, I blamed myself for being so dumb and naive. It took about three months to get my head together. I feel I have now, but I still am uneasy if a guy comes on too strong, or stops to talk to me in an isolated place, or even if he gets too close in an elevator. I haven't dated since it happened. I guess I shut everyone out and went on my own head trip, but I've started going places with my girlfriends lately and I think I have it together now.*

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## • INTRODUCTION

In April 1999, two teenage boys shot and killed 12 students and a teacher and wounded a number of other students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. The boys then committed suicide. During a three-week period in October 2002, two snipers randomly shot people in the region around Washington, D.C., killing 10 and wounding three others.

In addition to such dramatic and terrifying incidents, Americans confront daily stories of violence in their news media. Violence occurs in homes, schools, the workplace, and the streets. Injuries from guns are the eighth leading cause of death in the United States, and there are about three nonfatal shootings for every fatal one (Bilchik 1999). A great deal more violence occurs that does not involve the use of guns.

Because social problems involved *intergroup conflict*, violence enters into nearly every social problem at some point. The conflict often becomes violent, as illustrated by gangs of straight youths who beat up homosexuals, by race riots, by murders when a drug dealer tries to move in on someone else's market, and so on.

In this chapter we deal with various kinds of interpersonal and intergroup violence, all of which concern Americans and all of which are widely believed to detract from the quality of life. We begin by discussing the meaning, the kinds, and the amount of violence in the nation. We show the ways that violence detracts from the quality of life and identify the various sociocultural factors that contribute to the problem. We discuss ways in which violence can be minimized or eliminated from human life.

We then discuss rape. Although some have thought of rape as a form of sexual deviance, it is essentially an act of violence. The victim may be further victimized by the reactions of family, friends, police officers, and male jurors.

## • WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

In general, **violence** implies *use of force to kill, injure, or abuse others*. It occurs between two or more individuals as *interpersonal violence*, or it involves identifiable groups in the society and erupts as *intergroup violence* between two or more different races, religions, or political groups. In intergroup situations the violence ultimately means confrontation between individuals whose actions are legitimated by their group affiliation. Interpersonal violence often occurs between people who knew each other prior to the violent confrontation. Intergroup violence, however, is likely to involve people who were strangers prior to the confrontation.

• **violence**  
the use of force to kill, injure,  
or abuse others

## How Much Violence Is There?

It is difficult to estimate the amount of violent behavior in the United States. Much is never reported, and for some kinds of violence—riots, gang beatings, violent demonstrations, and terrorist activities—there is no systematic effort to record all incidents. But evidence indicates that there is and always has been a considerable amount of violence in America.

For example, the following incidents were reported over a period of a couple of months in a western city:

A distraught man walked into the emergency room of a hospital and began shooting randomly, killing two people and wounding two others.

Militant antiabortion protestors tried to shut down an abortion clinic, resulting in a violent confrontation that required police intervention and numerous arrests.

A confrontation between two rival youth gangs resulted in a number of injuries, including knife wounds.

Several women who were out jogging were caught and raped by a man who may be a serial rapist.

A brawl erupted between police and members of a religious sect after a police officer attempted to arrest a member of the sect for a routine traffic violation.

A university decided to cancel an annual festival that had taken place for more than 50 years because a weekend of rioting caused more than 100 injuries.

Add to the above numerous other victims—businesspeople robbed and beaten, battered wives and children, women raped by a date, children beaten by a school bully, people harassed because of racial prejudice, jail and prison riots, and countless others—and it quickly becomes obvious that the level of violence is high in American society. A national victimization survey reported that 8 percent (about 15 million people) said they had experienced physical violence (they were hit, slapped, pushed, kicked, or struck with an object or weapon) during the 12 months prior to the study (Potter et al. 1999).

Violence occurs in all kinds of settings. During the 1990s, there were an average of 1.7 million violent victimizations per year against people at work or on duty (Duhart 2001). The majority of victimizations in the workplace are simple assault, but the violence can also be as severe as rape and murder. Law enforcement officers, taxi drivers, and bartenders experience the highest rates of victimization.

*Children also experience a great deal of violence.* The highest rate of nonfatal violent victimizations each year occurs among those between the ages of 12 and 17



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Violence claims victims of both sexes, all racial and ethnic groups, and all ages.

• **domestic terrorism**  
the use, or threatened use, of violence by those operating entirely within the United States to intimidate or coerce the government and/or citizens in order to reach certain social or political aims

(Klaus and Rennison 2002). Their rate is more than double that of those aged 35 and above. Rates also vary by such things as race and social class. A survey of 104 fourth- and fifth-grade children in an impoverished inner-city area found that 89 percent had heard the sound of gunfire; 65 percent had been slapped, punched, or hit by someone; 65 percent had seen someone beaten up or mugged; 16 percent had seen someone killed; and 11 percent had been shot at (Ceballos et al. 2001). Much of the violence experienced by children occurs in the school setting (see chapter 11).

Intimate relationships also are often marked by violence (Greenfield et al. 1998; Rennison 2000). Violence by an intimate accounts for around 21 percent of all violent victimizations of women and about 2 percent of violent victimizations of males. Hundreds of thousands of incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend occur each year, with about 85 percent of the victims being women. Black women are more likely than those of other races to be victims; in a given year about 12 black women per 1,000 and 8 white women per 1,000 are victims of intimate violence.

Intimate violence includes all age groups, but is highest among females between the ages of 16 and 24 (Rennison 2001). Among 631 students from three high schools in the Midwest (one inner-city, one suburban, and one rural school), a fourth of the girls reported sexual or physical violence

or both while dating (Bergman 1992). In a sample of 623 college-age women, 43.1 percent reported experiencing physical abuse at some time during their dating history (Neufeld, McNamara, and Ertl 1999).

How much intergroup violence is there? Ted Gurr (1969:576) attempted to estimate the amount of civil strife in the United States from June 1963 through May 1968, a time of intense conflict. He identified more than 800 events that were either civil rights demonstrations, black riots and disturbances, or white terrorism against blacks and civil rights workers. There were more than two million participants and more than 9,400 casualties. The most common type of violence was interracial.

In 1995, antigovernment militants used a truck bomb to destroy a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 and wounding more than 500. Americans became aware of the problem of **domestic terrorism** (we discuss international terrorism in chapter 14). *Domestic terrorism* is the use, or threatened use, of violence by those operating entirely within the United States to intimidate or coerce the government and/or citizens in order to reach certain social or political aims (Watson 2002). The FBI reported 247 incidents or suspected incidents of domestic terrorism between 1980 and 2000 (Watson 2002).

The Oklahoma City incident was not the first encounter between the federal government and right-wing militias (Smolowe 1995). In 1983, a shootout resulted in the death of Gordon Kahl, a tax resister, militia member, and suspected killer of two U.S. marshals. A number of other incidents occurred in ensuing years, including the FBI attack on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, in 1993. More than 70 members of the cult were killed as their buildings burned. Many militia members viewed the attack as the final straw in federal oppression.

All the militias view the government as a tyrannical enemy (Pitcavage 2001). However, *the militias vary according to purpose* (Smolowe 1995). The Aryan nation is a white-supremacist group. The Survivalists are expecting, and preparing for, the breakdown of the economy and the government by preparing to defend and support themselves in the resulting chaos. The Patriots stress the rights of states and the people over the federal government. Posse Comitatus is a tax-resistance group that is also anti-Semitic. Various militias (more than a dozen scattered throughout the nation) accumulate weapons to promote and defend the kind of society they believe the Constitution was meant to create.

As long as such groups operate, there is a strong potential for violence. Many not only have sophisticated weapons, but also engage in regular training exercises in their use. Their members are deadly serious about what they see as their mission and are prepared to engage in violent measures to achieve it.

## • VIOLENCE AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE

You can get a feel for how violence detracts from the quality of life by looking at both objective and subjective evidence. As will be evident, the negative impact of violence on the quality of life can be severe and long term.

### Human Injury and Destruction

Violence results in *human destruction* and is, therefore, a *contradiction* to American values of well-being and freedom from fear. Violent crime, riots, and other forms of interpersonal and intergroup violence can lead to both injury and death. Labor-management and interracial confrontations are the kinds of intergroup conflict most likely to result in deaths and serious injuries. One of the worst riots in modern U.S. history occurred in Los Angeles in 1992 following the acquittal of white police officers who had severely beaten a black man who had resisted arrest (Pringle 1997). Three days of rioting left 55 people dead, 2,300 injured, and 1,093 buildings damaged or destroyed. The injured or killed in such situations include spectators or those who are traveling through the area.

Additional destructive physical consequences may result from the circumstances created by violence. From 25 to 50 percent of homeless families are headed by women who fled from violent husbands (Mason 1993). They escaped the domestic violence only to face the challenge of surviving the debilitating life of those without shelter.

