



# 3

## **Violent Youth Crime**

### **THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF YOUTH VIOLENCE**

*Patterns of Youth Violence*  
*Explanations for the Decline in Youth  
Violence*  
*Characteristics of Violent Juvenile Offenders*  
*Violent Victimization of Youth*  
*The Role of Firearms in Youth Violence*

### **JUVENILE PSYCHOPATHY**

*Characteristics and Behaviors of Psycho-  
pathic Youths*  
*Causes of Psychopathy*  
*Treatment of Juvenile Psychopathy*

### **VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

*Controlling Availability of Guns*  
*Reducing Violence in Families*  
*Providing Community-Based Prevention  
Programs*  
*Promoting Blended Treatment and “Get-  
Tough” Approaches*

### **CONCLUSIONS**

### **KEY TERMS**



At the beginning of the 21st century, the United States was enjoying unprecedented lows in criminal violence, especially among youths. In 2003, for the ninth consecutive year, the rate of juvenile arrests for murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault declined. The decline represented a 48 percent drop from the peak youth violence levels of 1994, and violent youth crime was at its lowest level since 1980. Based on NCVS data, violent youth crime was at its lowest level since 1973. According to data at the time, juvenile offenders were responsible for 12 percent of all violent crimes, including 5 percent of murders, 12 percent of forcible rapes and aggravated assaults, and 14 percent of robberies.<sup>1</sup> It was a golden age in terms of youth violence.

Unfortunately, the most recent news is not as positive. Starting in 2003, violent youth crime in the nation's major cities has increased. Beginning in 2004 and continuing to today, the overall violent crime rate increased for the first time in years. The number of juveniles arrested for murder increased *more than 20 percent* from 2003 to 2004 and *again* from 2004 to 2005.<sup>2</sup> Similarly distressing news came from across the nation. In Minneapolis, police estimate that juveniles account for 63 percent of suspects in serious felony crimes. In Boston the juvenile robbery arrest rate increased 54 percent, and the juvenile weapons arrest rate increased 102 percent in 2005. Similar increases in violent youth crime appear in Houston, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Washington, DC, and many other cities. Criminal justice practitioners attribute the increases to gangs that are arming and recruiting younger kids into their ranks.<sup>3</sup> For example, homicides increased 5 percent in 2005 with much of the killing attributed to gang activity in Milwaukee, Oklahoma City, Omaha, and St. Louis.<sup>4</sup> In 2004 and 2005 Indianapolis, Louisville, Memphis, and Phoenix violent crime rates increased from 13 to 25 percent, mostly because of juvenile offenders.<sup>5</sup> The recent upsurge is not limited to American delinquency. In Thessaloniki, Greece, five schoolchildren between the ages of 12 and 13 were recently charged with murdering an 11-year-old boy and desecrating the corpse.<sup>6</sup>

In March 2007 the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) gathered crime data for 2006 from 56 policing agencies across the United States. Their assessment about the most recent crime trends is troubling:

Overall, the 24-month trend, starting on January 1, 2005, is unmistakable: Among the jurisdictions filing reports with PERF, total homicides in 2006 were more than 10 percent higher than they were in 2004. Robberies increased over 12 percent; aggravated assaults increased by 3 percent; and aggravated assaults with a firearm increased nearly 10 percent. Law enforcement officials offered several explanations for the upsurge in violent crime, but among the most commonly cited reason was that young people with access to firearms and a willingness and at times to settle disputes violently. The violence was disproportionately committed by young males who dropped out of high school, were involved in the drug trade and generalized criminal activity, and who viewed even the most trivial affronts as reason enough to inflict violence.<sup>7</sup>

Even though general trends show declines in delinquency compared to its peak in the early 1990s, citizens, politicians, and the media continue to express concern about youth violence. Although neighborhoods and schools are much safer than in recent decades, public perceptions have changed little. People continue to believe juvenile violence is a serious threat and that it should be dealt with

severely. This chapter will explore the problems of youth violence today, general trends and how they have changed over the past years, the specific problems posed by the most severe delinquents (those who have psychopathic traits), what is being done to provide treatment for serious delinquent offenders, and programs and policies that reduce adolescent violence in the future.

## THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

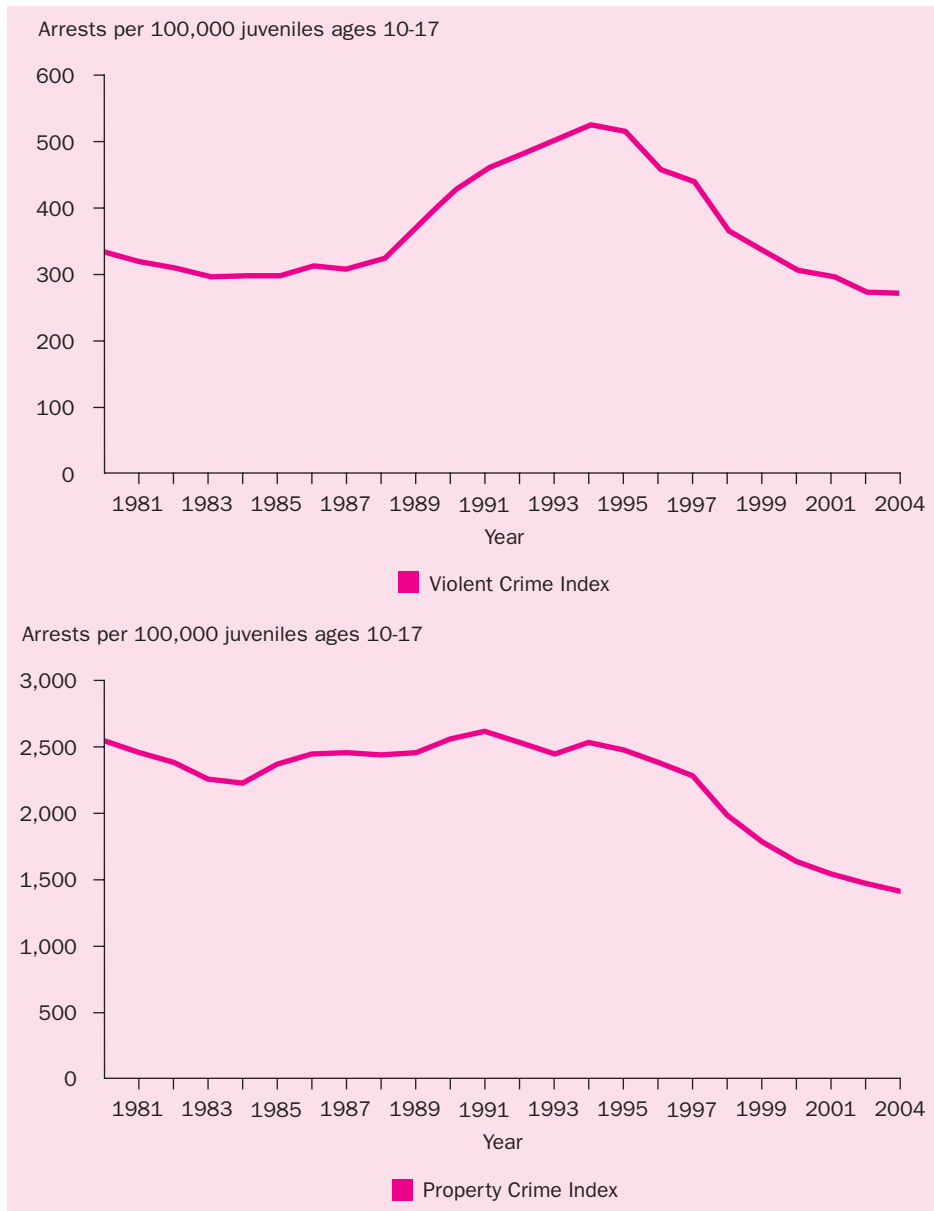
Based on the most recent available data collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, approximately 60,000 juveniles were arrested for serious violent crimes in 2005. About 36,995 youths were arrested for aggravated assault, 15,713 youths were arrested for robbery, 2,434 youths were arrested for forcible rape, and 711 youths were arrested for murder.<sup>8</sup> Juveniles are both perpetrators of violence and victims of violence, and their violence occurs at home, at school, and on the streets. Children are frequently victims of violence in the home, with more than 300,000 reported cases of child abuse validated each year and about 1,500 fatalities resulting from abuse (see Chapter 10). Although children are more likely to be victimized in the home, they sometimes engage in violence toward other family members often as a response to their own maltreatment.

Since 1992 more than 200 children have been killed at school, most by other students (see Chapter 11). Many students bring weapons to school, even more carry weapons while not at school. Most violence by juveniles occurs during the hours shortly after school. While the number of violent crimes by adults increases from 6 A.M. through the afternoon and evening hours, peaks at 11 P.M., and then drops hourly to a low point at 6 A.M., juvenile violence peaks in the afternoon between 3 P.M. and 4 P.M., the hour at the end of the school day. More than one in seven sexual assaults by juveniles occurs in the four hours between 3 P.M. and 7 P.M. on school days. And unlike other violent crimes, sexual assaults by juveniles on non-school days are most likely to occur between noon and 1 P.M.<sup>9</sup>

### Patterns of Youth Violence

As shown in Figure 3-1, the arrest rate per 100,000 juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17 for the most violent offenses has declined sharply in recent years before the upsurge since 2003. From 2003 to 2004, the number of juveniles arrested for murder and nonnegligent homicide increased 21.6 percent. From 2004 to 2005 the juvenile murders increased another 20 percent, and robberies increased more than 11 percent. In the first six months of 2006, the overall violent crime rate jumped another 4 percent. The bulk of these increases were attributed to gang homicides among adolescents (see Chapter 12).<sup>10</sup> In spite of these recent surges in violence among adolescents, overall violent and property crime rates among juveniles are still at their lowest point in decades. For violent crimes, for instance, youth arrest rates in the early 21st century are comparable to those in 1981. According to the property Crime Index, current rates are at their lowest levels in decades, about 1,500 arrests per 100,000 juveniles.

