



# CSPV FACT SHEET

FS-003

1997

## Ethnicity, Race, Class and Adolescent Violence

- Adolescence and early adulthood are characterized by much higher rates of both perpetration and victimization of violence than other years.
- Adolescents have also been shown to have higher rates than younger children and adults for both minor and serious forms of violence.
- Developmental and social-environmental factors must be considered when attempting to explore the elevated risk of violence found among U.S. adolescents today.
- Involvement of adolescents in interpersonal violence:
  - The modal age for involvement in serious and lethal injuries has decreased over time.
  - Firearm mortality rates among 15- to 19-year-old urban youth rose markedly in the late 1980s.
  - The 1994 report of the Centers for Disease Control indicated that from 1985 to 1991 the homicide and non-negligent manslaughter rates for males between the ages of 15 and 19 increased by 127%. By 1991 males of these ages were more likely to be arrested for murder than were males in any other 5-year age group.
  - According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) juvenile victimization rates for 1992 increased by nearly 14 per 1,000.
  - National Crime Victimization Survey data suggest that in 1992 the rate of violent crime victimization per 1,000 for juveniles (12-17) and young adults (18-24) was nearly twice the victimization rate for 25- to 34-year-olds and was about five times the rate for those over 35.
- Ethnic and racial differences in rates of adolescent violence:
  - Supplemental Homicide Reports suggest that African Americans constituted nearly 61% of all adolescents (10-20 years of age) known to have committed murder in 1990.
  - Firearm death rates for black males aged 15-19 in the United States in 1989 ranged from 15.5 per 100,000 for those residing in non-metropolitan areas to 143.9 per 100,000 for those residing in the central cities. Comparable rates for white males were 3.0 and 21.5 respectively. Non firearm rates for males showed a similar geographic and racial pattern, as did rates for females of both races.
  - Hispanic males between the ages of 15 and 24 were shown to have a homicide victimization rate of 97.3 per 100,000 as compared to 185.1 for African Americans and 10.0 for Anglo whites.
- Little is known about the distribution of homicide among adolescents who are Native American or who belong to the diverse ethnic groups that constitute Asian and Hispanic racial categories.
- The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) have consistently indicated that African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are substantially over represented among those arrested for acts of interpersonal violence in the United States.

- Self-report studies have suggested that racial differences in rates of involvement in violence are smaller than those indicated by the UCR. Further, these differences may be less pronounced for adolescent involvement in nonlethal aggression than for adolescent involvement in homicide. Such studies have also reported that as black and white adolescents age into early adulthood, the black-white gap widens rather than narrows.

#### Conclusions:

- In the United States today, African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics are much more likely to be victims and perpetrators of lethal violence than are people of European or Asian ancestry.
- Substantial evidence also exists to support the accuracy of the belief that higher rates of lethal aggression are found among the economically marginal than among the more economically privileged sectors of all ethnic and racial groups.
- The available evidence is inconclusive with regard to whether substantial and significant race and class differences exist in the rate of involvement in nonlethal forms of violence.
- Class, race, and ethnic bias still exists in the way that violence is conceptualized by researchers and the public and in the way that the criminal law is formulated and enforced.

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**The information for this fact sheet was excerpted from the following CSPV paper:**

Hawkins, D.F. (1996, October). *Ethnicity, Race, Class, and Adolescent Violence* (CSPV-006). Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado at Boulder.