### Psychological Disruption and Dehumanization

In earlier chapters we noted the *psychological trauma* endured by victims of violent crime and abusive relationships. Sexual and/or physical abuse at the hands of a parent or other close relative is a particularly difficult experience (Dyer et al. 2000). Adolescents exposed to violence in intimate relationships have higher rates of depression, running away from home, thoughts of suicide, dropping out of school, and teenage pregnancy (Hagan and Foster 2001).

Depending upon the relationship between victim and abuser, *the victim may come to see himself or herself as a bad person who somehow deserves the abuse*. For example, you—like the rest of us—want to believe that your parents are good, loving people, so if they abuse you, you may feel that it is because you deserve it. The outcome

of years of abuse, then, is likely to be “low self-esteem, self-hatred, affective instability, poor control of aggressive impulses, and disturbed relationships with inability to trust” (Rieker and Carmen 1986:368). In fact, even if parents do not abuse their children, *the children may be harmed by seeing their parents physically attacking each other*. A sample of women who as children witnessed physical conflict between their parents had higher levels of psychological distress than a comparison group who had not experienced such conflict (Henning et al. 1996).

For the victims of abuse, the psychological damage can be severe enough to require hospitalization. A study of 51 teenaged patients at a state psychiatric hospital found that more than half of them had been physically or sexually abused or both (Hart et al. 1989). They were hospitalized for various problems, including self-destructive behavior and drug abuse.

Moreover, *the consequences can be long term, enduring even after the individual is no longer in the abusive situation*. Both adolescents abused by parents or peers and women abused by husbands or boyfriends may develop **posttraumatic stress disorder** (Houskamp and Foy 1991; Singer et al. 1995). This disorder involves emotional and physical difficulties after a traumatic experience. The difficulties can last for years—even a lifetime. They include such things as nightmares, recurring thoughts about the traumatic experience, a lack of involvement with life, and feelings of guilt.

Both violent victimization and exposure to violence can produce posttraumatic stress disorder and other emotional problems (Ceballo et al. 2001). For example, the Oklahoma City bombing resulted in the disorder among some people who were exposed to, though not directly involved in, the violence (Sprang 1999). Although Oklahoma City residents were most likely to be adversely affected, even people who lived hundreds of miles away reported emotional problems six months afterward.

Interpersonal violence not only traumatizes the victim, it also perpetuates the violence. Parents who abuse their children typically were beaten as children. Thus, the *dehumanization process* continues. In addition, childhood sexual abuse leads to higher rates of disrupted marriage and of dissatisfaction with sexual relationships when the victims become adults (Finkelhor et al. 1989).

Intergroup violence is no less disruptive and dehumanizing than interpersonal violence. For example, adolescents exposed to the ongoing violence between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland have more mental health problems and lower self-esteem than those more insulated from the conflict (Muldoon and Wilson 2001).

## Violence as Seductive Self-Destruction

Throughout American history, groups have resorted to violence either to bring about certain changes or to try and maintain the status quo. In either case, violence often has been defined as the “only way” to reach the desired goals but instead has facilitated the victory of the opposition. Because expectations and outcome often have been contradictory, violence has frequently been a kind of *seductive self-destruction*.

A survey of violence associated with the labor movement concluded that when laborers resorted to violence, it was almost always harmful to the union (Taft and Ross 1969). In general, violence did not bring the advantages the workers had wanted. Historian Richard Hofstadter (Hofstadter and Wallace 1970) agreed with this, pointing out that one of the more effective tactics of labor was the series of sitdown strikes in the 1930s. These strikes were designed to avoid rather than instigate violence.

Hofstadter also made the point that violence has seemed more effective in maintaining the status quo than in bringing about change, at least in the short run. The long

### • posttraumatic stress disorder

an anxiety disorder associated with serious traumatic events, involving such symptoms as nightmares, recurring thoughts about the trauma, a lack of involvement with life, and guilt

history of violence by whites against blacks to maintain blacks in a subordinate status was seductively self-destructive. Whites did not keep blacks subjugated, nor did management, which employed violence far more than workers, prevent unionization of workers.

Violence, in sum, can appeal to people as a means either to bring about or to resist certain changes, but violence typically turns out to be counterproductive. Not only does the group using violence fail to achieve its goals; it also may ensure victory for its opponents.

## Economic Costs

Violence carries a high price tag. The costs of interpersonal violence include, among other things, maintaining the criminal justice system and family service agencies. There are also medical costs. It is estimated that the medical costs of gunshot injuries alone in just one year exceed \$2 billion, about half of which are borne by taxpayers (Cook and Ludwig 2000).

Intergroup violence involves not only medical costs but also the cost of repairing damaged property. The 1992 Los Angeles riot resulted in an estimated loss of \$1 billion from the damages (Pringle 1997). In addition, businesses lose considerable sums of money while damaged stores are closed.

## • CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Violence has been linked with a *human need to be aggressive*. Early psychologists said that human beings are aggressive animals by nature. More recent psychologists argue that **aggression** is related to *frustration*. Aggression is a common way to deal with frustration, and since frustration is virtually inevitable, you can expect a considerable amount of aggression in social life. Certainly, the frustrations produced by firings and other stressors in businesses have contributed to a rise in the level of violence in the workplace (Johnson and Indvik 1994).

But frustration-generated aggression does not adequately explain violence, for aggression can be channeled into such outlets as competitive sports, hobbies, or hard physical labor. To fully explain violence, let's look at various sociocultural factors that contribute to the problem.

## Social Structural Factors

**Norms.** *Group norms legitimate various kinds of violent behavior* (Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe 2001). If you have abusive friends, you are more likely to be abusive in your own relationships. In some families, children observe their parents using violence to settle disagreements or they are taught to employ violence in defending themselves or asserting their rights. This may be based on the *fallacy of non sequitur*: “If I hit you, you will stop doing the things I dislike.” It does not follow that violence stops further violence. In fact, violence is likely to elicit more violence.

The point is underscored by another norm that involves children—the *norm of physical punishment*. In the short term, physical punishment may lead children to conform to adult expectations. But what happens subsequently? Studies using national samples have concluded that over time, *the use of physical punishment increases the likelihood of delinquent and antisocial behavior by children and is associated with*

• **aggression**  
forceful, offensive, or hostile  
behavior toward another  
person or society



Riots are one form of violence that erupts periodically in the United States. ➔



*violent crime in adulthood* (Straus, Sugarman, and Giles-Sims 1997; Straus 2001). The more severe the abuse, the more severe the adult crimes are likely to be. A study of juvenile child molesters reported that the molesters, compared to other kinds of offenders, were more likely to have been physically and sexually abused themselves as children (Ford and Linney 1995).

Historically, American norms have legitimated official violence—against radicals and striking laborers, for instance. As you will see later, this official violence is supported by attitudes that approve the use of violence for social control. Throughout the nation’s history, groups defined as radical or as a threat to social order also have been defined as legitimate objects of suppression by violence.

An example is the violence of the Chicago police against young antiwar demonstrators during the Democratic Convention of 1968. The committee that investigated the situation called it a “police riot.” The police injured many innocent bystanders, including some reporters and news photographers (Hofstadter and Wallace 1970:382). One witness said the police acted like “mad dogs” looking for something to attack. Many people were horrified by the brutality of the police, but public opinion polls showed that the majority of people supported the police. This support came not only because some of the young people had baited the police by taunting them with obscenities, but because Americans tend to expect and approve violence in the name of social order.

**Political Arrangements.** Certain political factors affect the level of violence in American society. United States history is characterized by the *exclusion of minorities from the core benefits of and participation in American life*. (Exclusion here means both lack of access to economic opportunities and denial of access to the political power by which grievances can be redressed.) This exclusion was maintained and continues to exist to some extent because of political action or inaction. The exclusion has been an important factor in race riots and other interracial violence.

Paige (1971) examined the relationships between *political trust*, *political efficacy*, and *riot participation* among 237 African American males in Newark, New Jersey. Political trust was measured by a direct question: “How much do you think you can trust the government in Newark to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, some of the time, or almost never?” Political efficacy was measured by the amount of information the respondents had about local and national political figures. Riot participation was measured by asking the respondents whether they had been “active” in the 1967 Newark riot and what they had done.

Respondents who scored high on political information and low on political trust were most likely to have participated in the riot, while those who scored low on information and low on trust were least likely to have participated. In other words, the rioters did not trust the government to be responsive to their needs.

In more recent years, the antiabortion movement has been associated with violence. In 1998, Dr. Barnett Slepian, a physician who performed abortions, became the seventh person killed in the United States by antiabortionists (Gegax and Clemetson 1998). In addition, arson and bombing of abortion clinics and violent confrontations between anti- and pro-abortion groups have characterized the struggle over abortion. Those who oppose abortion feel that the rights of the unborn have been legislated away by court decisions and that politicians seem to ignore their cause. Thus, they resort to militant and even violent actions to influence the political process and bring about new laws that restrict a woman’s right to have an abortion.