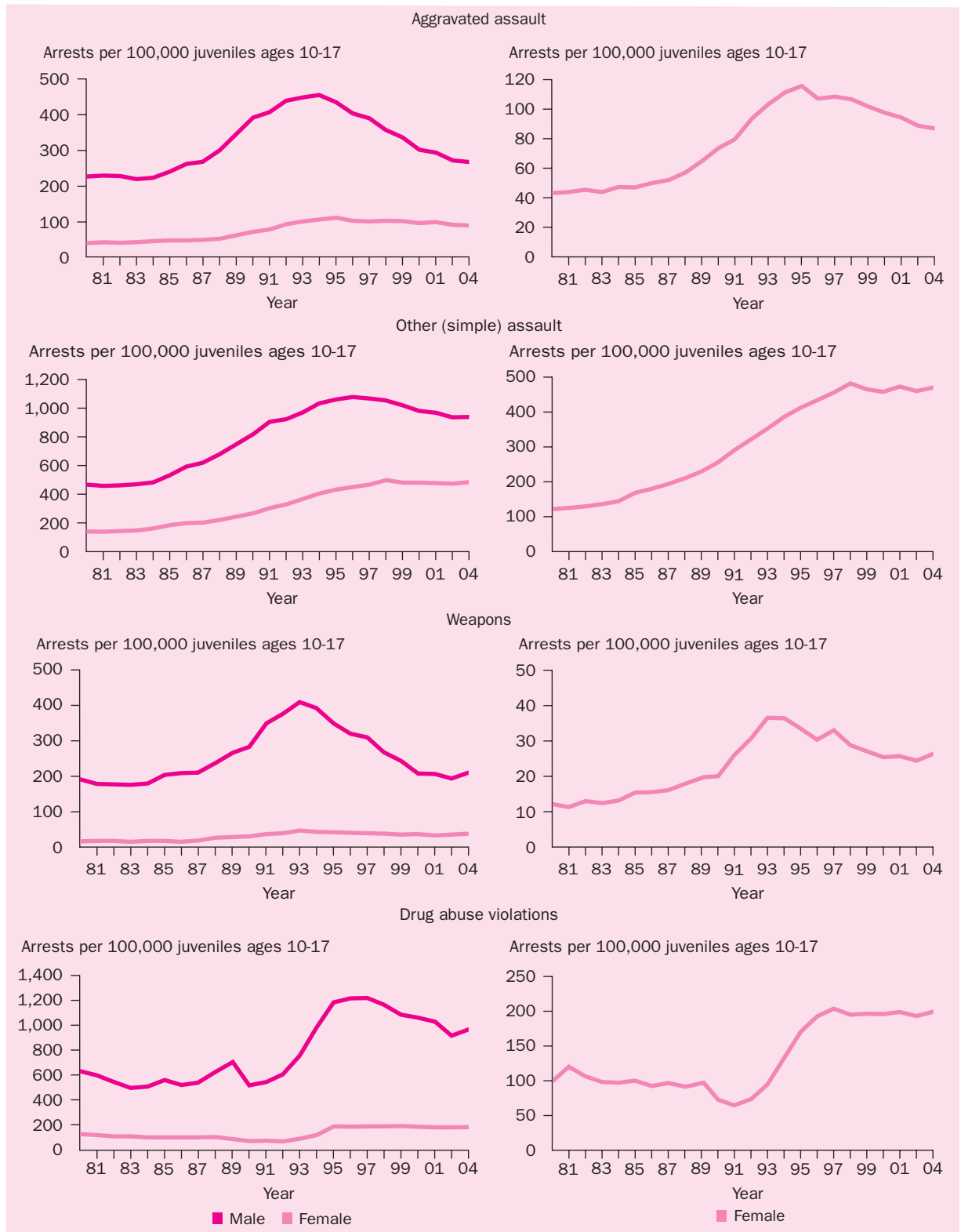
Figures 3-2 and 3-3 illustrate the patterns of delinquency by gender and race from 1981 to 2004. Gender rates are shown for aggravated assault, simple assault, weapons offenses, and drug abuse violations. Although males have

**figure 3-1** Violent and Property Juvenile Arrest Rates, 1981-2004

Source: Howard Snyder, *Juvenile Arrests, 2004* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2006).

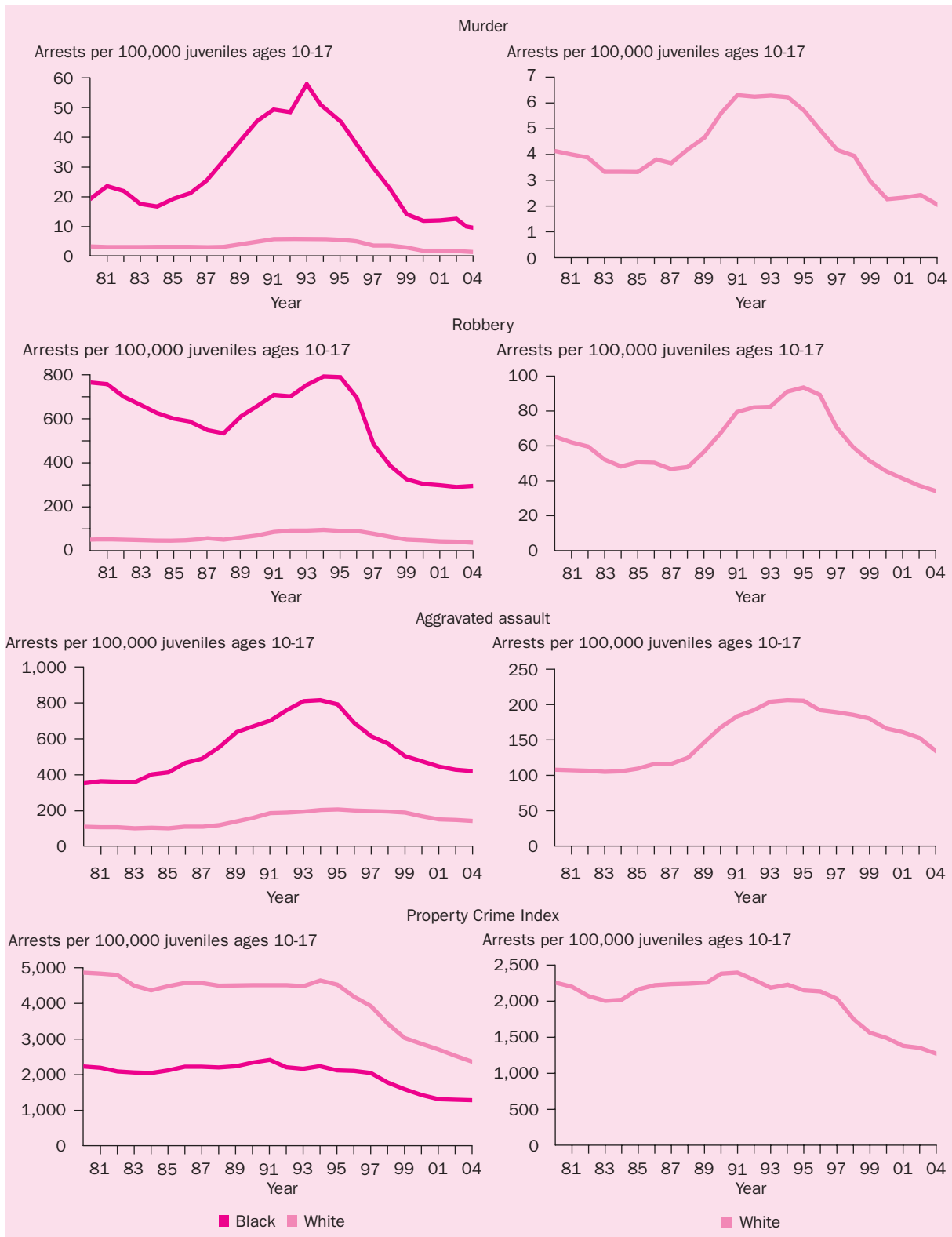
significantly higher arrest rates than females for all offenses, the relative “gender gap” for these offenses has decreased. There are also significant but changing offending differences in serious delinquency between African Americans and whites. For murder, robbery, aggravated assault, and serious property crimes, the “racial gap” in juvenile arrests has drastically narrowed, as African American youths have experienced sharply declining crime rates.

**figure 3-2** Serious Juvenile Arrest Rates by Gender, 1981-2004



Source: Howard Snyder, *Juvenile Arrests, 2004* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2006).

**figure 3-3** Serious Juvenile Arrest Rates by Race, 1981-2004



Source: Howard Snyder, *Juvenile Arrests, 2004* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2006).

African Americans comprise about 16 percent of all juveniles in the United States, yet they disproportionately contribute to violent crime arrests. As described earlier, however, the race-specific arrest rates for violent offenses have declined more dramatically for African American youths since 1993 than they did for white youth. Other forms of youth violence, including forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, weapons violations, and other assaults (fighting), also declined after the mid-1990s, with most offense categories showing double-digit changes. Terance Miethe and Wendy Regoeczi believe that there has been *no* significant increase of homicides by girls during the 1990s and that there was *no* increase in interracial homicides involving youth during that period. Moreover, they suggest that if there was any noticeable change in youth homicides, it was that they were becoming increasingly “characterized by young, African American male offenders, instrumental motives, multiple offenders, guns, and strangers.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, while there are fluctuations in gender by gender and race, serious juvenile violence is still disproportionately committed by young minority males.<sup>12</sup> (For a discussion of youth violence in European countries, see Box 3-1.)

Although it does not get the same attention as delinquency, suicide is another important form of violence affecting the lives of children and adolescents. Nearly one in five high school age youth made a plan to attempt suicide during the year, and about half actually attempted suicide. Many risk factors that contribute to violent delinquency, such as family trouble, delinquent peers, and bullying, also contribute to suicide among adolescents. For instance, Ann Burgess and her colleagues suggest that chronic bullying in schools produces students who are susceptible to committing suicide, school shootings, or both.<sup>13</sup> From 1999 to 2004, 11,176 juveniles committed suicide in the United States. Suicide is the third leading cause of death of adolescents after accidents and homicide. While females are more likely to attempt suicide, males are four times more likely to die from suicide.<sup>14</sup> Suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and depression can also be part of a larger set of problem behaviors that serious adolescent offenders wrestle with. Alex Piquero and his colleagues recently found that life-course persistent offenders have more mental health problems and more adverse health outcomes than adolescence-limited delinquents.<sup>15</sup>

## Explanations for the Decline in Youth Violence

In 1997, in the third edition of this textbook, we wrote that “if there is no significant change in the tendency of youths to become involved in violence, juvenile violent-crime arrests will double in just 18 years.”<sup>16</sup> We were looking at the most current data available at the time, but such data are always out of date by the time a book is published. Thus, in 1997 the most current arrest statistics were from 1994. The one-year decline between 1993 and 1994 did not appear to be much more than an anomaly especially after so many years of increasing youth violence. Howard Snyder and Melissa Sickmund had recently calculated estimates of juvenile violent crime for the year 2010 based on juvenile arrests for 1992 and available projections of population growth. They stated: “If current trends continue, by 2010 the number of juvenile arrests for murder is expected to increase by 145 percent over the 1992 level.”<sup>17</sup> They also projected increases of 129 percent for aggravated assault and 66 percent for rape. Louis Freeh, Director of the FBI, stated that “the ominous increase in juvenile crime, coupled with population trends, portends future crime and violence at nearly unprecedented levels.”<sup>18</sup> But

**box 3-1****DELINQUENCY AROUND THE GLOBE****Youth Violence in European Countries**

The United States is not the only country that struggles with juvenile violence. Research on recent trends in juvenile crime and violence in European Union countries suggests that the rate of juvenile violence rose sharply in the latter part of the 20th century just as it did in the United States. Since the early to mid-1980s, an increase in youth violence occurred in Austria, Denmark, England and Wales, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. Rates of youth violence increased in most of these countries even though overall youth crime rates appeared to be stable and even though crime rates were not increasing among older people. In some countries, the official figures increased between 50 and 250 percent. In England and Wales in 1986, for example, approximately 360 of every 100,000 youths ages 14 to 16 were “convicted or cautioned by the police” for violent crimes; in 1994 that figure had climbed to approximately 580 per 100,000. Increases in youth violence in Germany were even higher. In 1984 the number of 14- to 18-year-olds suspected of violent crime in the former West Germany was approximately 300 per 100,000; by 1995 that figure had more than doubled to about 760 per 100,000. Rates in the former East Germany were between 60 and 80 percent higher. Even Sweden, a country that forbids parental use of physical force against their children and prohibits professional boxing, reports dramatic increases in the number of juveniles sentenced for assault since the mid-1980s.

According to official records, victim surveys, and self-report studies, the victims of violent crimes committed by juveniles were other juveniles. In the Netherlands young people ages 15 to 17 were four times more likely than adults to be the victims of assault. Juveniles in Germany were also more likely to be the victims of violent crime than members of other age groups. In every country, young males were far more likely than young females to be violent crime victims.

Explanations for the growth in European juvenile violent crime rates parallel those used to explain youth violence in the United States: unemployment, alcohol, drugs, availability of guns, and domestic abuse. In some countries—France and Germany, for example—the problem of unemployment was exacerbated in the early 1990s by an influx of immigrants from countries that had been under communist rule. Immigrants who could not overcome language and culture barriers in order to find employment were more likely to engage in violent crimes than those who found jobs and became integrated into society.

German officials noted an increase in the use of alcohol and other drugs in the last decade, and firearms had become somewhat more available after the fall of the Berlin Wall than they had been in the past. Even though many of the German males arrested for violent crimes came from low-income households, the most common thread in their life histories is that they came from families where violence was common: they were beaten, their siblings were beaten, or one of their parents was beaten.

Ultimately, a main cause appears to be that life in many European countries is shifting toward a winner-loser culture in which many disadvantaged youth appear fated to be losers. Countries vary considerably in the mix of law enforcement and prevention efforts undertaken to deal with increased youth violence.

Sources: Mangai Natarajan, *Introduction to International Criminal Justice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005); Christian Pfeiffer, “Juvenile Crime and Violence in Europe,” pages 255–328 in Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, volume 23 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Hanns Von Hofer, “Criminal Violence and Youth in Sweden: A Long-term Perspective,” *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 1:56–72 (2000); Rosemary Barberet, Benjamin Bowling, Josine Junger-Tas, Cristina Rechea-Alberola, John van Kesteren, and Andrew Zurawan, *Self-Reported Juvenile Delinquency in England and Wales, the Netherlands, and Spain* (Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press, 2004).

these estimates and predictions were all wrong. Why were we and so many other criminologists wrong about the direction of violent youth crime, and why did juvenile violence and crime in general decline so much and so quickly?

Frank Zimring recently said, “Criminologists are like weathermen without a satellite. We can only tell you about yesterday’s crime rates.”<sup>19</sup> However, there is also a good deal of disagreement among criminologists as they offer interpretations and explanations of the last decade’s violent youth crime rates. There are a variety of explanations for why youth violence ended up declining rather than increasing. In Chapter 2, six reasons for the general decline in juvenile arrests were discussed including an improving economy, increased use of incarceration, more and better policing, changes in the age distribution of the population, the decline in the crack market, and legalized abortion. But are explanations for why youth committed fewer thefts, used certain drugs less frequently, burglarized fewer homes, and stole fewer automobiles adequate for explaining the drop in homicides, forcible rapes, aggravated assaults, and weapons violations?

Marc Ouimet examined the drop in crime in the United States and Canada to explore what caused the drastic declines in crime. Whereas American criminal justice policy included greater numbers of police, more aggressive and specialized policing tactics, and increased use of prison, Canada’s criminal justice policy did not. Yet, both nations enjoyed similar reductions in crime. Ouimet believes that the causes of the crime decline in both countries lay in demographic shifts, improved work opportunities, and changes in cultural values.<sup>20</sup>

According to John Conklin, “Whatever caused crime rates to fall in the 1990s saved tens of thousands of lives and millions of dollars worth of property.” Because nearly all categories of crime dropped after the early 1990s, Conklin argues that no single factor led to the decline. He suggests that increases in the number of police officers on the streets or police patrol practices, decreased use of crack but greater use of marijuana, more rigorous and more enforced gun laws, lower divorce rates, and even the shrinkage in the relative size of the adolescent population cannot explain the decline in violent crime *and* nonviolent crime during this period. Rather some common forces were at work, pushing all the rates down.

Conklin argues that the force common to the large declines in both violent and nonviolent youth crime was essentially the harsher sentencing laws passed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the “get-tough” attitude of the courts, the waiver of serious violent juveniles to adult criminal court, and the burgeoning correctional population. According to Conklin, “At least 10,800 murders, 2,176,000 robberies, 738,000 burglaries, and 748,000 motor vehicle thefts were prevented over the course of the decade by the incarceration of additional offenders. . . . The increase in the incarceration rate can account for the decreases in all four crime indicators.”<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman believe that the decline in youth violence largely resulted from the decline in demand for crack, which reduced the need for street markets to recruit large numbers of young drug sellers, and that this was accompanied by a reduced need for street sellers to be armed (see Chapter 4).<sup>22</sup> In addition, Blumstein says that police were more effective in enforcing gun laws and disrupting gun markets (discussed later in this chapter) and that the economy improved so young people were able to get legitimate jobs.<sup>23</sup> Others contend that the focus on crack markets and lethal violence among minority youths is inaccurate. Callie Rennison and Mike Planty

## think about it

Violent movies abound, violence is pervasive on the Internet, poverty rates have not changed significantly over the years, and two-parent families are in decline. Yet youth violence has declined significantly. Is it possible that violent behavior is more easily deterred by swifter and more severe punishments after all?

used NCVS data for the crimes of rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault between 1994 and 2001—the era of the greatest declines. In contrast to previous findings, Rennison and Planty found that for *nonfatal* crimes, reductions among African American and urban males were modest. However, among white, nonurban males, the reductions were great. In other words, contrary to many media accounts that focus on delinquency among inner-city, minority youths, it was actually the case that rural and suburban white youths “cleaning up their act” contributed most impressively to declines in serious youth violence (excluding homicide).<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Frank Zimring says that upward and downward trends in youth violence tend to be cyclical in unpredictable ways because there are “no unitary trends in the recent history of youth arrests for violent crime.”<sup>25</sup> Juvenile arrest rates for homicide, robbery, rape, and assault are rather cyclical and the cycles for the four offense categories are different. For example, he notes that while gun assaults increased after 1983, nongun aggravated assault cases increased even faster, and that although gun homicides increased, killings with knives remained rather stable.

### Characteristics of Violent Juvenile Offenders

Today, as in past years, the overwhelming majority (82 percent) of youths arrested for violent crimes are males, although girls accounted for about 24 percent of those arrested for aggravated assault, 11 percent for murder, and 10 percent for robbery (see Table 3-1). Girls who murder are more likely to use knives than are boys, who tend to use guns. They are also more likely to murder family members and very young victims. For example, 24 percent of girls’ murder victims were under age 3, compared to only 1 percent of boys’ murder victims.<sup>26</sup>

Yet girls do appear to be more violent than in the past. Between 1992 and 1996 female juveniles arrested for violent crimes increased by about 25 percent, and since the mid-1990s the decline in female violence has been much smaller than the decline in male violence. Girls involved in violence are also increasingly likely to make the national news. For example, a group of high school girls were videotaped beating other girls during a hazing incident in a Chicago suburb. And 12-year-old Nicole Townes was in a coma for three weeks after being pummeled and stomped by a group of girls between the ages 13 to 15 at a birthday

## think about it

A different form of youth violence occurs when adolescent females commit infanticide. Are such acts more or less egregious than school shootings? How does gender influence lethal violence?

**table 3-1** Juveniles Arrested for Violent Crimes, by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, 2005

OFFENSE	SEX		RACE/ETHNICITY		
	MALE	FEMALE	WHITE	BLACK	OTHER
Murder	89.1%	10.9%	43.0%	54.0%	3.0%
Forcible rape	98.5	1.5	64.3	34.0	1.7
Robbery	90.5	9.5	30.7	67.5	1.8
Aggravated assault	76.4	23.6	55.6	42.2	2.2
<b>Total violent crime</b>	<b>81.5</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>49.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States 2005* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2006).

party in Baltimore. According to Wiley Hall, “Around the country, school police and teachers are seeing a growing tendency for girls to settle disputes with their fists. They are finding themselves breaking up playground fights in which girls are going at each other toe-to-toe, like boys.”<sup>27</sup>

White youths accounted for over half, or about 48 percent, of all youths arrested for violent Crime Index offenses (see Table 3-1). White youths were roughly 64 percent of juveniles arrested for forcible rape and 56 percent for aggravated assault, but only 43 percent of the arrests for murder and 41 percent for robbery. African American youths are most overrepresented in arrests for robbery and murder, and this pattern has been generally consistent over the past several decades.<sup>28</sup>

While some criminologists suggest arrest data may reflect police bias in arrest decisions, the use of broader measures of delinquency, such as self-report data from the National Youth Survey, provide additional support for findings of disproportionate minority involvement in violent crime (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 13). Delbert Elliott reports that at the peak age of offending (17 years), 36 percent of African American males and 25 percent of white males reported that they had committed one or more serious violent crimes and that nearly twice as many African Americans as whites continued violent offending into adulthood.<sup>29</sup>

Arrest disparities may not reflect differences in the *characteristics of incidents* involving white and nonwhite offenders. Using the more complete information provided in the newer National Incident-Based Reporting System (*NIBRS*) (discussed in Chapter 2), Carl Pope and Howard Snyder found that compared with nonwhite juvenile offenders, white juvenile offenders were

- Less likely to have multiple victims.
- More likely to act alone.
- More likely to commit crimes indoors.
- Less likely to possess a nonpersonal weapon, such as a firearm, knife, or club.
- Less likely to offend against adults.
- Equally likely to offend against females.
- Less likely to offend against members of another race.
- Equally likely to injure victims.
- More likely to commit crimes against family members and equally likely to commit crimes against acquaintances.<sup>30</sup>

Pope and Snyder suggest that these incident characteristics, rather than race, are more likely to impact arrests. They state that:

Overall, the *NIBRS* data offer no evidence to support the hypothesis that police are more likely to arrest nonwhite juvenile offenders than white juvenile offenders, once other incident attributes are taken into consideration. This holds true when the data are analyzed in the aggregate (i.e., for all states and crimes combined), at the state level, and within each crime category. In fact, there is some evidence to support the conclusion that once a violent crime is reported to or witnessed by police, the likelihood of arrest is greater for white juvenile offenders than for nonwhite juvenile offenders.<sup>31</sup>

Explanations for youth violence abound, and specific explanations for why males are more violent than females, why minority youth may (or may not) be more likely to engage in violence, why older juveniles are more violent than younger juveniles, why juveniles tend to age out of violent and nonviolent crime, and why youth violence tends to be disproportionately found in urban areas, especially lower-income neighborhoods, range from consideration of biological, psychological, and developmental factors; social disorganization and social strain; patterns of socialization and peer association; and economic and power differences. These various explanations for juvenile delinquency and youth crime are examined in depth in Chapters 5 through 9.