In essence, then, *political arrangements virtually guarantee a certain amount of violence* in a society that has groups with diverse and strong beliefs, interests, and demands, and in which violence is defined as a legitimate way to pursue group interests. If blacks make political gains, the Ku Klux Klan or other white supremacy groups may become more militant and violent. Violence against Asian immigrants has occurred both from white supremacists and from those who feel economically threatened (such as the commercial fishermen in Texas who tried to stop Vietnamese immigrants from fishing). The government can never fully satisfy all the diverse interests of the people. Whatever decisions are made are likely to generate adverse reactions and even violence from those who feel cheated, deprived, or oppressed by these decisions.

**The Politics of Gun Control.** Government policy on *gun control* bears upon violence in America. Gun control is highly controversial, with strong arguments on both sides of the issue (including the debate about whether the Second Amendment guarantees citizens the right to own firearms). Let’s begin with some data. America is a land full of guns; we are one of the *most heavily armed people on earth*. In 2001, 40 percent of American homes had guns, and 42 percent of those with guns had three different kinds (rifle, shotgun, and pistol) (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2001:148–49). Thus, a hundred million or more Americans have access to guns in their homes.

The *government’s ability to guarantee security* to the citizenry affects the number of handguns. The more that citizens lack confidence in the federal government, the more likely they are to own firearms (Jobu and Curry 2001). The important point here, incidentally, is not whether the government protects citizens well by some objective standard but whether the citizens *perceive* a secure social order.

The significance of the number of guns is underscored by their role in violence. Since 1960, more than a million Americans have died from gun-related homicides, suicides, and accidents. As table 5.1 shows, guns are the most common weapon used in violent crimes. The rate of children killed by guns is higher in the United States

**TABLE 5.1**  
**Weapon Usage in**  
**Selected Crimes**

Weapon Used	Percent in which weapon used		
	Homicide	Robbery	Aggravated Assault
Firearm	65.2	39.9	18.0
Knife	13.2	8.4	17.8

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics 2001:291–92

than in any other industrialized nation. A review of 17 young people involved in school shootings in the 1990s found that 14 of them got the guns from their homes (Washburn and Hasemyer 2001). Among those in prison, 15 percent of state inmates and 13 percent of federal inmates had a handgun when committing their offenses, and 2 percent had a semiautomatic or machine gun (Harlow 2001).

There is a correlation between the rates of gun ownership and homicide (Doyle 2000). Thus, the homicide rate in the United States is four times higher than that of western Europe and seven times higher than that of Japan (Doyle 2000); and don't overlook the large number of injuries. For every person killed, nearly three others are wounded by firearms (Annest et al. 1995).

In addition to numbers, there is the sheer horror of the incidents. In 1989 the nation was shocked when a man used a semiautomatic rifle to spray 100 bullets into a group of children outside an elementary school in Stockton, California. He killed 5 children, wounded 29 children and a teacher, and then used a pistol to kill himself. His motives will never be known. On a smaller scale, an 18-year-old male in 1996 killed an 11-year-old boy who had shorted him on drug money. As an observer chillingly commented, the “shooting should have rocked the Chicago neighborhood where it took place, except that this kind of thing happens all too often” (Greenbaum 1997:3).

In spite of tragic incidents like these and in spite of the relationship between the number of gun-involved crimes and gun-control legislation, the issue of gun control is hotly debated. Many people insist that the widespread existence of guns does not contribute to the amount of violence in the nation. One argument is that it is people, not guns, that kill; if a gun is not available, a person will find a different weapon. Professionals dispute the relationship between the number of guns and the amount of violence. Some argue that this is a violent society and that violence will not be reduced simply by controlling the sale and possession of guns. Many Americans agree that the effort at control would be frustrating at best and counterproductive at worst. As a popular slogan puts it, when guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns. This is the *fallacy of appeal to prejudice*. It taps into popular passions in this country about citizens' right to defend themselves. However, evidence, not emotional slogans, is needed to make a reasonable decision about the issue.

In the first place, guns are the weapon most frequently used in homicides. Contrary to the argument that killers would simply find alternative weapons, the gun is the deadliest of weapons; the fatality rate for shootings is about five times higher than the rate for stabbings. Moreover, murder frequently is an act of passion that the killer himself or herself might later regret. At least in some cases, without the gun there would be no murder.

Second, guns are the most frequent weapons used in armed robberies. A gun often seems essential for armed robbery, because without it the offender is unable to produce



## VIOLENTLY OPPOSED TO VIOLENCE

At one time, most of the states had laws prohibiting abortions except when necessary to protect the mother's life. Initially, physicians led the way in calling for a reform of abortion laws. Some lawyers also pressed for change. Abortion should be allowed, they argued, when the mother's mental health or life was jeopardized by the pregnancy or when the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest. Women's groups joined the movement, ultimately resulting in the 1973 Supreme Court decision to legalize abortion.

The Right-to-Life movement then began to work vigorously to reverse the effects of the 1973 decision. Members have pressed for such things as a constitutional amendment to ban abortions and legislative action to stop funding welfare abortions. Some members became more aggressive, picketing abortion

clinics or trying to block people from entering the clinics. Beginning in the 1980s, the efforts have included acts of violence. As noted in the text, arson, bombing of clinics, and even murders have occurred. Some members of the movement—probably a very small number—have resorted to violence to oppose what they define as violence against human life.

Arrange an interview with workers in one or more abortion clinics in your area. Ask them what effect the activities of the Right-to-Life movement has had on their work. Do they fear violence? How do they respond to the charge that they are violently ending human life?

Also interview some members of the Right-to-Life movement. Ask them if they approve of bombing clinics. Is violence against a clinic justifiable? Why? How far would they go in opposing abortions? What answer do they give to those who charge that they are trying to impose their morals on others?

the necessary threat of force. The fatality rate in armed robberies involving guns is about four times as high as the rate involving other weapons.

Some citizens believe firearms are necessary to defend their home. This argument has little substance. Many murders occur in homes, but seldom do they involve strangers. The most frequent kind of offender-victim relationship in homicide in homes is that of husband and wife. There is also the possibility of accidental injury or death because of a gun in the home. Ironically, you may face greater danger from a weapon purchased for defense against intruders than from an actual intruder.

A study of firearm-related deaths in the state of Washington was one of the first to examine the issue of deaths caused by guns kept in the home (Kellermann et al. 1992). The researchers found that the guns were rarely used to protect the owners. In fact, for every instance of a homicide for self-protection, there were 43 deaths of residents by suicide, criminal homicide, or accidental gunshot. Only one-half of 1 percent of the cases involved the shooting of an intruder. The researchers concluded that the presence of firearms in the home increases danger to the family more than it increases protection.

Finally, it may be true that people, rather than guns, do the killing; but it is also true that people with guns are more likely to kill than are people without guns. Berkowitz (1981) conducted research that suggests that the mere presence of a gun increases aggressiveness, so that while it is true that “the finger pulls the trigger,” it also appears that “the trigger may be pulling the finger.” In the research, each student was paired with a partner, ostensibly another student but actually a confederate of the researcher. The two were to come up with ideas to improve record sales and boost the image of a popular singer. Each student was to explain his or her ideas to the partner, who would then administer electric shocks—one shock if the partner thought the ideas were good and up to 10 shocks if the partner thought the ideas were relatively poor. Some of the students became angry after being given seven shocks. Those students then evaluated their partners. They were taken to the room containing the electric-shock machine and

a telegraph key that administered the shocks. Some saw nothing but the key lying on a table. Others saw a badminton racket and shuttlecocks, and a third group saw a shotgun and a revolver. Those students who saw the firearms gave their partners a greater number of shocks and administered each for a longer period of time. Berkowitz notes that other studies have shown the same effect; the mere presence of a firearm increases aggressive behavior.

The evidence suggests, then, that gun control could reduce some kinds of violence (murder and armed robbery) and minimize the destructiveness of other kinds (assaults and arguments). Public opinion polls show that most Americans favor the *registration of firearms*. There are two important reasons for the existence of political inaction in the face of the evidence and the will of the people. One is that the evidence is still ambiguous; legislators are not convinced of the value of control. The other reason is the strong *lobbying efforts* of the National Rifle Association (NRA). The NRA has a large, paid staff and thousands of local clubs in every state. It spends millions of dollars a year on direct lobbying efforts. Consequently, as of this writing, apart from some limitations on the importation and sale of semiautomatic and automatic weapons, little has been done to reduce the number of guns in American society.

**The Stratification System.** In an effort to put violence in America in historical perspective, Graham and Gurr (1969) identified certain *political and economic inequalities* between various groups that have been associated with violence. The early Anglo-Saxon settlers gained the political and economic leverage necessary to resist *efforts by subsequent groups of immigrants to share fully in the nation's opportunities*. Difficult economic times have been particularly fertile for fueling violence, as illustrated by the mob violence against African Americans in the South during inflationary shifts in the price of cotton (Beck and Tolnay 1990).

Inequalities also have been identified as factors in urban riots. In the 1992 riot in Los Angeles, *inequality formed the motivating basis for many of the participants*. Using interviews with 227 African Americans living and/or working in the area at the time of the riot, researchers compared participants with nonparticipants (Murty, Roebuck, and Armstrong 1994). Participants tended to be younger males with lower incomes and lower amounts of education. They also had more arrest records than nonparticipants. But *nonparticipants as well as participants indicated general acceptance of the rioting*. It wasn't that they approved of rioting as such, but that they believed collective violence is the only way to get the larger society to address their grievances (poverty, discrimination, unemployment, and police brutality).

At an interpersonal level, boys whose fathers have a history of unemployment are more likely to engage in violent behavior than are sons of fully employed fathers (Brownfield 1987). Violent behavior here refers to beating up or hurting someone on purpose (other than a brother or sister). Of course, unemployed fathers are more likely to be found in the lower socioeconomic strata. Unemployment generates strains in the family life of lower- and working-class youths. In turn, these strains seem to be conducive to greater violent behavior. Thus, both children and adults who live in economic deprivation are more prone to violent behavior and aggression, including murder (Attar, Guerra, and Tolan 1994; Walter et al. 1995).

Clearly, then, *certain kinds of inequality are related to violence*. Inequality generates frustrations and rage in individuals when they find themselves powerless to resolve their situation, and the probability of violence goes up. Some may engage in the collective violence of riots and public disorder. Others may vent their rage by fighting

on their own. In any case, the violence is the consequence of a stratification system that leaves some Americans in the gutters of the economy.

## Social Psychological Factors

**Attitudes.** *Certain attitudes legitimate violence.* One is the attitude of approval of violence itself. To be sure, there is a tendency to be selective about what circumstances justify violence (Bethke and DeJoy 1993). Still, most Americans accept violence as a problem solver, and about “two-thirds think that the use of physical force is often justified” (Patterson and Kim 1991:132). In particular, many Americans accept intimate partner violence if the circumstances warrant it (Sacks et al. 2001).

One explanation of violence is **relative deprivation**, which means that people have a *sense of deprivation in relation to some standard*. Here, the attitudes people have toward their deprivation are more important than any objective assessment of that deprivation. This observation goes back at least as far as de Tocqueville (1955), who pointed out that the French were experiencing real economic gains prior to the Revolution. An observer could have told the French that, objectively, they were better off at the time of their revolt than they had been at other times in the past. Yet what if the people used a different standard than their past to measure their deprivation? They might then perceive themselves to be less well off than they *should* be and rebel, which is precisely the idea of relative deprivation.

Davies (1962) used the notion of relative deprivation to explain revolutions. He constructed a “*J-curve*” *theory of revolution*. In essence, the theory states that a *widening gap between what people want and what they get leads to a revolutionary situation*. People do not revolt when the society is generally impoverished. Rather, a revolutionary state of mind develops when a threat develops to the expectation of greater opportunities to satisfy needs.

There is always a gap between your expectations and the satisfaction of your needs. Some degree of gap is tolerable, and although over time both your satisfactions and your expectations tend to increase, something may happen to suddenly increase the gap. Expectations continue to rise while actual need satisfactions remain level or suddenly fall. The gap then becomes intolerable, and a revolutionary situation is created.

According to Davies’ theory, the deprivation of people in a revolutionary situation is relative. Actual satisfaction of their needs may be higher at the time of a revolution than earlier, but their expectations are also higher. The people may be better off in terms of their past, but worse off in terms of their expectations. Their attitudes rather than their objective condition make the situation revolutionary.

Relative deprivation has been identified as a factor in racial militancy and the approval of violent protest by northern blacks. Interviews with 107 riot-area residents of Detroit in 1967 showed that those who were most militant in their attitudes and who believed the riots helped the black cause were those who felt relatively deprived rather than relatively satisfied (Crawford and Naditch 1970).

A survey of 6,074 young adults found that those who saw themselves as economically deprived compared to their friends, neighbors, and Americans generally were more likely to engage in violent behavior (Stiles, Liu, and Kaplan 2000). The sense of deprivation led to negative feelings about themselves, which motivated them to use violent means to cope with their situation.

Finally, *attitudes about firearms help maintain the large number of guns in American homes*. As noted earlier, the majority (57 percent) of Americans favor gun control.

• **relative deprivation**  
a sense of deprivation based on some standard used by the individual who feels deprived

• **retributiveness**  
 paying people back for their  
 socially unacceptable  
 behavior

An even larger majority (73 percent) believe that the Second Amendment guarantees the right of individuals to own guns (The Polling Report 2002).

**Values.** Attitudes that justify violence are often reinforced by certain values. In American society, people are likely to agree on the values of **retributiveness** and self-defense.

Retributiveness, or retributive justice, is summarized by the notion of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” It is a value of punishment, of paying people back for their antisocial behavior. It is the value that comes into play when people insist on the death penalty and other harsh forms of punishment.

Self-defense as a value means an *affirmation of the right to violence, including killing, in order to defend yourself or your family*. Some would extend the value to include the defense of your home as well. In part, these values are maintained through the mass media. We need to look, therefore, at the controversial question of the media’s role in teaching values that support violent behavior.

**Role of the Mass Media.** *The mass media expose Americans to an enormous amount of violence.* It would be interesting to record the number of violent incidents that impinge upon your life in a week’s reading, listening to the radio, and watching television. Concern about violence on television began in the 1950s when it became evident that there was a high degree of violence in everything from children’s shows to late-night adult entertainment. From time to time, television executives have promised to scale back the amount of violence, but the level remains high.

A child who watches television regularly is likely to witness thousands of violent deaths during his or her growing-up years. A study commissioned by a television magazine found 1,846 individual acts of violence on television in a single day in Washington (Disney 1992). Cartoons were the most violent of the programs, with 471 violent scenes during the day. In a three-year study of violence on television, the University of California at Los Angeles reported some decline in violence on network series (UCLA

Television, including  
 children’s programs,  
 exposes children to  
 an enormous amount  
 of violence.



Television Violence Report 1997). However, the researchers expressed concern about the violence in 10–14 percent of television movies and 30–42 percent of theatrical films shown on television. Moreover, they uncovered a new concern—the emergence of special programs that are reality-based, showing footage of such things as animals attacking and, in some cases, killing people; police shootouts; car chases; and near-death experiences. Such shows were nonexistent in 1995 but already a problem in 1997.

Television advertisements also contain violence. An analysis of 92 food ads aimed at children found violence in 61 percent of them (Rajecki et al. 1994). An analysis of ads during the playoff and World Series games in major league baseball reported that 6.8 percent contained violent content, including the use of guns and knives (Anderson 1997).

Perhaps as disturbing as the amount is the way the violence is handled. A group of researchers at four universities analyzed 2,500 hours of television (Farhi 1996). They found violence in 57 percent of the programs. They also found that perpetrators of violent acts went unpunished 73 percent of the time, and that 47 percent of the violent incidents showed no harm to the victims.

The question is, what are the consequences of all this violence? There are, of course, cases where both children and adults have imitated the violence they have watched (Lande 1993). Beyond that, considerable controversy exists over what, if any, harmful consequences result from television violence. We noted in chapter 2 that listening to rap music can lead to greater acceptance of violence. Does viewing television violence also make people more accepting of violence? Do violence-accepting attitudes translate into violent behavior?

Some observers argue that the effect is an increased amount of violent behavior. Others argue that watching violence on television provides a kind of **catharsis**, a *discharging of aggressive emotions* through vicarious participation in violence. For example, a man who has become extremely hostile toward his wife can discharge his aggression and avoid violence against his wife by watching violent acts on television.

• **catharsis**  
discharge of socially unacceptable emotions in a socially acceptable way

But displacement of aggression and vicarious discharge of aggression are not the same thing. Contrary to the idea of catharsis, portrayal of violence in motion pictures and on television increases the level of violence in society. There is evidence to support this.

Studies indicate that watching violence on television *socializes* people into the norms, attitudes, and values for violence. The more that people watch television, in other words, the more likely they are both to approve of and to engage in violence (American Academy of Pediatrics 2001). Thus, Eron (1987) found a strong relationship between the amount of violent television a child saw at age eight and aggressive behavior when the child reached the age of 30. Johnson and his associates (2002) assessed 707 individuals over a 17-year period. They found a significant association between the amount of time spent watching television as adolescents and young adults and subsequent aggressive behavior.

In addition to aggressive behavior, watching televised violence leads to a more jaundiced view of the world:

[B]eliefs about the prevalence of violence in American life have been correlated with amount of television viewing. . . . People who look at a great deal of television tend to believe that there is more violence in the real world than do those who do not look at much television. . . . Exposure to televised violence has also been found to lead to mistrust, fearfulness of walking alone at night, and a desire to have protective weapons, and alienation. (National Institute of Mental Health 1982:61)

Such a jaundiced view of the world may lead people to be less concerned about the victims of violence. In an experiment with fourth- and fifth-grade students, Molitor

We already have discussed some steps for reducing violence, because whatever effectively deals with the problem of crime also reduces the level of violence. In addition, the various norms, attitudes, and values that support violence need to be changed. This means intervening early in the lives of children so that they learn alternatives to violence and aggression in solving their problems and gaining their goals in life. In families, schools, and churches, children need to learn how to employ nonviolent methods to survive and to find fulfillment.