### Violent Victimization of Youth

If the middle of the 1980s marked the beginning of an upsurge in juvenile arrests for violent crime, it also marked the point at which violent juvenile *victimizations* began to increase dramatically. Between 1984 and 1993, the rate of juvenile homicide victimizations increased threefold. In 2004, for instance, a total of 1,365 juveniles were homicide victims—an average of a little under four per day. Of these victims, 504 were age 4 or younger and 176 were younger than 1 year old.<sup>32</sup> One 4-year-old murder victim is Emanuel Barima, who was stabbed in the neck by two brothers, one 9 years old, the other only 8. The two brothers had allegedly been teasing and bullying Emanuel's 5-year-old sister, Abigail, for months before confronting Emanuel and Abigail outside their Bronx apartment. If convicted, both young murderers could face up to 18 months in a secure juvenile correctional facility.<sup>33</sup> (See Box 3-2 for a discussion of the murder of very young children.)

African American males are over five times more likely than white males to be homicide victims.

This young boy was the victim of a drive-by shooting. What might be done to prevent senseless violence?



## box 3-2

## A WINDOW ON DELINQUENCY

## The Murder of Young Children

**M**ore young children, those under age 6, die from homicide than from infectious diseases or cancer. Girls under age 6 are much more likely than girls ages 12 to 17 to be murdered, and white children under age 6 were nearly as likely as their teenage counterparts to be victims of homicide. Between 2001 and 2003, 94 infants were murdered in the United States, and 19 infants were killed and classified as negligent manslaughter. During the same time period, nearly 3,000 infants were raped, sodomized, or assaulted in the United States.

However, the actual homicide rate for very young children is likely to be much higher than official statistics suggest because they are among the most difficult to document. The deaths of very young children often resemble deaths resulting from accidents and other causes. For example, a child who dies from *sudden infant death syndrome* (SIDS) is fairly indistinguishable from a child who has been smothered. A child who has been thrown or intentionally dropped is likely to have injuries quite similar to those of a child who died from an accidental fall.

Two characteristics distinguish homicides of very young children from other juvenile victims: Such homicides are committed primarily by family members and half by the common use of “personal weapons,” such as hands and feet, to batter, strangle, or suffocate victims. In addition, young boys are somewhat more likely than young girls to be victims of homicide (55 and 45 percent, respectively). Among very young children, those at highest risk of homicide are those under age one. Homicides of children in this group include

a certain number appropriately classified as **infanticide** (homicides in which recently born children are killed by relatives who do not want the child or who are suffering from a childbirth-related psychiatric disturbance). The FBI does not provide data identifying infanticides as a distinct subgroup, although countries such as Britain and Canada have a special infanticide offense category in their national crime statistics. The number of infanticides rose from 4.3 to 9.2 per 100,000 between 1970 and 2000, but then declined in recent years. Infants are most likely to be murdered by their mothers during the first week of life, but after that time, males, typically a stepfather or boyfriend of the mother, are more likely. Half of all infanticides occur before the fourth month of life and the greatest risk of being murdered is on the day of birth.

FBI data do not identify victims murdered during the first six days of life (victims of what is called *neonaticide*), annually there are about 70 such victims. Two-thirds of these children were murdered by mothers, one-half of whom were under age 20. Fathers were responsible for only about 1 out of 10 of these murders. Sadly, prosecutors decline to pursue charges in 76 percent of cases involving these infant victims.

*Sources:* Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States 2005* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2006), p. 23; David Finkelhor and Richard Ormrod, *Homicides of Children and Youth* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001); ChildTrends DataBank, *Infant Homicide*, online at [http://www.childtrends.databank.org/pdf/72\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.childtrends.databank.org/pdf/72_PDF.pdf), accessed April 22, 2007; Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Infant Victims: An Exploratory Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2005), pp. 359–366.

But like the juvenile homicide offending rate, the rate of homicide victimization of juveniles has declined significantly since the mid-1990s, dropping 50 percent from an all-time high of 12.1 per 100,000 in 1993. Using data from the National Crime Victimization Survey, Katrina Baum reports on recent trends in criminal victimization among children and adolescents. Since 1993, juveniles between the ages of 12 and 17 have annual rates of nonfatal, violent victimization

that are about 250 percent higher than the rates for adults. Although rates are higher among juveniles than adults, overall crime rates declined for all age groups for all types of crimes since 1993, and the greatest declines were among younger teens between the ages of 12 and 14. Younger teens are more likely to be victimized by strangers, 80 percent are victimized by another adolescent, and they are slightly less likely to be victimized by a firearm. Older juveniles are slightly more likely to be victims of robbery, aggravated assault, and rape/sexual assault than are younger juveniles. Male juveniles are substantially more likely than females to be victims of violent crimes, with the exception of rape and sexual assault.<sup>34</sup>

Serious injuries resulting from violent crimes also differ by gender. Girls were more likely than boys to have stab wounds, while boys were more likely than girls to have gunshot wounds. And girls were also more likely than boys to be injured at home rather than in a public place or at school.<sup>35</sup> African American youths are victims of violence at rates higher than white youths. African American and white youth are generally likely to experience similar rates of violent victimization, although 12- to 15-year-old white youth are slightly more likely to be victims of aggravated assault, and African American youth are significantly more likely to be victims of robbery. Interestingly, African American females are nearly twice as likely as white males to be victims of aggravated assault.<sup>36</sup>

Juveniles comprise about 12 percent of all crime victims reported to police, but 71 percent of all sex crime victims and 38 percent of all kidnapping victims. Simple assault is the most commonly reported crime against juveniles, comprising 41 percent of all juvenile victimizations. Sexual assault accounts for almost one-third of preteen victimizations, more than twice the proportion for older juveniles.<sup>37</sup> Victims of juvenile violence are frequently victimized by other juveniles as 38 percent were no more than one year older or one year younger than the offender. Over 90 percent of male victims of violent crime were victimized by males; 52 percent of female victims ages 12 to 17 were victims of female offenders. Nearly all victims of juveniles knew the offender. In those incidents where the relationship was known, about two-thirds of the victims of juvenile violence were acquainted with the offender, 23 percent were family members, and only about 12 percent were strangers.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the obvious negative impact of the victimization of children and adolescents, there is another problem: The cycle of violence that victimization perpetuates. Murray Straus and Sarah Savage examined the link between childhood neglect and dating delinquency in a group of nearly 7,000 students sampled from 33 universities in 17 countries. They found that about half of university students reported some form of parental neglect sustained when they were children. Nearly 15 percent of students experienced a pervasive pattern of neglect. For both genders, neglect increased the likelihood of physically assaulting a dating partner.<sup>39</sup> Using a large sample of Canadian youths, David Wolfe and his colleagues found that those who were maltreated as children were significantly more likely to suffer from various psychiatric problems. Maltreated boys were 200 to 400 percent more likely to suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder and 200 to 340 percent more likely to threaten or abuse their dating partners.<sup>40</sup>

Overall, approximately 12 percent of high school students have experienced some form of dating violence and the prevalence estimates from various studies range between 9 and 57 percent.<sup>41</sup> Fortunately, the United States appears to be

taking the victimization of children more seriously. In July 2006 Congress passed the *Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act* that toughened a variety of laws that targeted offenders who victimize children. In addition, the Department of Justice created Project Safe Childhood, an initiative designed to protect children as they use the Internet.<sup>42</sup> In addition to these federal developments, a number of prevention and treatment programs aimed at serious youth violence are described later in this chapter.

## The Role of Firearms in Youth Violence

The majority of juvenile homicide and suicide victims are killed with firearms. A frequently made claim by a segment of one side in the gun control debate is that “Guns don’t kill people, people kill people.” The implication is that guns do not act on their own, they are tools in the hands of people who choose to use them for carrying out violent acts. If people did not have access to guns, then they would find other deadly weapons to use. Many advocates of strict gun control take a very different view. To them, guns are, in and of themselves, evil. Guns are deadly forces that are directly responsible for the deaths or maiming of tens of thousands of people every year. If it were not for the easy availability of guns, most perpetrators would either refrain from violence altogether or, at worst, select a less deadly weapon.<sup>43</sup> There are more than 250 million guns in America today, and there is no question that juveniles have significantly greater access to guns in the 21st century, that guns are available through often illegal means, and that the guns they have access to are much more deadly than in the past.<sup>44</sup> While the number of arrests of juveniles for weapons violations *increased* by over 400 percent between 1960 and 1990, they *decreased* significantly (dropping nearly 50 percent) since 1993. In 2005 juveniles accounted for just over 20 percent of all persons arrested for weapons violations. Of those juveniles arrested and victimized, most were males, two-thirds were white, and just under a third were African American. Among all age and sex groups, males at age 18 have the highest per capita arrest rates for weapons violations, followed by males at age 17.<sup>45</sup>

**Carrying and Getting Guns** According to the Indicators of School Crime and Safety National survey, schools are safer than they have been in decades. During the school year when the most recent data are available, 17 homicides and five suicides of school children occurred on school property.<sup>46</sup> A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention national survey of middle/junior high and high school students reported that just over 5 percent of the students said they had carried a gun to school during the month prior to the survey. Nearly 8 percent said they had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property once or more during the preceding year.<sup>47</sup> In other words, few school children carry, possess, or use weapons.