American norms and attitudes about when violence is legitimate also need to change. In particular, no one should be taught that he or she deserves violent treatment from another person. Many women abused by a male partner remain in the relationship for years in the belief that they somehow brought the violence on themselves. Or they are convinced that they will eventually change the partner into a nonviolent individual. Women who break away from such relationships have learned to reject the notion that they deserve abuse or that they are responsible for helping their partner to change (Rosen and Stith 1995).

Second, *gun-control measures* may reduce the violence in our society. Homicide is the leading cause of death in Colombia, South America; but when two cities—Cali and Bogota—banned the carrying of firearms on weekends, holidays, and election days, the homicide rates went down (Villaveces 2000). A comparative study of Seattle, Washington, and Vancouver, British Columbia, provides additional evidence (Sloan, Kellermann, and Reay 1988). Vancouver has much stricter firearm regulations than Seattle. During the period of the study, robbery and burglary rates were similar in the two cities, but Seattle had a higher assault rate and 700 percent more assaults using firearms

(which means greater risks to the victims). Seattle citizens also were 4.8 times as likely to be murdered with a handgun. In another study, researchers found, in states that passed laws making gun owners responsible for storing firearms so that they were inaccessible to children, unintentional shooting deaths of children younger than 15 declined by 23 percent (Cummings et al. 1997). Similarly, the 1994 federal ban on assault weapons contributed to lower gun murder rates and murders of police officers by criminals armed with assault weapons (Roth and Koper 1999).

Third, violence in the mass media should be reduced. The reduction is needed in cartoons as well as other kinds of programming. An experiment with third- and fourth-grade children found that cutting back on the amount of time children spent watching television and playing video games reduced the amount of aggressive behavior (Robinson et al. 2001).

Not only should violence be reduced, but the programs should include a greater amount of modeling of desirable behavior. *Television could become a medium for promoting more prosocial behavior.* In an experiment with 40 children in a private preschool, the researchers showed a number of prosocial videos (Forge and Phernister 1987). After seeing the videos, the children engaged in more prosocial behavior: sharing toys and play space, cooperating with others, taking turns, and interacting in a positive way.

Finally, violence will lessen as we deal with some of the inequalities in our society. We will discuss this further when we consider poverty and other problems in Part 3.

### Follow-Up

Would you like to see a ban on corporal punishment of children become a matter of public policy? Why or why not?

and Hirsch (1994) found that those who watched violence were afterward less likely to be concerned about two other children who engaged in a violent confrontation. The subjects watched a TV monitor that supposedly showed two children in an adjacent room. The subjects were told to get help if anything happened. Those who had watched clips from a violent movie were less likely to, or slower to, get help when the children on the monitor became violent with each other.

These negative effects of watching violence on television affect children at a very early age. Three researchers set up an experiment in which they observed 63 four-year-olds during play (Singer, Singer, and Rapaczynski 1984). They scored the children for

amount of aggression. The parents kept logs of the amount and kind of television programs the children watched. The researchers then kept track of the children for six years and measured some of their beliefs and behavior. They found that the children who spent more time watching television, especially violent programs, were less able to behave with self-restraint, more likely to be aggressive, more restless, and more prone to believe that the world is a frightening place.

Finally, note the possibility that even watching violent sports can increase aggression. Researchers who investigated the rate of violent assaults on women in the Washington, D.C., area reported an increase in admissions to hospital emergency rooms following victories by the Washington Redskins' football team (White, Katz, and Scarborough 1992). They speculate that viewing the success of violence—even in a sporting event—may give some fans a sense of license to try to dominate their own surroundings by the use of force.

Admittedly, even with all the research we have noted, it is difficult to state unequivocally that exposure to the mass media leads to specific effects because of the many other factors that operate within our lives. However, the evidence is growing and overwhelmingly supports the position that mass media violence is associated with aggressive attitudes and behavior. The evidence suggests that mass media violence teaches people how to be violent and tends to create violent behavior in viewers.

## • THE VIOLENCE OF RAPE

We know of no society that completely lacks rape or that fails to punish it (Palmer 1989). The definition of rape, however, varies. The American legal code distinguishes between two kinds of rape: forcible and statutory. **Forcible rape** is defined as actual or attempted sexual intercourse “through the use of force or the threat of force” (U.S. National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service 1974:44). **Statutory rape** refers to sexual intercourse with a female who is under the legal age for consenting.

Rape is an extremely *traumatic experience* for victims. For the perpetrators, rape is typically an expression of violent aggression against women, not an act of sexual passion.

### Numbers and Characteristics of Victims

How prevalent is rape in the United States? It is difficult to say because an unknown number of rapes are *never reported*. In a national survey of women, 47 percent took at least five years after a childhood rape to tell someone and 28 percent *never told anyone* about it before the research interview (Smith et al. 2000). Adult victims are often reluctant to report a rape because of fear that the rapist will try to get even with them or will attack them again. They also fear publicity, embarrassment, and the way they may be treated by police and prosecutors.

The FBI reports around 90,000 rapes per year. However, victimization data report higher numbers: in 1999, 175,390 incidents of rape or attempted rape (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2001:189). Nationally, 17.6 percent of women say they have been the victim of rape or attempted rape at some point in their life (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000).

Not every woman is equally likely to be a rape victim. Table 5.2 shows how the rate of rape/sexual assault (sexual assault refers to attacks or attempted attacks involving unwanted sexual contact, including verbal threats) varies by such factors as the woman's race, ethnicity, age (for those 12 and above), income, and place of residence. In terms of race, the highest rates are reported by American Indian and Alaska native

• **forcible rape**  
actual or attempted sexual intercourse through the use of force or the threat of force

• **statutory rape**  
sexual intercourse with a female who is below the legal age for consenting

**TABLE 5.2**  
**Characteristics of Victims**  
**of Rape and Sexual**  
**Assault**

Victim Characteristics	Victimization Rate per 1,000 Persons Age 12 and Older
<b>Race</b>	
White	1.1
Black	1.2
Other	1.1
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic	0.5
Non-Hispanic	1.2
<b>Age</b>	
12–15 years	2.1
16–19 years	4.3
20–24 years	2.1
25–34 years	1.7
35–49 years	0.8
50–64 years	0.4
65 years and older	0.1
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Never married	2.6
Married	0.1
Divorced or separated	2.3
Widowed	0.2
<b>Household Income</b>	
Under \$7,500	5.2
\$7,500–\$14,999	1.7
\$15,000–\$24,999	1.4
\$25,000–\$34,999	1.9
\$35,000–\$49,999	0.8
\$50,000–\$74,999	1.0
\$75,000 and over	0.2
<b>Residence</b>	
Urban	1.5
Suburban	0.8
Rural	1.4

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics 2001:188

women, while Asian and Pacific Islander women reported the lowest rates (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000).

Contrary to popular belief, there is little interracial rape, and most rapes *do not* involve strangers. About three-fourths of rapes and attempted rapes are perpetrated by someone known to the victim (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000). In particular, the rapist is

most likely to be a current or former partner—husband, cohabiting partner, or date. Date rapes occur at an early age. A survey of female high school students in South Dakota found that between 11.8 and 14.9 percent of the girls said they had been raped on a date (Schubot 2001).

Finally, there is the form of rape known as **incest**, which refers to exploitive sexual contact between relatives in which the victim is under 18 years of age. Russell (1986) reported that 19 percent of women she interviewed had been victims of *incestuous abuse*. A study of more than 300 male and female victims of child sexual abuse reported that 88 percent had been abused by a family member (Faller 1989). On the average, the boys were 6.3 years old and the girls were 5.5 years old when the abuse began. These experiences can be psychologically devastating and can have the same kind of long-term effects as rape. Many of the victims are prone to what Russell called “revictimization,” getting involved as adults with men who abuse or rape them.

• **incest**  
exploitive sexual contact between relatives in which the victim is under the age of 18

## • RAPE AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Regardless of the background characteristics of the victim, the consequences for the quality of life are similar: Rape is a highly traumatic experience, and fear of rape probably causes uneasiness in most women at some time.