Pamela Wilcox and Richard Clayton surveyed over 6,000 6th- through 12th-grade students in 21 schools and discovered that males were about 30 percent more likely than females to carry weapons to school, and that nonwhites were nearly 50 percent more likely than whites to bring weapons to school. Wilcox and Clayton also reported that students of lower socioeconomic status, students who have been threatened at school, students who report a variety of

other problem behaviors, and students whose parents own guns were also significantly more likely to carry weapons to school.<sup>48</sup>

Surveys of only students may not provide the most accurate estimate of how many youths possess or carry guns on a regular basis. Many youths have dropped out of school, and substantial numbers are confined in correctional institutions. Joseph Sheley and James Wright surveyed students as well as 835 male juvenile inmates in six different correctional facilities. Students were asked if they currently owned a gun, and inmates were asked if they had owned a gun at the time they were arrested. About 22 percent of the students and 83 percent of the incarcerated youths reported ownership of a gun at the time in question.<sup>49</sup>

The media has often pointed to gang violence involving semi-automatic assault rifles and report that some police officers believe that they are “outgunned” by many of the weapons used by violent youth. Indeed, much gang violence in recent years has been characterized by the use of more sophisticated weapons (discussed later in this chapter). However, most youth violence is *not* gang-related violence, and there is evidence that the general sophistication of firearms used by juveniles did not change much throughout the decade of the 1990s. Rick Ruddell and Larry Mays examined data involving the confiscation of 1,055 firearms from juveniles in St. Louis from 1992 through 1999. They found that handguns were the most likely kind of firearm to be confiscated from juveniles and that

most often these handguns were of the Saturday night special variety—cheap, easily concealed, and small caliber. Only 10 assault weapons were confiscated from juveniles over the 8-year period, compared to 134 nonpowder firearms (BB or pellet guns). According to Ruddell and Mays, “youths are more likely to have pellet guns, .22 caliber firearms, and Saturday night specials confiscated by the police. . . . Overall, most firearms seized from juveniles by the police have a low threat level.”<sup>50</sup>

The **Brady Bill** mandated a five-day waiting period for the purchase of handguns, while The *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994* made it a federal crime for anyone to sell or transfer a handgun, or am-

Children with ready access to firearms are at an increased risk for violent offending and victimization.

For child safety, guns should be kept unloaded and locked in a safe place. Does the balance of child safety and protection against criminals depend on what neighborhood you live in?



munition for a handgun, to a person under age 18.<sup>51</sup> The act also made it a crime for juveniles to possess a handgun or ammunition for a handgun, although there are certain exceptions: A youth may possess a handgun when it is used for farming, ranching, target shooting, or safety instruction provided the youth has his or her parent's written permission to have the handgun. However, most states already prohibit the sale of handguns to persons under age 21 and the sale of rifles and shotguns to persons under the age of 18. Therefore, if it is clearly illegal for youths to obtain guns through legitimate channels, how do they get them? It is estimated that about a third of children in the United States live in homes with firearms.<sup>52</sup> If there is no firearm available in the home, a youth is likely to have little difficulty in obtaining one from friends, on the street, through theft, or through an illegal purchase from a gun dealer.

## think about it

Is the ultimate argument for gun control that children can readily obtain them from family, friends, and their homes? What are the benefits and costs of having firearms in a family home?

In their classic study, Sheley and Wright asked students and juvenile inmates how they had obtained the guns they possessed. More than half the students said they borrowed their guns from a family member or friend, whereas most of the juvenile inmates said they had gotten their guns from friends and street sources. Both students and inmates indicated that they felt they could obtain guns with little trouble: There was little need to steal guns or to go through normal retail outlets where a friend or family member could legally purchase a gun.<sup>53</sup> This is fairly consistent with a recent survey of firearm use by offenders. About 40 percent of state prison inmates age 24 or younger obtained the gun used in their current offense from family members or friends. Only 7 percent obtained a gun from a retail store.<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, many young people live in social worlds characterized by crime and violence. Of the juvenile inmates, 40 percent had siblings who had been incarcerated, 62 percent reported having male family members who routinely carried guns, and 84 percent indicated that they had been threatened with a gun or shot at during their lives. Half had been stabbed with a knife, and more than 80 percent had been beaten up by someone. Students were only slightly less exposed to violent environments. Nearly half the students reported that male members of their households regularly carried guns, 45 percent reported having been threatened with a gun or shot at, and one-third of the students had been beaten up either at school or on the way to or from school.<sup>55</sup>

Philip Cook and Jens Ludwig believe that, at the local level, greater ownership of guns by adults is associated with the likelihood of youths carrying both guns and other types of weapons. However, they argue that while gun prevalence does not affect the decision of a youth to carry a weapon, it does affect the decision of what kind of weapon the youth will carry. This means that “the availability of guns clearly increases the likelihood that those teens that do carry weapons choose guns.”<sup>56</sup>

Thus far, this chapter has explored topics related to a general understanding of serious youth violence, especially involvement in the most serious forms of delinquency and gun-related crimes. Within this general framework are the most serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders—the chronic delinquents described in Chapter 2. However, within the population of serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders is another important phenomenon that has yet to be examined: *psychopathy*. Only a small subgroup of serious delinquents is psychopathic, which is a serious personality disorder that impairs social development and enhances involvement in delinquency.<sup>57</sup>

## JUVENILE PSYCHOPATHY

**Psychopathy** is a personality disorder that impairs interpersonal, affective, and behavioral functions and is closely linked to serious antisocial behavior. The disorder is significantly more likely to occur in boys as opposed to girls and does not discriminate by race, ethnicity, social class, or country of origin. In other words, psychopaths have been studied in many racial groups and in many different countries. There are several core characteristics of psychopathic individuals. They are aggressive, self-centered or narcissistic, impulsive, and prone to risky activities. They often begin getting into trouble very early in life, engage in a wide variety of antisocial behaviors, and are prolific criminals.<sup>58</sup> Thus far, these characteristics describe many serious, nonpsychopathic offenders as well. It is the following list of characteristics, however, that distinguishes psychopaths from other individuals. Psychopathic delinquents are callous, guiltless, and have little to no fear or anxiety. They are exploitative, manipulative, deceptive, and seemingly unable to form warm relationships with other people. They are without conscience and appear to be impervious to efforts by the juvenile and criminal justice systems to intervene.<sup>59</sup>

Philippe Pinel is considered the first person to clinically study the construct of psychopathy with the publication of his *A Treatise on Insanity* in 1801. Pinel described a diagnosis for people who exhibited uncontrolled rage and outlandishly immoral behavior that was without psychotic features such as delusions. In other words, people seemed to be extremely dangerous yet simultaneously in control of their emotions and mental health.<sup>60</sup> In 1835 James Pritchard called the disorder “moral insanity,” again noting that serious criminal conduct was occurring without mental defect.<sup>61</sup> Many other physicians, psychiatrists, and correctional clinicians also studied psychopathy throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The modern understanding of psychopathy was realized in 1941 with the publication of Hervey Cleckley’s *The Mask of Sanity*. His work was the most systematic clinical study of psychopathy and laid the groundwork for contemporary research. Cleckley described the sheer antisocial differences between psychopaths and even the most delinquent youths:

In repetitive delinquent behavior, the subject often seems to be going a certain distance along the course that a full psychopath follows to the end. In the less severe disorder, antisocial or self-defeating activities are frequently more circumscribed and may stand out against a larger background of successful adaptation. The borderlines between chronic delinquency and what we have called the psychopath merge in this area. Although anxiety, remorse, shame, and other consciously painful subjective responses to undesirable consequences are deficient in both as compared with the normal, this callousness or apathy is far deeper in the psychopath.<sup>62</sup>

The majority of research on psychopaths has centered on adult criminals in prisons or psychiatric hospitals. It was discovered that offenders presented psychopathic characteristics throughout their lives, even in early childhood and adolescence. Thus, juvenile psychopathy is an important area of research for understanding the disorder and developing ways to prevent it or reduce its negative effects.

The application of psychopathy to children and adolescents has occurred for decades. William McCord and Joan McCord expressed concerns that seri-

ous violent crime was the work of adolescent psychopaths in 1964.<sup>63</sup> In 1966 Lee Robins described children that appeared in local psychiatric clinics as “Boys [that] had a history of truancy, theft, staying out late, and refusing to obey parents. They lied gratuitously, and showed little guilt over their behavior. They were generally irresponsible.”<sup>64</sup> In the 1980s as crime rates increased and criminology focused more attention on the most serious types of offenders, serious juvenile offenders also began to receive more scrutiny from researchers. In recent years, criminologists in several countries have produced an impressive knowledge-base on psychopathic traits among juvenile offenders. Some of their primary characteristics and behaviors are described next.

### Characteristics and Behaviors of Psychopathic Youths

Criminologists have found that a set of traits typifies psychopathic youths. Donald Lynam and his colleagues suggest that juvenile psychopathy can be understood as a constellation of personality characteristics that contribute to delinquent behavior. The personality profile is quite negative, unfortunately. Psychopathic youths are very disagreeable and often are suspicious, deceptive, exploitative, arrogant, tough-minded, and aggressive. They are low in conscientiousness and constraint, which means that they impulsively seek to satisfy their own needs with no concern for the feelings of other people.<sup>65</sup> Paul Frick and his colleagues studied a sample of more than 1,100 children in third, fourth, sixth, or seventh grades to examine the stability of psychopathic traits. Again, they found that the most psychopathic children (their average age was 10 years) were highly impulsive, highly narcissistic, and highly callous and unemotional to others. Moreover, these characteristics were relatively stable over a 4-year follow-up period. This suggests that psychopathic traits develop early in life and, once established, are likely to persist throughout the life course.<sup>66</sup>

If the personality profile of psychopathic youths is troubling, the behavioral profile is even more unsettling particularly among institutionalized juvenile offenders. Mary Ann Campbell, Stephen Porter, and Darcy Santor found that psychopathic youths are among the most aggressive, antisocial, and delinquent children within detention centers. Although they are the most prone to externalizing problems (e.g., hurting others), and they are the least prone to internalizing problems (e.g., hurting themselves). In other words, psychopathic youths do not feel “stressed” about engaging in serious antisocial behavior. They also tend to have had the most severe criminal records, been suspended or expelled from school, often had multiple placements in foster homes and juvenile detention centers, and experienced more abuse during early childhood.<sup>67</sup> Several other scholars have also found that youths who present psychopathic traits have multifaceted involvement in delinquent behaviors.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, psychopathic youths appear to be impervious to the legal and moral bases of punishment. They simply do not respond to punishment by correcting their behavior, instead they appear to be unmoved.<sup>69</sup>

Compared to serious delinquents who are not psychopathic, juvenile psychopaths are noteworthy for their sustained criminal activity, continued criminal activity while under the supervision of the juvenile justice system, and recidivism rates upon reentering society. Michael Vaughn and Matt DeLisi studied the effects of psychopathic traits on delinquent careers among a population of institutionalized delinquents in Missouri. They found that adolescents with psycho-

pathic personality features were 300 percent more likely to have an early onset of criminal behavior, be contacted by police, and be processed by the juvenile court.<sup>70</sup> In addition, youths with psychopathic traits were significantly likely to become adult career criminals.<sup>71</sup> Diana Falkenbach and her associates studied psychopathic features among 69 children who had been arrested and placed in a juvenile diversion program (Chapter 13). They discovered that youths with psychopathic traits were more likely to not comply with the program and be rearrested.<sup>72</sup> Based on data from Canadian youths between the ages of 12 and 18, Raymond Corrado and his colleagues reported that psychopathic youths are significantly likely to commit general, violent, and nonviolent delinquent acts than kids who are not psychopathic. Moreover, psychopathic youths commit crimes faster and with greater frequency.<sup>73</sup> Even while incarcerated, psychopathic youths present problems. Daniel Murrie and his associates studied institutionalized youths in Virginia and found that prior record for crimes of violence, record of violence that did not result in arrest, violence while incarcerated, assaulting other correctional residents with weapons, and inflicting great bodily harm were significantly correlated with psychopathy.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, among 85 adjudicated delinquents in Florida who were between the ages of 11 and 18, psychopathic youths accumulated more disciplinary infractions, committed more violent acts, and had worse treatment outcomes than nonpsychopathic children.<sup>75</sup>

## Causes of Psychopathy

What causes some youngsters to be glib, deceitful, manipulative, callous, irresponsible, impulsive, mean, lacking in guilt, and so easily able to victimize others? Is their pathology innate? Did something happen to them that produced psychopathy? Does some combination of nature and nurture produce psychopathy? Based on the weight of the evidence, the best answer appears to be that it is produced by a combination of biopsychological and sociological factors—in other words, *nature and nurture* (for more on the development of antisocial behavior, see Chapter 8).