### Emotional Trauma

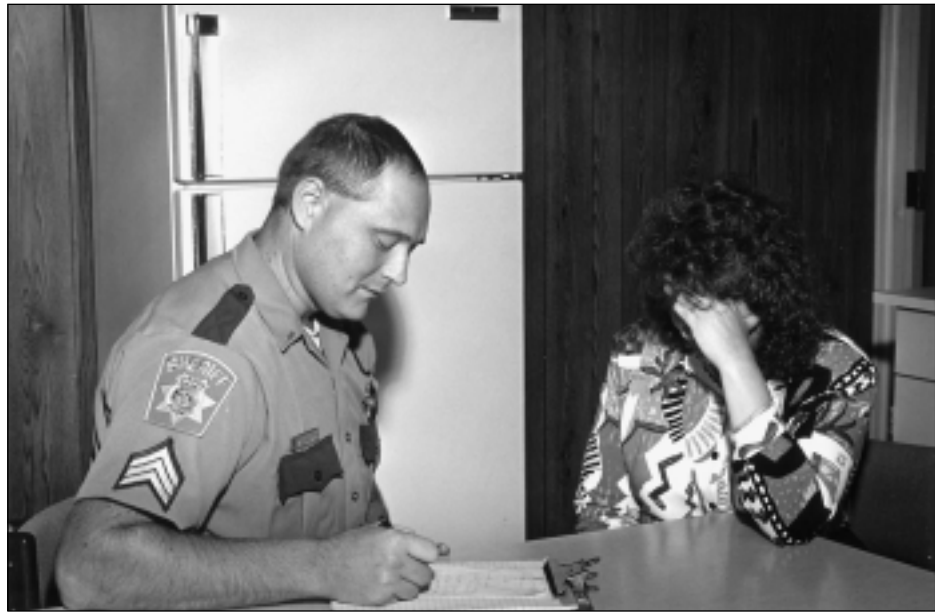
Rape victims suffer *intense emotional trauma*. Rape contradicts the ideal of healthy, voluntary, and nonviolent relationships. The emotional trauma that results from rape is incompatible with the desired quality of life.

Incest victims are likely to have long-term problems. As adolescents they may be characterized by depression, suicidal tendencies, promiscuity, and unplanned and unwanted pregnancies (Beitchman et al. 1991; Boyer and Fine 1992). When they become adults, they are more likely than the nonabused to suffer from depression and various kinds of psychological and physical problems as well as social maladjustment and difficulties in relating intimately (Cutler and Nolen-Hoekesema 1991; Parker and Parker 1991; Golding 1994; Alexander et al. 1998).

Adult victims of rape experience what Burgess and Holmstrom (1974) delineated as the “*rape trauma syndrome*.” The syndrome involved two phases of reaction of the victim: *an initial, acute phase of disorganization and a long-term phase of reorganization*. The acute phase, which lasted for a few weeks after the incident, involved both physical and emotional reactions. The *physical reactions* included soreness and bruises resulting from the violence of the offender; tension headaches, fatigue, and disturbance of sleep; various gastrointestinal disturbances such as nausea, stomach pains, and lack of appetite; and genitourinary problems such as vaginal itching and pain. The *emotional reaction* during the acute phase ranged “from fear, humiliation, and embarrassment to anger, revenge, and self-blame. Fear of physical violence and death was the primary feeling described” (Burgess and Holmstrom 1974:983). Although it may seem surprising that victims should feel guilty or blame themselves, such feelings are apparently common (see “I Felt Guilty,” at the beginning of this chapter). A young woman reported strong guilt feelings in these terms:

I’m single but I’m not a virgin and I was raised a Catholic. So I thought this might be some kind of punishment to warn me I was doing something against the Church or God.

Rape is one of the most traumatic experiences a woman endures. ➔



Another victim remarked, “My father always said whatever a man did to a woman, she provoked it” (Burgess and Holmstrom 1974:983).

In the long-term phase of reorganization there were “*motor*” and *emotional consequences*. Common motor consequences included things such as changing residence, changing telephone numbers, and visiting family and friends to gain support. Among the emotional consequences were nightmares; the development of various phobias, such as the fear of being indoors, outdoors, alone, in a crowd, or hearing but not seeing people walking behind one; and sexual fears. One victim reported that five months after the incident she could still get hysterical with her boyfriend: “I don’t want him near me; I get panicked. Sex is OK, but I still feel like screaming” (Burgess and Holmstrom 1974:984).

In a follow-up study of 81 victims, reinterviewed from four to six years after they were raped, Burgess and Holmstrom (1979) reported that 71 percent of the victims who had never had sexual relations, 27 percent of those inactive at the time of the rape, and 35 percent of those sexually active when they were attacked reported that they had not yet recovered. More than two-thirds of the victims said they had decreased sexual activity, and many of them said that they experienced pain and discomfort and had difficulty reaching an orgasm when they resumed sexual activity.

Subsequent studies confirm the findings of Burgess and Holmstrom. Virtually every area of a woman’s life is negatively affected by the experience of rape. The majority will suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder at some time in their lives (Solomon and Davidson 1997). Relationships, work, and sense of personal well-being will be adversely affected. If a woman was sexually abused as a child, she will endure even higher levels of trauma from being raped as an adult (Arata 1999).

Much less attention has been paid to the consequences of being the victim of an *attempted rape*. One study of 40 victims of attempted rape found that the women had roughly the same short-term and long-term reactions as did women who were raped (Becker et al. 1982). The attempted rape victims were likely to experience feelings of

embarrassment, fear, humiliation, and anger; to have sleep disturbance problems; and to experience some physical ills such as gastrointestinal problems and headaches. They were as likely to experience some degree of self-blame as were the rape victims.

Finally, most women experience trauma because of the *fear of rape* (Mesch 2000). As one female student told us, “Every woman knows that she is a potential victim of a rapist.” Such fear takes a toll on free movement and peace of mind. A survey reported that murder is the only crime feared more by women than rape (Gordon and Riger 1989). The major fears in the women’s lives were losing a job, divorce, cancer, and rape.

## Physical Abuse

The rapist may harm his victim with a weapon, beat her, choke her, overcome her with brute strength, attempt to make her submissive by threats, and murder her (DiMaio 2000). In a study of rape victimization in 26 American cities, researchers found that 91 percent of rape victims and 63 percent of attempted rape victims were injured. The injuries ranged from bruises, cuts, and black eyes to internal injuries, broken bones, or wounds (though the proportion receiving the more serious injuries was small) (U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Administration 1979). Older women (aged 55 and above) are more likely than younger women to sustain genital injury as well as other kinds of injuries during a rape (Muram, Miller, and Cutler 1992).

The *force and brutality so commonly involved in rapes* lead us to conclude that rapes are acts of violence rather than sexual passion. The rapist is not someone with an overwhelming sex drive; he is, typically, a man who feels compelled to assault and humiliate women. He uses rape as a weapon to express his hatred of females. Physical abuse, therefore, is an inevitable consequence for the female victim.

## • CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Most of the factors that contribute to other kinds of violence also contribute to rape as a particular form of violence. There are also factors distinctively associated with rape that tend to *encourage offenders* and to *oppress the victims*.

### Social Structural Factors

Certain *traditional norms about sex roles* may be factors in rape. That is, in the traditional roles, males are aggressive and females are submissive. The more strongly that men adhere to traditional rather than egalitarian roles, the more likely they are to have victim-callous rape attitudes (Lottes 1991). For some men, it may be acceptable to rape an assertive woman so that she learns her “proper place.”

In general, it seems *the more that men are integrated into a culture where the norms support male dominance and superiority*, the more likely they are to find rape acceptable. The locker-room talk of athletes tends to treat women as objects, encourage sexist attitudes, and promote rape (Curry 1991). Such talk seems to correlate with behavior, for *athletes are more likely than other men to be sexually aggressive* and to participate in gang rapes (Koss and Gaines 1993).

Finally, *negative family experiences can foster the development of a rapist*. Kruttschnitt (1989) interviewed 38 convicted rapists; 59 convicted nonsexually violent offenders; and 65 nonoffenders who were similar to the others in age, race, and area of residence during adolescence. The rapists were more likely than the others to have a

history of sexual abuse. In addition, they tended not to be close to their siblings. In some cases of abuse within families, a victim at least may find support from other family members. The rapists tended to lack that support.

Other research also shows that *a lack of involvement of family members with each other* (in terms of emotional support, closeness, and shared activities) increases the likelihood of family members being the victims of sexual abuse (Ray, Jackson, and Townsley 1991). As with most social problems, the quality of family life is an important variable.

## Social Psychological Factors

Are the following statements true or false?

Rape tends to be an unplanned, impulsive act.

Women frequently bring false accusations of rape against men.

Most women fantasize about being raped and find erotic pleasure in the fantasy.

A woman who is raped is usually partly to blame for the act.

It is not possible for a man to rape a healthy woman unless she is—consciously or unconsciously—willing.

What are your answers? If you said that any of the above statements is true, you have accepted one of the *myths about rape*. In point of fact, many people—even a minority of college women—accept one or more of these kinds of beliefs (Holcomb et al. 1991; Carmody and Washington 2001). An analysis of a number of studies on attitudes toward rape concluded that men, older people, political conservatives, and those from the lower socioeconomic strata are more likely than others to accept the myths about rape (Anderson, Cooper, and Okamura 1997). They also are less likely than others to be sympathetic toward the victim and to blame the offender. They thereby both lend support to those who rape and help perpetuate injustice in the efforts to prosecute rapists.

It is important, then, to deal with the attitudes expressed in the myths. In contrast to the notion that rape is impulsive, significant proportions of convicted rapists have admitted that they intended to find a victim prior to the rape, and that they looked for women who they thought could not or would not resist the attack (Stevens 1994). As far as fantasies about rape are concerned, only a small proportion of women report that they fantasize about being forced to have sex.