Some behavioral scientists have distinguished primary and secondary psychopaths as a way to explore **etiolo**gical, or causal, factors of antisocial behavior. *Primary psychopaths* are persons who have brain abnormalities that impair their ability to process and express emotion, such as empathy. Their antisocial behavior is largely innate.<sup>76</sup> Research by James Blair and his colleagues indicates that the genetic factors produce neurotransmitter dysfunction that in turn reduces the ability of the amygdala, almond-shaped groups of neurons in the brain that control our emotional ability, to process emotional learning and socially relate to others.<sup>77</sup> Importantly, even the most biologically centered explanation also points to the importance of the social environment in developing antisocial behavior. In other words, even primary psychopaths respond to the influence of others in determining their behavior.

*Secondary psychopaths* have the same characteristics as primary psychopaths; however, the pathology in the secondary psychopath is developed often as an adaptation to some severe trauma in early life, usually parental abuse or rejection. Because of the importance of early life trauma in developing secondary psychopathy, many criminologists use the term **sociopath** to distinguish psychopathic characteristics that are largely the result of early life abuse and neglect.<sup>78</sup> Donald Lynam has shown how these biological and environmental factors in-

## box 3-3

## A WINDOW ON DELINQUENCY

*Psychopaths and Violence*

**P**sycho-pathic offenders are noteworthy for the extremity of their violence. In the community, psychopathic offenders are the most active, versatile, and relentless offenders; in prison, they are among the most violent and noncompliant inmates. Several criminologists have explored the nature of offending by psychopathic individuals. Stephen Porter and his colleagues compared murders committed by psychopaths and nonpsychopaths among inmates in Canadian prisons. They reported that murders committed by psychopaths were characterized by sadism and more gratuitous violence (e.g., stabbings with dozens or hundreds of entry wounds) than killings by nonpsychopathic offenders. More than 82 percent of psychopathic offenders committed these types of murders compared to 52 percent of nonpsychopathic offenders.

Katherine Ramsland researched psychopathic violence among children and adolescents and unearthed several examples:

- Sixteen-year-old Brenda Spencer received a rifle for her birthday. She used it to shoot kids at an elementary school near her San Diego home, wounding nine and killing two. A reporter asked her later why she had done it. Her answer: "I don't like Mondays. This livens up the day."
- Two bodies were found on a country road in Ellis County, Texas. One was male, one female. The boy, 14, had been shot, but the 13-year-old girl had been stripped, raped, and dismembered. Her head and hands were missing. The killer turned out to be Jason Massey, who had decided he was going to become the worst serial killer that Texas had

ever seen. He tortured animals, stalked another young woman, and revered killers like Ted Bundy. He was 9 years old when he killed his first cat and added dozens more over the years, along with dogs and even six cows. He had a long list of potential victims and his diaries were filled with fantasies of rape, torture, and cannibalism of female victims. He was a loner who believed he served a "master" who gave him knowledge and power. He was obsessed with bringing girls under his control and having their dead bodies in his possession.

- Nine-year-old Jeffrey Bailey, Jr. pushed a 3-year-old friend into the deep part of a motel pool in Florida. He wanted to see someone drown. As the boy sank to the bottom, Jeffrey pulled up a chair to watch. When it was finished, he went home. When he was questioned, he was more engaged in being the center of attention than in any kind of remorse for what he had done, and spoke nonchalantly about the murder.

Given these disturbing images, it is clear why juvenile psychopathy is such an important area of research to enable the prevention of serious youth violence.

*Sources:* Stephen Porter, Michael Woodworth, Jeff Earle, Jeff Drugge, and Douglas Boer, "Characteristics of Sexual Homicides Committed by Psychopathic and Non-Psychopathic Offenders," *Law and Human Behavior* 27:457-470 (2003); Matt DeLisi, "Criminal Careers Behind Bars," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 21:653-669 (2003); Robert Hare, "Psychopathy as a Risk Factor for Violence," *Psychiatric Quarterly* 70:181-197 (1999); Katherine Ramsland, *The Childhood Psychopath: Bad Seed or Bad Parents?*, online at [http://www.crime-library.com/criminal\\_mind/psychology/psychopath/1.html](http://www.crime-library.com/criminal_mind/psychology/psychopath/1.html), accessed June 3, 2007.

teract to produce psychopathy in young people. Children who present severe hyperactivity, impulsivity, and attention problems often also suffer from conduct problems. These children are very difficult to parent and manage in school and often alienate themselves from conventional peers, resulting in social isolation and labeling. Over time, the antisocial aspects of their behavior become

reinforced or exacerbated while the positive aspects of their behavior become more infrequent and difficult to reinforce. Unless a major treatment intervention occurs, these “fledgling psychopaths” develop into the most serious, violent, and chronic delinquents.<sup>79</sup>

## Treatment of Juvenile Psychopathy

Whether prevention and treatment programs specifically address the needs of juvenile psychopaths is unknown because almost all of the evaluation research has been conducted on adult offenders. By and large, criminal justice treatments attempt to increase the prosocial abilities of offenders. In the case of psychopathic offenders, the emphasis is placed on increasing empathy through intensive cognitive therapy and behavioral modification. Amazingly, prior research shows that, in some circumstances, treatment actually makes psychopaths more dangerous. Marnie Rice, Grant Harris, and Catherine Cormier evaluated an intensive therapeutic community program that included up to 80 hours of intensive group therapy per week. Whereas the treatment reduced recidivism among 146 nonpsychopathic offenders, it increased recidivism among 146 psychopathic offenders. By learning to take others’ perspective and behave in socially acceptable ways, psychopaths were able to enhance their ability to manipulate, exploit, and victimize others.<sup>80</sup> Robert Hare and his colleagues similarly discovered that recidivism rates for psychopathic offenders that had received social skills and anger management classes were higher than those without treatment.<sup>81</sup> Grant Harris and Marnie Rice have concluded that “there is no evidence that any treatment yet applied to psychopaths have been shown to be effective in reducing violence or crime.”<sup>82</sup>

Despite this grim assessment, those who have the most contact with psychopathic juvenile delinquents, probation and detention officers within the juvenile justice system, believe that the most violent and antisocial youths can still be rehabilitated. Keith Cruise and his colleagues surveyed 424 juvenile detention and probation officers and reported that many have hope that the most severe juvenile offenders can be reformed. Nearly 61 percent felt that psychopathic youths are candidates for rehabilitation, and nearly 63 percent of probation officers felt that psychopathy was changeable. This suggests that even those with the most frequent contact with juvenile offenders still detect admirable traits that suggest the youths are amenable to turning their lives around.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, it is too expensive *not* to treat serious delinquents who present psychopathic traits. Individual criminal careers ultimately cost society more than \$1 million per offender in assorted victimization and criminal justice costs.<sup>84</sup> Michael Caldwell and his colleagues have reported that for every dollar spent to provide intensive treatment to violent, psychopathic delinquents, seven dollars in various costs were saved or effectively prevented.<sup>85</sup>

The treatment of youthful psychopathic offenders must borrow heavily from the treatment of juvenile homicide offenders. Both groups represent the extremes of delinquency and point to the need for intensive, multifaceted, and sustained treatment. Kathleen Heide and Eldra Solomon present the following treatment protocol for the most violent of juvenile offenders:

- Comprehensive cognitive behavioral restructuring.
- Prosocial skills training.
- Positive peer communities.

- Anger management and appropriate emotional release.
- Empathy training.
- Clear, firm, and consistent discipline.
- Drug and alcohol counseling and education.
- Transitional treatment including family counseling when appropriate.
- Aftercare.
- Psychopharmacological management.
- Educational and vocational programs and other activities that promote prosocial opportunities for success.<sup>86</sup>

## VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Although youth violence has declined significantly since its mid-1990s peak, it remains well above levels observed for most of the 20th century. What can be done to ensure that youth violence continues to decline? In this final section we will consider four strategies for preventing violence by juveniles, whether psychopathic or non-psychopathic. The four strategies are (1) controlling availability of guns, (2) reducing violence in families, (3) providing community-based prevention programs, and (4) promoting treatment and get-tough approaches.

### Controlling Availability of Guns

A variety of innovative policing initiatives have been designed to reduce the availability of guns to juveniles. Beginning in 1994, the New York City Police Department installed its “Compstat” approach that stressed zero tolerance of nuisance types of offending, such as loitering, turnstile jumping, vandalism, and prostitution. By refusing to tolerate even the most trivial violations, the police sent a message to offenders that any type of criminal behavior would not be permitted. Not coincidentally, youth who committed serious crimes and carried firearms also committed minor forms of delinquency; thus, they were often arrested before their nuisance offending could escalate to more serious acts. This policing approach was responsible for dramatic reductions in violence, homicides, and gun crimes in New York City.<sup>87</sup> In fact, even harsh critics of the program acknowledge that controlling offenders who use guns and the subsequent availability of guns resulted in crime declines.<sup>88</sup>

Similarly, the Richmond, Virginia, Police Department developed a coordinated antigun program with the United States Attorney’s Office, known as Project Exile, to aggressively prosecute all gun arrests as federal offenses. The primary advantage is that authorities are able to use existing stricter federal gun laws and the more severe penalties available in the federal courts. Although Project Exile does not directly target youth, gun violence in the Richmond area did appear to decline after its implementation. Critics of Project Exile argue that the decline in gun violence was only a continuation of the more general decline in gun violence observed in large cities around the country and not due to the new program. A recent reevaluation by Richard Rosenfeld and his colleagues found strong violence reduction effects resulting from Project Exile.<sup>89</sup>

## think about it

Raising the price of guns and creating a scarcity of ammunition might reduce the ability of youths to possess firearms. Should guns be priced out of the reach of youths? Would such a policy discriminate against persons from the lower class?