The myth that women frequently bring false charges of rape against men has no factual basis. There is a good deal of evidence that women frequently do not report rape to the authorities, but no evidence that they frequently make false accusations.

Let's look in more detail at the other two myths, for they are more difficult to answer definitively. First, the humiliating treatment to which a rape victim is often subjected during a trial follows from the *attitude that the victim was somehow to blame* for provoking the offender. This is the *fallacy of personal attack* at its worst. Instead of receiving help and support, the victim of violence becomes the defendant of her own integrity. The attitude that "the victim was asking for it" ignores three things. One, women are socialized to make themselves attractive to men by their dress and mannerisms. Two, provocative dress cannot be considered sufficient justification for inflicting the physical and emotional brutality of rape upon a woman. As Horos (1974:12) argued,



Does a woman's dress or mannerisms give any man the right to rape her? Because you carry money in your pocket, does it mean that you're asking to be robbed? Perhaps this myth arose because rape is the only violent crime in which women are never the perpetrators, but always the victims.

Three, provocative dress is not even involved in all rapes. The victim may be an elderly woman in a long robe, a woman wearing a coat, or a young girl in modest school clothes. In any case, to focus on dress is simply another way of *blaming a victim for an injustice*.

The attitude that a healthy woman can always prevent rape also may help acquit an offender and oppress the victim. This attitude may reflect the *fallacy of retrospective determinism*. In essence, people may be saying to the victim: “The situation could have had no other outcome. The man is not to blame, because you allowed it to happen—and you allowed it to happen because of the kind of person you are.”

This attitude ignores the *paralyzing fear* that can grip a woman. Perhaps a third or more of rape victims exhibit *tonic immobility*, which is an involuntary, reflexive response to a fearful situation, a response in which the victim “freezes” as though paralyzed (Galliano et al. 1993).

This attitude also ignores the *amount of force* used by rapists. Recall that rape typically involves the use of a weapon. Furthermore, beating, choking, and the threat of death may be effective even though no weapon is visible.

We already have pointed out the lack of sympathy and help a victim may experience in encounters with the police. The *attitude of the police* may be that the woman provokes the attack and that a healthy woman cannot be raped. In addition, the police may suspect the woman is merely using the charge of rape to punish a man or get attention for herself. To be sure, there are rare cases in which a woman charges rape to retaliate against a man or fulfill some pathological need.

Furthermore, the police know that not all victims of rape are respectable citizens with backgrounds free of suspicious behavior. In part, then, the attitudes of the police reflect a genuine need for caution. Nevertheless, a past police record, provocative clothing, or minimal resistance do not give a man license to forcibly rape a woman.

Considerable improvement has occurred in recent decades in the treatment of rape victims. Yet it is still true that the police, along with legal and medical personnel, can fail to give victims needed services (Campbell et al. 2001). Victims who go to formal authorities for help receive more negative reactions than those who rely on informal sources such as friends and family (Ullman and Filipas 2001).

As with violence in general, the mass media also play a role in the problem of rape. There are movies and magazines that “portray women as mindless, undifferentiated, anonymous beings with strong masochistic urges” (Vivar 1982:53). One magazine had an article entitled “Rape Me, Rape Me Not.” The author claimed that women train in the martial arts to slow down the rapist so that the sexual experience is more fulfilling. Another magazine had an article on the “joy” of rape for men. Movies are sold for private consumption that show women being sexually abused, tortured, and murdered. Do such portrayals have any effect upon the readers or viewers? What about milder forms of media, such as R- and X-rated movies with sexual violence in them?

A number of experiments (Donnerstein 1980; Donnerstein and Linz 1984; Weisz and Earls 1995) show that men who watch movies that portray sexual violence, including those shown in theaters around the country, are more likely to engage in bizarre or antisocial behavior. Even a few minutes of watching a sexually violent movie can lead to antisocial attitudes and behavior. The men in the experiments were more likely afterward to accept the myths about rape (that, for instance, a woman really wants to be raped), to indicate a willingness to commit rape, to engage in aggressive behavior against a woman in a laboratory situation, and to have less sensitivity to the trauma of rape for women. In another experiment, men who watched a film that was sexually degrading to women were more likely than other men to believe that a



## CORRELATES OF SEXUAL ABUSE AMONG TAIWANESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

As in the United States, rape and other crimes of sexual abuse are not distributed evenly throughout the population of other nations. Roda Chen researched the factors associated with higher rates of rape and other forms of sexual abuse (such as fondling of the genitals and forced kissing) among 2,205 students in nine colleges in Taiwan. The reported rates of sexual abuse were 6.8 percent for males and 42.1 percent for females. Chen found a number of correlates of sexual abuse. As shown in figure 5.1, the correlates included important family relationships. In essence, students from homes where the relationships—those between the parents and between the parents and the children—were happy were much less likely to be victims of sexual abuse than were

those from homes lacking warmth and/or characterized by severe conflict.

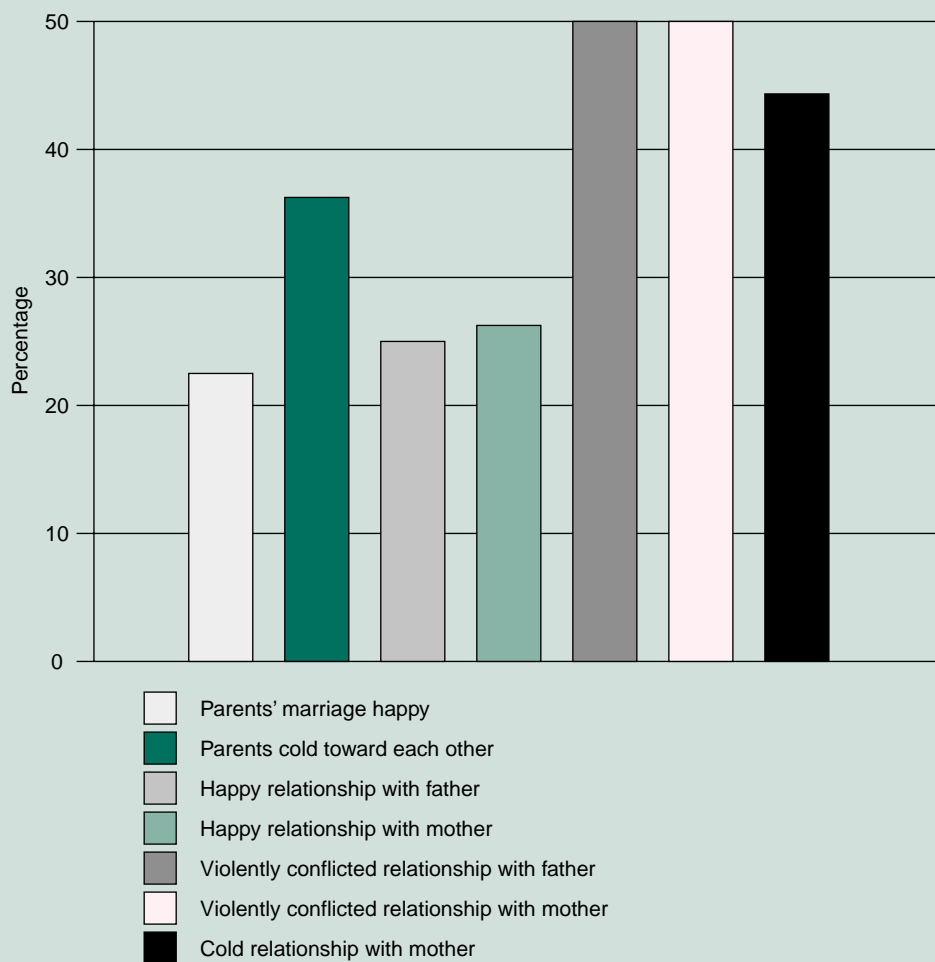
These results, incidentally, are similar to those of American victims, who also tend to come from unhappy families. Why should troubled family relationships make a young person more vulnerable to sexual abuse? One possible reason is that the lack of family affection may lead young people to seek affection from questionable others in questionable places. A second possible reason is that youth from unhappy families may have poorer supervision and less help in learning how to protect themselves. Finally, it may be that those from unhappy families develop a cynical view of life that leads them to care less about protecting themselves in terms of where they go and with whom they associate.

SOURCE  
Chen 1996.

rape victim found the experience pleasurable and “got what she wanted” (Milburn, Mather, and Conrad 2000).

Finally, we raise the question of the social psychology of the offender. What kind of man is a rapist? Is he mentally ill? Two researchers who questioned incarcerated rapists found that some of the offenders gave reasons for the rape that justified or minimized the significance of the act (Scully and Marolla 1984). The various justifications they used were that the women were seductive; that women say “no” but they really mean “yes”; that most women eventually relax and enjoy the experience; that women who are “nice” will not get raped; and that the act was at best a minor offense that did not merit the penalty the offender was now suffering. In other words, the men appeared to accept the rape myths. As we have noted above, those who accept the myths are more likely to be sexually aggressive and to approve of rape.