Franklin Zimring suggests an alternative to banning firearms. He notes that there is a distinct political economy of adolescents. Youths have less monetary capital, lower regard for property as capital assets, and shorter monetary attention spans than adults. Adolescents with many economic wants, therefore, can be more easily distracted from investing their capital in guns. Zimring believes that raising the price of guns and creating a scarcity of ammunition for those who possess guns would have a significant negative impact on juveniles', especially younger juveniles', decisions to spend money on guns.<sup>90</sup>

Policies aimed only at reducing the total number of firearms in circulation in communities may not be adequate. As Marc Riedel and Wayne Welsh note, it is not the total number of guns available that leads to higher levels of violence, rather it is "the carrying of guns in high-risk places at high-risk times."<sup>91</sup> If this is true, the creation of new laws designed to reduce gun and ammunition availability may not be as effective as stricter enforcement of existing laws prohibiting persons from carrying concealed weapons.

Law enforcement has been attempting to reduce the availability of guns through a variety of strategies, such as targeted enforcement operations (including hot spots of gun crime and the use of gun sweeps), community-supported silent witness programs that encourage residents to report the presence of illegal guns, cooperation with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) to trace illegal guns, safe gun storage programs, and the creation of juvenile gun courts.<sup>92</sup> Box 3-4 discusses some successful approaches to getting guns off the street.

## Reducing Violence in Families

A growing number of criminologists believe that the structure of the modern family and the lack of meaningful relationships between parents and children today are significant causal factors in youth violence (see Chapter 10).

Whether a victim or only an observer, children learn inappropriate techniques for resolving conflicts. Should the penalties for inflicting or exposing children to violence be more severe?



## box 3-4

## DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

## Getting Guns off the Streets

The evidence presented in this chapter so far clearly establishes the increase in firearm crime, especially among youths. If the police could get more guns off the streets, would there be fewer firearm crimes?

The **Kansas City Gun Experiment** was designed to test this idea. For 29 weeks, from July 7, 1992, to January 27, 1993, the Kansas City Police Department focused extra patrol attention on gun-crime “hot spots” in an 80-by-10-block area of the city. The extra patrol consisted of a pair of two-officer cars, with officers assigned on a rotating basis. Four officers worked six hours of overtime each night, from 7 P.M. to 1 A.M., and two other officers worked an additional 24 nights. The overtime was funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance Weed and Seed program.

All officers focused exclusively on gun detection, primarily through traffic stops and pedestrian checks. The experiment appears to have had a number of significant effects. Among them are the following:

- Gun seizures by police in the target area increased by more than 65 percent, while gun crimes declined in the target area by 49 percent.
- Neither the number of gun crimes nor that of guns seized changed significantly in a similar beat several miles away, where the focused patrol was not used.
- The number of drive-by shootings dropped from seven to one in the target area but doubled in the comparison beat.
- Homicides were significantly reduced in the target area but not in the comparison beat.
- Traffic stops were the most productive method of finding guns, with an average of one gun found per 28 traffic stops.
- Two-thirds of the persons arrested for gun carrying in the target area resided outside the area.
- Before-and-after surveys of citizens showed that respondents in the target area

became less fearful of crime and more positive about their neighborhood than did respondents in the comparison beat.

The Kansas City Gun Experiment was replicated in Indianapolis in 1997 as part of that city’s *Weed and Seed program*, but with mixed success. Directed patrols that met with greater success were more selective about which vehicles to stop and issued citations rather than warnings; they also used K-9 patrols and probation sweeps for guns. In addition, directed patrol did not seem to shift crime to surrounding areas. Where a general deterrence patrol strategy was used to maximize the number of police stops and create a sense of increased police presence, there appeared to be little impact on gun-related crime.

Boston’s **Operation Ceasefire** combines a direct law enforcement attack on illicit firearms found on traffickers supplying juveniles with guns and an attempt to create a strong deterrent to gang violence. The project includes:

- Expanding the focus of local, state, and federal authorities to include intrastate firearms trafficking in Massachusetts in addition to interstate trafficking.
- Focusing enforcement attention on traffickers of the makes and calibers of guns most used by gang members.
- Focusing enforcement attention on traffickers of guns that had short time-to-crime intervals and, thus, were most likely to have been trafficked.
- Focusing enforcement attention on traffickers of guns used by the city’s most violent gangs.
- Attempting to restore obliterated serial numbers of confiscated guns and subsequently investigating trafficking based on those restorations.
- Targeting gangs engaged in violent behavior.

(continued)

**box 3-4****DELINQUENCY PREVENTION****Getting Guns off the Streets —continued**

- Delivering an explicit message that violence would not be tolerated.
- Backing up that message by “pulling every lever” legally available when violence occurred.

A recent evaluation of gun programs found that the homicide drop in Boston was more dramatic than in 95 other large American cities, suggesting that Operation Ceasefire was particularly effective in reducing gun violence. The program has also been utilized in the most crime-ravaged parts of Los Angeles and Atlanta, and was shown to produce great reductions in gun crimes. For instance, in the six years after the intervention was begun in Atlanta, the number of homicides fell nearly 30 percent with total homicide levels at their lowest rate in 30 years.

Sources: Lawrence Sherman, James Shaw, and Dennis Ragan, *The Kansas City Gun Experiment* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 1995); Shay Bilchik, *Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999); David Kennedy, Anthony Braga, Anne Piehl, and Elin Waring, *Reducing Gun Violence: The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2001); Edmund McGarrell, Steven Chermak, and Alexander Weiss, *Reducing Gun Violence: Evaluation of the Indianapolis Police Department's Directed Patrol Project* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2002); Richard Rosenfeld, Robert Fornango, and Eric Baumer, “Did Ceasefire, Compstat, and Exile Reduce Homicide?” *Criminology and Public Policy* 4:419–450 (2005); George Tita, Jack Riley, Greg Ridgeway, and Peter Greenwood, *Reducing Gun Violence: Operation Ceasefire in Los Angeles* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2005); Arthur Kellerman, Dawna Fuqua-Whitley, and Constance Parramore, *Reducing Gun Violence: Community Problem Solving in Atlanta* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2006); Edmund McGarrell, Steven Chermak, Jeremy Wilson, and Nicholas Corsaro, “Reducing Homicide through a ‘Lever-Pulling’ Strategy,” *Justice Quarterly* 23:214–231 (2006).

Consider this horrifying case. Laree Slack, a 12-year-old girl was being raised in a church-going, intact, two-parent family, but her parents were anything but loving. Laree's parents, Larry and Constance, became angry at Laree because she had failed to appropriately wash and put away the family's clothes one day. As punishment, Laree was ordered to “assume the position” and stand ready to be whipped. She was whipped with the same 5-foot stretch of electrical cord Larry had used earlier on Laree's 8-year-old brother. When Laree attempted to squirm away, her father ordered Laree's two older brothers to tie her face down on a metal bed frame. Larry and Constance took turns lashing Laree. When her back began to bleed, Larry untied her and turned her over and she was whipped again on her chest and stomach. Laree suffered more than 160 lashes and was pronounced dead at the hospital a few hours later.<sup>93</sup>

Violence within the family has far-reaching effects on children, regardless of whether they are the direct object of the violence or not. Children who observe their parents fighting or physically punishing siblings begin to internalize these acts as “normal” techniques for resolving conflicts. Exposure to violence or abuse in the home and exposure to hostile and punitive parenting are among the most important risk factors for a child's subsequent involvement in violent behavior.<sup>94</sup> Stephen Baron and Timothy Hartnagel's study of the violent behavior of street youth also notes that domestic violence is a significant factor in decisions to engage in violence. According to Baron and Hartnagel, “these youths also learn from their abusive home experiences that using force is a practical

and effective method of gaining compliance, increasing the odds that they will use coercion to gain financial or material rewards.”<sup>95</sup>

A variety of family factors place children at risk of violent behavior, including harsh or ineffective parenting, poor parental monitoring, poor attachment, and lack of warmth and nurturing (see Chapter 10). Parents of children with behavioral problems are more likely to engage in inconsistent and punitive discipline, and the children tend to develop aversive behaviors to affect and manipulate their family environments. The *Blueprints for Violence Prevention Initiative* has identified a number of successful strategies aimed at reducing juvenile violence by changing the individual behavior of the child by altering the social environment of the family, including home visiting, parent training, and family therapy programs.<sup>96</sup> Two important prevention programs in the country are explored next.

**Multisystemic Therapy** Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a family and community-based treatment program that seeks to address the multiple problems of seriously antisocial and aggressive youth ages 12 to 17. The multisystemic approach is that individuals are nested within a complex network of interconnected systems that encompass family, peer, school, and neighborhood domains. The principal objective of MST is to empower parents and youth with the skills and resources needed to surmount risk factors and capitalize on protective opportunities. These empowerments include strategic family therapy, structural family therapy, behavioral parent training, and cognitive behavior therapies over a 4-month period. Despite the difficulties inherent in treating seriously antisocial people, preliminary evaluations of MST have shown 25 to 70 percent reductions in rearrest and 47 to 64 percent reductions in out-of-home placements. At a cost of a mere \$4,500 per youth, MST has been ranked as the most cost-effective program in the country that targets serious and violent juvenile offenders.<sup>97</sup>

**The Incredible Years Series** One of the best programs to accomplish reduction in aggressive behavior is the Incredible Years Parent, Teacher, and Child Training Series. The Incredible Years is a comprehensive social competence program that treats conduct problems in children between the ages of 2 to 8. In six randomized trials, aggression and conduct problems have been reduced by 60 percent among the participating children and families. Other promising outcomes were increased academic competence and achievement, increased sociability and friendship-making skills, anger management and problem solving, and increased empathy among previously problem youth.<sup>98</sup> The Incredible Years program is one of the model prevention programs in the United States.<sup>99</sup>

### Providing Community-Based Prevention Programs

Early American criminologists believed that the local neighborhood and community largely determined the nature and extent of various social problems, including delinquency (see Chapter 5). This theoretical perspective led to a wide variety of community-based programs, such as the Chicago Area Project, aimed at eradicating or reducing such social ills as poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, the breakdown of the traditional family, and crime and delinquency. Today, community-based programs are still operating and are targeting youth violence.

**box 3-5 FROM THE BENCH****United States v. Lopez**

**O**n March 10, 1992, a 12th grade student arrived at Edison High School in San Antonio, Texas, carrying a concealed .38 caliber handgun and five bullets. Acting on a tip, school authorities confronted the student, who admitted to carrying the weapon. The student was arrested and charged by federal agents with violating the *Gun Free School Zones Act of 1990*. The student's attorney moved to dismiss the federal indictment on the ground that it was unconstitutional for Congress to legislate control over the public schools. However, the district court concluded that Congress was indeed free to regulate activities of public schools that affect interstate commerce. The student was tried and found guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment.

On appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, the government argued that possessing a firearm in a local school zone affects interstate commerce because the costs of violent crime are

substantial and insurance costs are spread throughout the population and that violent crime reduces the willingness of people to travel to areas within the country that are perceived to be unsafe. However, the Court disagreed, holding that "the possession of a gun in a local school zone is in no sense an economic activity that might, through repetition elsewhere, substantially affect any sort of interstate commerce."