Other offenders, however, admitted their guilt and viewed their behavior as morally wrong. They claimed that the rape was either the result of their use of alcohol or



**FIGURE 5.1**  
**Proportion of Taiwanese students sexually abused.**  
 Source: Based on data from Chen 1996.

drugs, or the result of their emotional problems. They also tended to try to present an image of themselves as “nice” guys whose “true” self should not be judged on the basis of the rape.

*Macho values also seem to be a factor in the tolerance of, and proneness to, rape.* In one experiment, young men were asked to listen to the tape of a simulated rape and imagine themselves in the role of the rapist (Mosher and Anderson 1986). The tape described an encounter between a man and a woman stranded on a lonely road because of a flat tire. The man forced the woman to have sex with him. Some of the listeners found the tape repugnant, but others found it interesting and sexually arousing. In particular, those with macho values (real men engage in violence and find danger exciting) were more likely to have a positive reaction to the tape.

Finally, whatever else he may or may not be, the rapist and the man who accepts the myths about rape have a high level of hostility toward women (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1995). Every rape involves aggression.

Four lines of attack can be pursued in dealing with the rape problem. First, *programs of prevention* need to be established. We have noted the high rate of date rape. Many colleges and universities have established programs to make students aware of date and acquaintance rape. Research has shown that rape-education programs can change attitudes of both men and women (Fonow, Richardson, and Wemmerus 1992).

Some cities also have set up prevention programs (Harvey 1985). These programs include a variety of services such as self-defense training, public education activities, and support services to professionals in the sexual assault field. They may prepare and provide booklets on prevention and self-defense and work with the mass media to gain a wide audience for their educational materials.

The idea of self-defense presents women with a dilemma. On the one hand, the woman who does not struggle may find the police or some jury members unsympathetic to her case. On the other hand, the research on physical resistance has come up with mixed results in terms of recommendations (Ullman 1998). A study of 274 women who were raped or avoided rape concluded that forceful fighting and screaming were likely to reduce the severity of the sexual abuse without increasing the physical injury (Ullman and Knight 1992). Other research found that physical resistance increases the likelihood of physical injury (Ruback and Ivie 1988), and that serial rapists had increased pleasure and prolonged the duration of the rape when the victim resisted (Hazelwood, Reboussin, and Warren 1989). Perhaps the best advice we can give at this point is that self-defense should include thorough training and not just a determination to struggle.

Second, *sex-role norms, legal processes, and attitudes* need to be changed. Some changes will occur only through a painfully slow process of education, for even knowledgeable and well-educated people can be deeply ignorant about rape. A male graduate psychology student told us, "There is a simple way for women to avoid the trauma of rape. They should just decide to relax and enjoy it." Such attitudes encourage offenders

and oppress the victims. The fact that a graduate student could hold this kind of attitude illustrates the point that changing attitudes is going to be a painfully slow process. But changing such attitudes, including attitudes about the various rape myths, will reduce the amount of sexual assault (Lanier 2001).

*Rapists need treatment.* Rapists tend to be psychologically disturbed in some way. As such, they need therapy, some kind of rehabilitation, and not simply punishment. Punishment may remove the rapist from society for a period of time, but it will not deter him from future offenses.

The fourth line of attack is to *provide help for the victims* of rape. In recent years a number of *rape crisis centers* have been established in urban areas to help victims. The centers offer assistance in dealing with (often unsympathetic) authorities, information about available legal and medical care, and counseling to facilitate recovery from the emotional trauma. The centers also frequently have prevention programs and offer courses in self-defense.

The attitudes of authorities seem to be changing in the direction of greater sympathy for the victims of rape. A number of cities have established *rape squads* of male/female police teams with the specific responsibility of dealing with rape cases. The female member of the team interviews the victim while the male helps gather evidence. Various states have reformed their laws on rape, and hospitals are beginning to open rape reception centers instead of refusing to treat victims. Ultimately, the aim is prevention rather than sympathetic treatment of victims. Meanwhile, the new types of services for the victims and potential victims are a welcome help for women. They suggest that men finally may be realizing that the rape victim should be helped and not oppressed further by humiliating encounters with the authorities.

### Follow-Up

With volunteers from your class, explore, and then report back to the class, any programs you have on campus for educating students about date rape and for aiding victims when date rape occurs.

## • SUMMARY

Violence is a problem that concerns most Americans. Generally, violence refers to the use of force to kill, injure, or abuse others. Interpersonal violence occurs between individuals or a number of individuals. Intergroup violence involves identifiable groups, such as different races or religions.

In estimating the amount of violence, we find an impressive amount based on self-reports, newspaper accounts, and police statistics. The United States has one of the highest homicide rates in the world. Virtually all Americans are exposed to a vast amount of violence in the mass media.

The meaning of violence can be summed up in terms of human destruction and injury, psychological disruption and dehumanization, economic costs, and “seductive self-destruction.” These all diminish the quality of life, and their impact can be both severe and long-term.

Violence has been linked with a human need for aggression, yet this is not a sufficient explanation. Various sociocultural factors contribute to the problem. One structural factor is group and societal norms, which make violence more likely among members of those groups. An important factor in intergroup violence is exclusion from the political process. Those who are unable to exert power through legitimate political means may resort to violence. An important factor in interpersonal violence is the lack of adequate gun control. Inequality is related to violence; political and economic inequalities between groups in a society increase the likelihood of violence.

Among the social psychological factors in violence are a number of attitudes that legitimate violence. The majority of Americans agree that physical force is sometimes justified, including the use of force in intimate relationships. A frequent explanation of violence involves the notion of relative deprivation, which means that attitudes toward deprivation rather than the objective condition are the critical factor.

Certain values support violence, including retributiveness and self-defense. Such values can be internalized, along with attitudes, through exposure to the mass media. The extent to which the mass media socialize people into violent attitudes and behavior is a matter of controversy. However, the bulk of the evidence indicates that violence portrayed and conveyed in the mass media is related to aggressive attitudes and behavior.

Rape is a form of interpersonal violence. Each year numerous American women suffer from rape, at-

tempted rape, or sexual assault. Fear of rape diminishes the quality of life for women. An actual rape may involve the murder of the victim. Perhaps 90 percent or more of rape victims are physically abused, and 100 percent suffer emotional trauma. The rape trauma syndrome involves several weeks of acute symptoms and disorganization, and a long period of painful emotional readjustment.

The more men agree with traditional norms about sex roles, and the more they are integrated into a culture whose norms support male dominance and superiority, the more likely they are to be sexually aggressive and to minimize the harm of rape.

The mass media contribute to the problem of violence against women in general and rape in particular through portrayals of sexual violence. These portrayals increase the tendency of males to engage in antisocial attitudes and behavior. Studies of offenders show that they had negative family experiences and are psychologically disturbed. All have extremely high levels of aggression.

## • KEY TERMS

Aggression

Catharsis

Domestic Terrorism

Forcible Rape

Incest

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Relative Deprivation

Retributiveness

Statutory Rape

Violence

## • STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How would you define violence? How much violence is there in America?
2. What are the physical and emotional consequences of being a victim of violence?
3. What social structural factors contribute to the level of violence in America?
4. What role do the mass media play in violent behavior?
5. How common is rape?
6. Discuss the physical and emotional consequences of being a victim of rape or attempted rape.
7. Why do men rape?
8. What can be done about the violence, including rape, in American society?



## • INTERNET RESOURCES

<http://www.ncadv.org/> The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence offers surveys, a discussion of public policy, and ways for victims to get help.

<http://www.rapecrisis.com> Has information, services, and links for sexual assault victims and their families.

<http://mencanstoprape.org/> Offers various resources and programs for men who want to stop the crime of rape.

## • FOR FURTHER READING

- Allison, Julie A., and Lawrence S. Wrightsman. *Rape: The Misunderstood Crime*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993. Uses data from both research and the news media to discuss every aspect of rape, from the offense to the treatment of the victim to the prevention of rape.
- Bowker, Lee H., ed. *Masculinities and Violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998. Explores various aspects of male violence, including how men learn to be violent.
- Hofstadter, Richard, and Michael Wallace, eds. *American Violence: A Documentary History*. New York: Vintage Books, 1970. Provides a wealth of primary materials (original documents) describing various kinds of violence throughout American history.
- Kleck, Gary. *Point Blank: Guns and Violence in America*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991. A thorough look at the major issues involving guns, gun control, and violence, including suggestions for a national weapons policy.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. *Family Sexual Abuse: Frontline Research and Evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991. Reports the results of 11 research projects that examined such things as sibling incest, the nature of sexual offenders, the effects of sexual abuse, and the probabilities of rehabilitating incest offenders.
- Raine, Nancy Venable. *After Silence: Rape and My Journey Back*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1998. A personal account of rape by a stranger who was never caught, detailing the reactions of police, family, and friends as the victim sought to cope with the trauma.
- Russell, Diana E. H. *Rape in Marriage*. New York: Macmillan, 1982. The most complete investigation and discussion of an aspect of the rape problem that did not surface until the 1970s.