In 1996 Congress reenacted the Act [18 U.S.C. § 921(a) (25)] to include an explicit interstate commerce element. It states that: "It shall be unlawful for any individual knowingly to possess a firearm that has moved in or that otherwise affects interstate or foreign commerce at a place that the individual knows, or has reasonable cause to believe, is a school zone."

*Source: United States v. Lopez, 514 U.S. 549 (1995).*

Children rarely choose where they live. Rather, they are dependent upon their parents, or their parents' fate, with regard to the particular neighborhood in which they reside. The neighborhood may be more or less safe, inhabited by the homeless, littered with graffiti, preferred by drug dealers and users, occupied by juvenile gangs, and lacking in supportive and nurturing social institutions such as a school and church. In other words, many children, through no choice of their own, face daily lives in communities and schools that are threatening and dangerous. Increasing levels of school violence even led Congress to pass the *Gun Free School Zones Act of 1990*. However, in 1995 the U.S. Supreme Court declared the Act unconstitutional in *United States v. Lopez*, only to have Congress reenact the provisions the following year (see Box 3-5).<sup>100</sup>

A number of programs are emerging in a variety of communities to counter the problems of juvenile violence. Individuals as well as diverse community groups are sponsoring neighborhood and community programs to reduce violence.<sup>101</sup> Three of the best community-based prevention programs are reviewed next.

**Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies** The Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum is a comprehensive program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behav-

ior problems in elementary school children (kindergarten through grade 5) while enhancing the educational process in the classroom. It is taught three times per week for 20–30 minutes per day and seeks to improve students' emotional literacy, self-control, social competence, positive peer instructions, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. The PATHS curriculum also focuses on the ability of the students to label, understand, and manage their feelings, impulses, and stress. In program evaluations, PATHS has been shown to improve protective factors (that insulate children from delinquency) and reduce risk factors (that propel youths toward delinquency). Other positive outcomes include increased self-control, improved understanding and recognition of emotions, more effective conflict-resolution strategies, improved thinking and planning skills, reduced depression, and fewer conduct problems. The PATHS program costs a meager \$45 per student per year.<sup>102</sup>

**Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America** For nearly 100 years, the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America has provided mentoring, one-on-one relationships for youths between the ages of 6 and 18 from single-parent homes (which is the typical family background of violent juvenile offenders). The service is provided by volunteers who complete rigorous training and follow published, required procedures for youth mentoring. In a recent 18-month follow-up evaluation, children who participated in Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America were 46 percent less likely than control youth to begin using drugs, 27 percent less likely to be using alcohol, 30 percent less likely to hit someone, and had better academic behavior, attitudes, school performance, and relationships with parents and peers.<sup>103</sup> Motivated by the successes of mentoring programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, the National Faith-Based Initiative for High-Risk Youth, a Public/Private Venture of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, uses one-on-one and group mentoring approaches to address the delinquency and mental health problems, especially depression, of high-risk juvenile offenders. Although the program has not been formally evaluated, preliminary outcomes from programs in Baton Rouge, Brooklyn, Denver, Philadelphia, and Seattle have been promising.<sup>104</sup>

## think about it

Weed and Seed programs reduce youth violence. They require brief but intense law enforcement. Why are the policies not more widely used given their effectiveness? Is the American public reluctant to empower the police?

**Olweus Bullying Prevention Program** The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is a universal intervention for the reduction and prevention of bully and victim problems. The program targets are students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools with additional interventions for students who have prior history of bullying and/or bullying victimization. Core components of the program are implemented at the school level, class level, and individual level and contain assistance from counselors, teachers, and mental health professionals. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has been shown to result in significant reductions in bullying and victimization among boys and girls, reductions in related delinquency problems, such as vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy, and improvements in the school social climate. The program costs \$200 per school and approximately \$65 per teacher.<sup>105</sup> Although bullying is a historical part of the school experience, it is also a serious risk factor for serious, violent, and chronic delinquent behavior (Chapter 11).

In spite of the efforts being made to reduce the availability of guns, to reduce violence in the media, to intervene in families, and to create safer and more nurturing communities, many experts believe that the only way to reduce youth

violence is by arresting violent youths and dealing with them formally within either the juvenile or adult justice system.

## Promoting Blended Treatment and “Get-Tough” Approaches

There is a serious dilemma facing both criminologists and policy makers when attempting to determine the “best” treatment approach or the “most effective” punishment approach for dealing with serious, violent juveniles. Unfortunately, it is difficult to distinguish the causes of the behaviors of violent youths from those of nonviolent delinquent youths. To select primarily violent youths for participation in a particular treatment program or for transfer to criminal court for prosecution based upon assumptions about the ability to bring about rehabilitation or deterrence might be flawed. Dewey Cornell points out that, even very violent juveniles can be subdivided into smaller subgroups based upon the youths’ prior adjustment problems. Cornell states, “Among violent offenders, youth convicted of the most serious violent crime, homicide, actually have less history of prior violence than do offenders convicted of less serious assaults.”<sup>106</sup>

Regrettably, it is often the case that serious, violent, and chronic delinquents were themselves exposed to severe abuses and deprivation from very early in life. Indeed, there is some public sentiment characterized by a “what did we expect” belief about the effects of early life abuses on subsequent violence and criminal behavior. This leads many observers to wring their hands in resignation convinced that nothing can be done to stem the actions of the serious delinquents.<sup>107</sup> Fortunately, this is not the case. Mark Lipsey recently reviewed the literature on programs that target serious delinquents and concluded:

the average effect on the recidivism of serious juvenile offender of those interventions that I studied are positive, statistically significant, and, though modest, not trivial . . . this evidence shows that optimal combinations of program elements have the capability to reduce recidivism by 40 to 50 percent, that is, to cut recidivism rates to nearly half of what they would be without such programming.<sup>108</sup>

Most treatment programs for violent youths occur within locked, secure correctional facilities, although they continue to emphasize rehabilitation and early reintegration into the community. One such treatment program is the Violent Juvenile Offender (VJO) program, designed to target chronic violent male juvenile offenders in four urban areas, Boston, Detroit, Memphis, and Newark. Youths selected for the VJO program must have been adjudicated for a Part I Index felony and must have at least one prior felony adjudication. The program involves efforts aimed at “strengthening youths’ bonds to prosocial people and institutions, providing realistic opportunities for achievement, employing a system of rewards for appropriate behavior and sanctions for inappropriate behavior, and individualized treatment.” To accomplish these goals, VJO youths are initially placed in small, secure treatment facilities and then gradually reintegrated into the community in phases. The second phase involves treatment in a community-based residential program, after which youths progress to the third phase, involving intensive supervision in the neighborhood.

Another treatment program for violent juvenile offenders is the Capital Offender Program (COP) in Texas. For a youth to be eligible for placement in COP, he or she must have committed a homicide and must not have been diagnosed

as having a severe psychological disorder. COP is designed to promote verbal expression of feelings, to foster empathy for victims, to create a sense of personal responsibility, and to decrease feelings of hostility and aggression. Treatment includes group psychotherapy emphasizing role playing in which youths act out their life stories and reenact their crimes from their own perspectives and those of their victims.<sup>109</sup>

Many states have lowered the age for waiver of violent youths to criminal court or are making it less difficult to transfer such youths (see Chapter 14); have established determinate sentences for serious, violent youths adjudicated in the juvenile courts; and have permitted a juvenile's arrest and court record to be made available to schools and to adult criminal courts once a youth is prosecuted as an adult. In addition, some states have passed parental-liability laws whereby juveniles' parents are held in contempt of court for missing their children's court hearings.

Law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts are coordinating efforts in a number of jurisdictions to develop new strategies for targeting violent juveniles. The Salinas Police Department in California created a Violence Suppression Unit consisting of 15 officers involved in aggressive patrol focusing on violent and gun-related crimes. The Seattle Police Department has established a system for tracking violent offenders and disseminating information through the department and other social service agencies to reduce the anonymity of the juveniles and refer the offenders to intervention services. A list of the 50 most violent juveniles was developed, with increased communication between police and probation, to increase surveillance of these youths and to provide for greater enforcement of their conditions of probation. In addition, enhanced prosecution for serious, violent juvenile offenders was instituted with the addition of a new full-time position in the prosecutor's office. At the same time, Seattle's Juvenile Firearms Prosecution Project provided for vertical prosecution of all juvenile firearms offenses with a Deputy Prosecutor specializing in firearm prosecutions assigned to handle all juvenile firearms offenses from initial filing of the case through juvenile sentencing. In Baltimore, the City Police Department's Youth Violence Task Force, working closely with the U.S. Attorney, ATF, FBI, and school police, identifies and targets gang members and violent offenders, and aggressively seeks their apprehension and incarceration.<sup>110</sup>

## conclusions

Youth violence had been declining dramatically for over a decade before it began to increase again in 2004. Even though it continues to be a serious threat, it is not yet the problem it was in the 1980s and early 1990s. For some criminologists, the lower level of youth violence is primarily due to the decline in the crack market and associated lethal violence with firearms. Other criminologists, however, believe that the decrease in violence stems from more police officers on the street and a get-tough attitude by the courts, resulting in more youths being incarcerated.

The vast majority of violent youth are males, disproportionately minorities, from urban, lower-income neighborhoods where a variety of stressors and strains predominate. Juvenile victims of violence reflect similar characteristics: They are older, male, and minority youth; younger, female and white youth are significantly less likely to be victimized. Guns, especially handguns, are used in most violent incidents involving juveniles.

Is it possible to prevent youth violence? Criminologists, legislators, and policy makers differ in their opinions of the root causes of youth violence and how to respond to violence. Proposals include getting guns out of the hands of juveniles, reducing violence in the media, strengthening families, assisting schools to teach alternatives to violence, providing treatment for offenders, and getting tough on violent offenders. None of these approaches appears terribly promising on its own, but possibly a comprehensive strategy that combines the best features of each may more effectively control youth violence.

The next chapter will explore illegal drug use by adolescents, which is another area of juvenile delinquency. While both youth violence and delinquency in general have declined during the past decade, juvenile drug use has increased.

## key terms

- Brady Bill** Federal legislation that mandated a five-day waiting period for the purchase of handguns.
- Etiology** The scientific name for the cause of antisocial behavior, such as delinquency.
- Infanticide** Homicide in which recently born children are killed by relatives who do not want the children or who are suffering from childbirth-related psychiatric disturbances.
- Kansas City Gun Experiment** An experiment in which the use of additional police to patrol in target areas for the exclusive purpose of gun detection significantly increased gun seizures and decreased gun crimes.
- Operation Ceasefire** A gun prevention program in Boston involving direct law enforcement attack on illicit firearms traffickers supplying juveniles with guns.
- Psychopathy** A personality disorder that impairs interpersonal, affective, and behavioral functions and is closely linked to serious antisocial behavior.
- Sociopathy** A form of psychopathy, sometimes referred to as secondary psychopathy, which is produced from early life environmental factors such as parental abuse and neglect.
- United States v. Lopez** A U.S. Supreme Court case that held that the *Gun Free School Zones Act of 1990* was unconstitutional.